

254 Kingsland Av.  
Brooklyn, N.Y.  
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Brian Grogan  
John Ross

Dear Comrades,

First I want to thank you and all the comrades of the IMG for the warm reception and comradesly collaboration during my stay in England. I believe this trip accomplished much that is positive for the Fourth International because of this collaboration. It certainly must be clear by now in England that the USec fights in a principled fashion for a united international movement containing all serious Trotskyist forces ~~for~~ with full rights extended to all political tendencies to fight for their political views within the international.

Brian had asked me for something in writing about my discussions with the WSL but this was not possible before my departure. Also I sought to give a report on my trip to Greece in my brief stop over at the London airport on my way back to the U.S. This also did not work out. So this letter is a substitute. You are free to circulate it to your Political Committee but any broader circulation might not be the best at this delicate stage of discussions with these comrades.

As you know my purpose <sup>is</sup> this trip was to discuss with comrades with whom I have been acquainted in the past and with whom I share a common experience. My hope was to help them find a way as I have into the ranks of the USec with of course full rights to develop their own political positions. It was not, of course, to negotiate any fusions or any other arrangements between these groups and the official sections or with the USEC directly. It was only to encourage them along such a path and to convey to the sections involved, the USec and the SWP whatever proposals they may have.

I was and am impressed with much of the work of the Thornett comrades in the trade unions. This is not to say I am uncritical of them but rather to state that I feel they have one of the most important trade union bases that Trotskyists have anywhere, they are valuable comrades, and have made experiences we can all learn from. Their shortcomings are, I believe, of a character that can be overcome if these comrades were able to have experiences as part of a broader movement. I made this position clear to them in my discussions.

~~Next~~ I met with Alan Thornett, John Lister, and Tony Richardson all day Saturday in Oxford. Much of the discussion paralleled the discussion held in public with their comrades in Leeds, Birmingham, and Oxford at my various meetings as well as in private with Adam Westoby and Alan Clinton of their London Group. I would not say we reached any real agreement in this discussion so I will summarize as best I can what I think their position is.

They state they reject Healy's position of the lineal descent of Trotskyism through the IC with everyone outside the IC as written off as revolutionaries and Trotskyists. Yet they hold back from clearly declaring the USEC to be Trotskyist and revolutionary. They do not say it definitely isn't nor that it definitely is.

They are critical of the USec for not being democratic centralist in their view. I explained that the USec was not at this point as democratic centralist as we would like but that it remained a unified international movement having handled the deepest political differences without a split and with full and principled discussion since 1969. I felt this was an outstanding example in the postwar Trotskyist movement. I also pointed out that progress was now being made to resolve those situations in countries where two sympathizing groups exist instead of a united section. I stressed that no one in the USEC favored such a situation and that the direction of movement at the present time was in the direction of unification. I told them it was incorrect to counterpose an abstract norm of democratic centralism to the real process of actually constructing a democratic centralist international which required primary emphasis on theoretical clarification not organizational actions.

I think this point is made primarily as a way of avoiding<sup>ing</sup> the real existence of the USec so that the WSL tendency can appear one among many under conditions of the nonexistence of the FI.

We had some discussion on how to approach an international discussion. Do we begin from the past (1953, 1963) or do we begin from the present. I insisted on the latter approach and believe perhaps a little headway was made on this point but we will see. I stressed that to the extent that the past is relevant it will be reflected in the present and no one would object to past questions brought up constructively on that basis. We just did not want a discussion based on past frozen positions or whose purpose it was to keep comrades out of the FI but rather to bring them in with full rights as to their differences.

The WSL's main fear, it seems, in relation to possible fusion with the IMG is that what they believe to be its lack of homogeneity would have a demoralizing impact on their trade union comrades who they feel need a cohesive organization with clear policies. I stressed that I could understand a reticence to unite immediately without a period of common working together and an international discussion process to discover exactly what are the real differences in approach to the British situation and what are perhaps the results of the normal competition of independent groups and the attending frictions. The question I felt was not immediate fusion but fusion as a goal, as a process. No one would want a fusion which was not lasting and serious.

There was some discussion of what was correct and what was incorrect in Healyism after 1963 with some of the comrades at least still clinging to aspects of Healyism in ~~my~~ my opinion.

There also appears to be a somewhat factional situation in Oxford itself between the IMG and WSL. Any mistake a young IMGer may make in relation to Cowley, or which the WSL thinks is a mistake, is exaggerated and used by those in the WSL most resistant to fusion. All I can suggest is comrades of the IMG who favor fusion should do their best to alleviate this situation where ~~possible~~ possible so that more basic questions can be objectively discussed to the extent that this is possible. But this is of course up to the comrades of the IMG who understand this question of fusion better than those of the WSL.

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At the end of the meeting Thornett made two proposals.

(1) He requested that the SWP as well as others answer his document on the FI. I stated I would take this request back to the SWP as well as inform the IMG of it.

(2) He stated his willingness to participate in the World Congress discussions and to attend the World Congress itself in an observer capacity. His only qualification was to request the right to speak at the Congress so he could defend his contributions should comrades disagree with them. He was worried that what his group would say would simply be ignored by the international comrades as not dealt with seriously. I stated that it seemed to me personally to be a reasonable request and I would relate it to the comrades concerned--the IMG and SWP to convey to the USec.

My own opinion is that we should answer his document essentially to get it out of the way as a stumbling block to a real discussion within the USec.

He asked me what I thought the WSL should contribute to the world discussion. I made two suggestions personally (1) I felt he had done some important thinking about the Transitional Program and had made important experiences in trying to make that program live in the current struggles of the British labor movement. I felt a completely objective and positive contribution on this to the international discussion would be of great interest to all comrades regardless of their international tendency position. (2) I told him resolutions were being submitted by USEC comrades on all major questions facing the world movement and he should submit his views on these questions.

He seemed to be agreeable to both suggestions. He said that we would make his proposals in writing shortly.

The situation in Greece was a bit different and I think it will have a helpful influence on the WSL situation. The Ex-Healy group (which is headed by Comrade D.) is in my opinion extremely healthy. In the split with Healy, D. took all but one worker so its composition is very healthy. They split with about 100 of the original 200 in the Healy group. They lost a number of these due to demoralization over the split and now have about 40-50 people. The official section has about 38 people and is in a deep crisis. About 30 people appear to belong to a group outside the official section which generally adheres to the positions of the IMT but had no official status. There exists all three international tendencies within the official group plus what appears to be a majority bloc opposed to any international discussion or politics generally. Needless to say this latter formation makes things a bit difficult in Greece.

The D. group works within the KKE interior. As you may know this party, while Stalinist, has opened its membership to anyone on the left. Left politics in Greece appears to be almost completely dominated by the KKE exterior and interior--they have the only student organizations, the major women's organizations, the major trade unions, etc.

This must be kept in mind when considering D.'s tactics.

The group, before I had arrived, had proposed discussions with the official section and had begun some with the leadership. They made clear they favored fusion and felt that the discussions leading to fusion and the fusion itself should include the IMT outside group as well. They stated they saw no bar to fusion in their entrust tactic and would be willing to accept the majority discipline even if it meant pulling out of the interior. In any event the official section broke off even the limited discussions that had taken place using as an excuse their entry.

D. was agreeable to all proposals I made. I spoke to the central committee at some length on all these matters and it was taped to be played to the whole membership. In general the comrades seemed to express a deep interest in the international movement and a deep desire to find a road to become part of it.

I proposed to them the following, of course, only as my personal suggestions as to a course which might help achieve unification. (1) That they put their proposals in writing and send them to both the official section and to the U Sec. (2) That they ask to participate in the world congress discussions and to be at least observers at the World Congress on the same basis as the WSL. (3) That they agree to the world congress documents as the basis for discussion. (4) That they propose joint discussions with the official section aimed at fusion nationally and internationally urging but not making it a condition the inclusion of the outside IMT group or anyone else in Greece who claims adherence to the U Sec.

They agreed to all this but wished to consult the WSL before formally writing. They made it clear that if there was no agreement with them they would write anyway.

I think you should also know about this question, which Thornett mentioned to you, of their being an international tendency. Thornett had proposed what he calls a "democratic centralist" international tendency composed of the WSL, the Socialist League of the U.S. (perhaps five people on the West Coast), and D.'s group. D.'s group feels a common political bond with the WSL and wish to collaborate with them internationally. But they do not seem to agree with this "democratic centralism" which they see as a bit of an impediment to international fusion and perhaps a carryover from Healy -- perhaps a new IC in disguise. A representative of the WSL is going to Greece shortly for discussions.

My own opinion is that the general weight of the Greek comrades will be to encourage Thornett into the discussion process. I feel these comrades could play a very important role in building a serious section in Greece. Let us remember that not long ago one million people in this tiny country of 9 million marched through the streets of Athens in defense of the Polytechnic. It will happen again in a more radical way and it would be important if the international can help the Greek comrades prepare for this with a strong united section.

Comradely,

Tim