

May 22, 1978

To Political Committee

Attached are two memoranda on IP/Inprecor from the IMG leadership. The first was drafted for a Political Committee discussion February 3, 1978, by the comrade responsible for press circulation. The second, drafted May 1, 1978, is for a future Political Committee or National Committee discussion.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

John Marston for PC meeting, 2/3/78

1. The agreement to merge Intercontinental Press and Inprecor was a considerable step forward for the Fourth International. It showed that vigorous internal debate does not have to lead to splits; on the contrary, it can result in greater unity and cohesion. The IMG recognised this gain by agreeing not only to put its full political weight behind the project of the fused journal, but also to make a substantial organisational and financial commitment to its success by guaranteeing the European distribution of the journal.

2. The very fact of a single, united journal reflecting the views of the F.I. is in itself a step forward. IP/Inprecor is the only journal to which militants can look for a weekly analysis of world developments from a revolutionary Marxist viewpoint. On some questions - for instance, women's liberation - the journal has already established a reputation for thorough and consistent coverage.

However, it has to be said that a precondition for consolidating these gains is a clearer definition of the political character of the journal. It is necessary to discuss out, in the light of its general task of 'advancing revolutionary Marxist views', what the specific thrust of the journal needs to be in the present period.

3. As a weekly magazine, one task of IP/Inprecor is clearly to supplement the international news information which can be carried in the press of the sections. However, I would argue that the journal also has to focus centrally on particular areas where current class battles will have an important effect on the international relationship of forces. Without wishing to be over-schematic, I would suggest that three of these areas are Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe (France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain). The last, in particular, also poses sharply the growing crisis of the Communist Parties, and this, in combination with the developing opposition currents in Eastern Europe, also makes the latter area an important one for our coverage.

Other areas which also warrant considerable attention are China, Indochina, Chile and Argentina, the role of social democracy in Britain and West Germany, Ireland, the important new struggles in the North American labour movement, and the rise of the women's movement on an international scale.

Finally, I would argue that IP/Inprecor should also prioritise reportage and discussion around two particular themes which are increasingly informing the work of the F.I. and its sections today: the fight for a class struggle left wing in the labour movement, and the struggle for revolutionary regroupment.

Of course this list is not exclusive but tries simply to outline some of the main questions on which IP/Inprecor should perhaps concentrate. It does not mean that it should drop such aspects as its excellent 'Capitalism Fouls Things Up' section or its monitoring of the international left press in 'Selections from the Left'.

4. I have thought it useful to elaborate on this point because IP/Inprecor has not shaped up at all well in its first big political test: the French elections. Throughout the world attention is focused on this battle and its possible outcome;

every question of strategy and tactics for the workers movement is being raised in this campaign: There is a major far left intervention, including that of the second largest section of the F.I. Yet after some initial articles the French elections have not been mentioned in IP/Inprecor since the issue of 30 January.

This failing has to be looked at all the more seriously (a) because of the abundance of material which has been published in Rouge and is therefore available for our whole movement, (b) because the format of IP/Inprecor would have allowed for a rounded-out coverage which no other tendency could have begun to challenge: weekly reports of the latest developments; in-depth analysis of the major questions at stake; profiles of the parties; texts of important campaign speeches; extracts from the left press; and so on. By missing this opportunity, IP/Inprecor has lost an important chance to establish itself.

5. It is also undoubtedly the case that the journal tends to concentrate too much on events in or concerning the USA. This is perhaps inevitable in a journal-based in New York and staffed by American comrades. But we feel that a more conscious effort should be made to redress the balance. The cover of Vol. 16, No. 5, for instance ('Six Iranian Activists Arrested in New Jersey'), raised this problem in an acute form. The same problem is reflected in the failure to print the subscription rates for anywhere outside the USA, and the five weeks' delay in printing the sterling price on the cover.

6. Finally, we should be extremely concerned at the growing delay between the publication of articles in the French edition and their appearance in IP/Inprecor. Of the six articles published in the French edition of 2 February, for instance, three appeared in IP/Inprecor on 13 February, one on 27 February, and two have yet to appear. Such delays are unacceptable. If, as one can only presume, problems of translation have occurred which were not foreseen at the time the original arrangements were made, then the IMG should be prepared to play its part in helping to overcome them. But an explanation of these delays is urgently required.

7. These problems are raised because in my opinion they relate directly to the falling sales of the journal by the IMG branches. We have spared no efforts to make IP/Inprecor a success; indeed, we took up the question of a campaign around the launch more rapidly than the comrades in either Paris or New York. Yet not merely has the presentation of the 'new' journal been disappointing (in no way distinguishable from the old IP), but the pattern of its contents has so far failed to gear into the central preoccupations of our militants. (One example here. We can use a lot of propaganda material on Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. But in the first seven issues there have only been four pages each on these areas. This is less than the average per issue devoted to US affairs. Nor is the IMG peculiar in prioritising these areas for international campaigns.)

8. Obviously the IMG can take some steps to systematise promotion of the journal even while these problems remain with its character. Proposals adopted by the IP/Inprecor sub-committee include: a further article on the new journal in Socialist Challenge; distribution of a memo on how and where to sell IP/Inprecor; systematic promotion and sales at national demos and rallies; a further discussion with the London leadership on

the problems in London; investigation of the cost of adverts in certain journals if New York remains unwilling to adopt Inprecor's policy of exchange adverts; production of a poster for the colleges.

9. However, these measures cannot be a substitute for an assessment of the political tasks of the journal and how it meets up to them. I would therefore propose for discussion the following suggestions: (i) that a procedure be elaborated for concretising the specific political character and role of IP/Inprecor through discussion; (ii) that immediate steps be taken to ensure that all articles are published without delay; (iii) that greater use be made of material appearing in Rouge on relevant questions; (iv) that consideration be given to the possibility of a monthly discussion supplement around particular topics (e.g. 'Socialist Democracy').

If these points are taken up I am sure that the initial problems we have met with the journal can be easily overcome.

1. The agreement to merge Intercontinental Press and Inprecor was a considerable step forward for the Fourth International. It showed that vigorous international debate does not have to lead to splits; on the contrary, it can result in greater unity and cohesion. The IMG recognised this gain by agreeing not only to put its full political weight behind the project of the fused journal, but also to make a substantial organisational and financial commitment to its success by guaranteeing the European distribution of the journal.

2. The very fact of a single, united journal reflecting the views of the FI is in itself a step forward. IP/Inprecor is the only journal to which militants can look for a weekly analysis of world developments from a revolutionary marxist viewpoint. On some questions - for instance, women's liberation - the journal has already established a reputation for thorough and consistent coverage.

However, it has to be said that a precondition for consolidating these gains is a clearer definition of the political character of the journal. It is necessary to discuss out, in the light of its general tasks of 'advancing revolutionary marxist views', what specific thrust the journal needs in the present period.

3. As a weekly magazine, one task of IP/Inprecor is clearly to supplement the international news information which can be carried in the press of the sections. However, the journal also has to focus centrally on particular areas where current class battles will have an important effect on the international relationship of forces. Three of these areas are Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Southern Europe (France, Italy, Portugal and Spain). The last, in particular, also poses sharply the growing crisis of the Communist Parties and this in combination with the developing opposition currents in Eastern Europe, also makes the latter area an important one for our coverage.

Other areas which also warrant considerable attention are China, Indochina, Chile and Argentina, the role of social democracy in Britain and West Germany, Ireland, the important struggles in the North American labour movement, and the rise of the women's movement on an international scale.

4. In highlighting the above, we are not suggesting that IP/Inprecor drop such aspects as its excellent 'Capitalism Fouls Things Up' or its monitoring of the international left press in 'Selections From the Left', or especially its Documents Section'. On this last point we are of the opinion that this section should be extended, particularly in the production of material from outside the ranks of the FI. For example, it would have been of immense interest to the readers of IP/Inprecor to have reproduced the extensive debate that is now going on inside the French Communist Party or some material relevant to the Spanish CP Congress.

5. A vital centre-piece of IP/Inprecor to guarantee its audience must be debate around key questions posed in today's class struggle. The new radicalisation emerging in the mass reformist parties, the crisis of the centrist left in the face of the new political tasks posed by the crisis and the impasse of the syndicalist and spontaneist methods of struggle give our programme new relevance and immediacy to whole new layers. A precondition to engaging these militants is to enter into debate with other currents like Eurocommunism, new centrist currents inside mass parties and the older centrist organisations.

6. In looking at the present IP/Inprecor in this light we can notice some problems.

a) A routinist approach to key world events, particularly in Europe. Take the approach to the French Elections. The format of IP/Inprecor could have allowed for a rounded out coverage which no other tendency could have begun to challenge; weekly reports of the latest developments; in depth analysis of the

major questions at stake; profiles of the parties; texts of important campaign speeches; extracts from the left press, and so on. Vol. 16, No. 9 where extracts from the left press and debate were reproduced was a model in this regard. This method could be extended to include in particular the coverage of the crisis within Eurocommunism.

b) Lightweight coverage of major international events, mainly confined to reportage and commentary. There should be at least two major analytic pieces in each issue. The article by Ernest Mandel on the world recession (Vol. 16, No. 16) and the articles on Ethiopia by Ernest Harach are the type of thing needed in each issue.

c) Virtually no debate in the journal. Debate around the WLM, the anti-nuclear movement, and especially general questions of strategy would be invaluable.

d) A tendency to concentrate too much on events in or concerning the USA. This is perhaps inevitable in a journal based in New York and staffed entirely by American comrades. But more conscious effort could be made to redress the balance. The cover of Vol. 16, No. 5 for example (Six Iranian activists arrested in New Jersey) raised this problem in an acute form.

Clynes and Marston

1/5/78