

P.O. Box 10116
Columbus, Ohio 43201

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED

1/5/85

50.6.85

4-23-75

To all VVAW/WSO regions, chapters and contacts

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Thursday April 10, 1975, I resigned from VVAW/WSO. As an ex-regional coordinator (MOIIN^WVVAWPA region - April 1974 to April 1, 1975), I think it's important that I let the general membership know the exact basis for my leaving. For the past three weeks I've been jotting notes on paper and writing outlines; trying my best to summarize my experience. This has been an extremely difficult task and I don't have the time to write a complete analysis. This paper then, will deal with my reaction to what's going on, some general criticisms, and finally, what I can only speculate to be the future of VVAW/WSO. I hope that people that disagree with the content of my letter do so in an honest manner as that is the very basis for my writing. I do not want this letter to be used as a further wedge in the continuing struggle within VVAW/WSO; rather, it is my hopes that my criticisms will be looked upon as just that - criticism and not an attack. Also, you must keep in mind that I do not profess to be a great political and/or theoretical writer. Therefore, honest criticism should not concern how I say something, but what I say.

In my years term as regional coordinator I have seen much change. Since the July demonstration in Washington my main job was trying to hold the region together and build at the same time. The main factor, in my opinion, that started this alienation on the part of the membership was the booklet Build the Anti-imperialist Veterans Movement published and distributed by the Revolutionary Union (RU). From that point to the present, this region has all but fell apart. The Dayton chapter has been lowered to that of an organizing contact; the Cleveland chapter is on paper only; the Athens chapter is alienated and disillusioned; and finally, the Columbus chapter voted unanimously to withdraw from VVAW/WSO. Why did this happen? Who is to blame? It is my opinion that much of the blame rests on the RU, the national office of VVAW/WSO, and to a lesser extent regional leadership.

It is important to look at those months between the July demo and the St. Louis NSCM. First off, RU participation in this organization didn't just "fall out of the sky"! RU members didn't wake up one morning and want to join VVAW/WSO. It had to be a conscious decision on the part of RU leadership. Although I have no way of "proving" this, it is my firm belief that this is fact. Disciplined pre-party members don't do what they want to do. Also, participation was not isolated to one area; rather, every part of the country was affected. What this now meant, that instead of individual communists in the organization (who I have learned a great deal from and still respect very much) VVAW/WSO had a block of communists with the same line. What ensued from this point on was enough to make me question the very character of this "new" organization. People were building up more hate for opposing lines and the people that put them forward than they did for the common enemy. Unity, solidarity, and fighting the enemy came second - first we "had to rid the organization of these incorrect lines". From the beginning I played the part of referee in this

ENCLOSURE

150-41500 4223

page 2

region - even to the point of defending "cadre in this organization. I was criticized for "fence sitting". But as more and more people left - good, honest hard working people - I started to question my role as regional leadership. It came to the point where the tone and character of the organization had changed, and I was not a part of that, nor would I be in the future.

To the RU: You always claim to be "for the masses" and for "the working class". Don't you know that many people in the organization have that very background and present day status?? If so, why don't you listen to them? Are you above criticism? It seems to me that your definition of "the masses" is either; (1) anyone who agrees with you, or; (2) someone that doesn't know of you. All opposition is not part of the "masses". You're always so defensive concerning your lines - never willing to really struggle with people. You listen to your hooks - your theory. But as we all know - books don't make history, people do. And when alot of people tell you you've fucked up, listen to them. You will instantly read any criticism in a defensive manner and use your interpretation of Marxism-Leninism to not accept it. It's important that you understand exactly where people are at. I admire and respect your dedication and self-sacrifice; those are the qualities of a good communist. But also, " they do not set up any sectarian principles of their own to shape and mould the proletarian movement". (Manifesto of the Communist Party) And don't you see, that's exactly what you're trying to do with VVA/USO. Either we're a fighting anti-imperialist veterans movement or we're nothing (or any number of other terms ranging from reformist to blood sucking agents of the bourgeoisie!). You have, in the course of this struggle, alienated alot of people. I think you've fucked up - and that is heavy political criticism.

To the national office: This whole struggle was handled wrong. First the Ru booklet, and the rumors started flying. Then you hit the organization with your position paper before a national meeting and expected a yes or no in six months. The rumors were still flying and they should have been handled through the national newsletter - but they were not. As to your position paper - true leadership would have come to the masses in the organization first, then came out with a position paper on the basis of that sum-up. Yes - we did need a focus to our work (at least it had to be defined), and priorities should have been made - and national programs. But your position paper just happened to correspond with the RU plan for the organization, and people did have honest questions as to where it came from. This was never handled either, and for myself, it was too little too late. This organization had been used to the struggle coming from the bottom (ie., Winter Soldier concept) and going up - and this one clearly came from the top to the bottom.

To regional leadership? In hindsight, we were guilty too. We were the ones caught in the middle. When lines were being drawn, some of us went to sides. The name calling that took place from one side also took place from the other, and that was wrong. At least for my part, it was an ignorance of how dishonest some people could be - on both sides. But we had no way of knowing that; the honest members of the organization got burnt the worst.

So why did I leave the struggle? Name calling, rumors, arrogance, elitism, dogmatism, and dis-honesty are the main factors. I felt the struggle was not really a true struggle. True struggle, to me, is a two way street with both sides meeting and honestly taking into consideration each others position. When you struggle with people, you have to be cognizant of where they are coming

from and you have to be able to compromise some of your positions; to admit that maybe, just maybe, they have a point in what they're saying. When, in the course of the struggle that is going on (or has taken place) I have always been ready to admit that my position (or line) is flexible and subject to change if it can be proven (to bear out in practice) that I'm wrong. However, when arguing with the political "giants" of this organization, everything is boiled down to a two line struggle (that is, one line is proletarian and the other is bourgeois) and you know that they have the proletarian line, where does that leave you but in the wrong and advocating the bourgeois line. I not only find this insulting, but totally frustrating and I personally can't continue in this type of struggle.

As for the future of VVAW/WSO, I can only guess. If true struggle starts taking place - maybe there's hope. But I know that will not happen. What will be left is cadre trying to organize other cadre. New members will either agree with the lines or as in the past with their region, become alienated and leave. And that's the shame of it all. What was once, in my opinion, a very good mass organization with pacifists, liberals, communists (not saying that you had to agree with any of those positions) and many others working together to defeat imperialism has become a hard line organization organizing others into that line. If you should happen to disagree with those lines.....witness the St. Louis NSCM and the line trashing that went on there. This is not to say that people should not study and formulate correct ideology - this should be a continuing process. But what has happened within this organization is a good example of "what is NOT to be done". I hope, sincerely, that people learn from the errors that were made.

Finally, in the years I have been in the organization I have learned alot. My politics and practice were advanced and I have made many good friends throughout the country - including members of the RU. I consider people still my friends and I still want to hear from everyone and will respond to anyone who writes. You have to realize that as much of my life, time, money, and energy that I put into building this organization, this was a very painful decision to make. Again, the brunt of the blame for all of this doesn't rest on the RU - but on people. I had to leave because I could no longer deal with political vending machines.

Solidarity,

*Gene
Korman*