

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, Number 2, March 19, 1970

PC Present: B. Barnes, J. Barnes, Breitman, Britton, DeBerry, Dobbs  
Halstead, A. Hansen, J. Hansen, Horowitz, LaMont,  
F. Lovell, Novack, Ring, Waters.

Visitors: Kerry, Seigle

AGENDA: 1. Message to Cannon Birthday Banquet  
2. Women's Liberation Steering Committee  
3. World Movement  
4. Communication on IMG letter  
5. Denver Chicano Conference

1. MESSAGE TO CANNON BIRTHDAY BANQUET

Novack reported.

Motion: to send the following message to James P. Cannon on the occasion of his 80th birthday: "We would have liked to be at the banquet and celebrate your arrival at the eightieth year together with you and the rest of the comrades in Los Angeles. But, as you discovered early in your career, political duty often does not harmonize with personal inclination. Though we can be present only by proxy, we speak for the entire party when we say how grateful we are for your historic initiative of forty-two years ago and for all the subsequent contributions which have led our movement to its present unprecedented prospects for expansion."

Carried.

2. WOMEN'S LIBERATION STEERING COMMITTEE'

Waters reported.

Report incorporated in letter to organizers [see attached.]

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. WORLD MOVEMENT REPORT

J. Hansen reported.

Motion: to approve the report.

Carried.

4. COMMUNICATION ON IMG LETTER

J. Barnes reported.

Motion: to send the communication to our cothinkers.  
[see attached]

Carried.

5. DENVER CHICANO CONFERENCE

Britton reported on our participation.

Motion: to approve the report.

Carried.

Meeting adjourned.

873 Broadway  
2nd floor south  
New York, N.Y. 10003

March 21, 1970

TO ALL ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

We have recently established a national women's liberation work steering committee which will function as an administrative body responsible to the Administrative Committee of the Political Committee.

The steering committee is composed of Evelyn Reed, Betsey Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters, Sarah Lovell, Bev Scott, Susan LaMont from the YSA National Office, and Judy White who is in the SWP National Office and head of the New York women's liberation work fraction.

The members of the committee will follow the material that comes into the national office -- periodicals, minutes from branches, reports -- handle the correspondence, and meet periodically to discuss various aspects of the women's liberation work.

Both the quantity of material that must be followed, and the increasing openings we have within the women's liberation movement have made the establishment of such a steering committee the most satisfactory way to handle the increasing volume of work involved. It will function much as the national antiwar steering committee, although the level of activity will obviously not be as great.

Communications should continue to be addressed to the SWP National Office and they will be circulated to members of the steering committee.

Please share this letter with the comrades responsible for the women's liberation work in your branch.

Comradely,

*Mary-Alice Waters*

Mary-Alice Waters  
National Office

873 Broadway  
New York, New York  
March 20, 1970

Political Committee of the IMG  
c/o Pioneer Book Service  
8 Toynbee Street  
London E 1, England

Dear Comrade Peterson,

I am enclosing a copy of a communication that was approved by the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party at a meeting March 19, 1970.

Fraternally yours,

Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

cc: United Secretariat of the Fourth International

In a letter dated November 18, 1969, sent by the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, with a copy to the Socialist Workers Party of the USA, various questions were raised concerning an article by Tom Kerry entitled "A Mao-Stalin Rift--Myth or Fact?" that included an expression of difference with a statement made by Tariq Ali in his book The New Revolutionaries: A Handbook of the International Radical Left.

The Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party is of the opinion that the difference does not directly involve either a matter of current political line or basic position of the world Trotskyist movement. It concerns a debatable historical question.

In fields such as this, the Political Committee of the Socialist Workers Party is opposed to the imposition of views that may be contrary to those held by a particular author. As we see it, democratic centralism is not synonymous with monolithism, but permits freedom of public expression in areas where united political action is not immediately concerned, as determined by the conventions and congresses of the Fourth International and its sections, or organizations in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International.

This attitude has hitherto governed the publication of many items sponsored by the world Trotskyist movement, as was notably the case with the collective book Fifty Years of World Revolution.

We agree that public debate on such issues should be conducted in comradely fashion and that if the debate should lead to, or should disclose, differences over policy of some depth, the discussion should be transferred to the internal publications of the movement.

We note the correction made by the Political Committee of the IMG concerning Comrade Ali's membership status at the time he wrote his book. The misstatement in the article in the International Socialist Review resulted from wrong information and can easily be publicly rectified if it is felt necessary. However, Comrade Kerry included the statement precisely in order to show that his criticism on this point was not directed at the IMG. It should also be noted that Comrade Kerry also made completely clear that he does not

regard Comrade Ali to be a "Maoist," and that it was his intention to deal only with one point in a currently widely circulated book, a point having to do with event that occurred almost a quarter of a century ago.

From the reports of the American comrades who discussed this matter with Comrade Tariq Ali and the other leaders of the IMG last December, we assumed that the misunderstandings had been cleared up and that Comrade Ali would feel free, if he wished, to reply to Comrade Kerry in the pages of the International Socialist Review. As yet, however, the editorial board reports that it has heard nothing further about this. Perhaps the British comrades have given further consideration to the question of a reply or it has not been possible to find time to write something along the lines indicated by Comrade Ali in the discussion last December.

In any case, we should like to confirm what our American comrades told the Political Committee of the IMG last December -- that the pages of the International Socialist Review remain open to contributions on this subject and that we feel that further discussion of the difference could prove to be both stimulating and fruitful, providing fresh evidence of the rich intellectual life characteristic of our world Trotskyist movement.

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L M A R X I S T G R O U P

8. Toynbee St.,  
London E.1.  
18/11/69

To: United Secretariat of Fourth International  
Copy: Socialist Workers Party of USA

Dear Comrades,

The Political Committee of the International Marxist Group wishes to bring to your attention a serious matter. In the September/October issue of INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW there is an article by Tom Kerry entitled "A Mao-Stalin Rift - Myth or Fact"; this article virtually starts with an attack on Tariq Ali, a member of the IEC of the Fourth International who is also on the National Committee of the IMG. The article is the main piece in the journal, it is written by the editor and is featured as the key article of the issue on the cover. It has, therefore, all the hallmarks of being an authoritative and definitive statement.

After the attack, Tom Kerry, as if to excuse his action, writes: "Tariq Ali wrote this article for the anthology before the announcement of his adherence to the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International...."

This statement is false: in the very book that Tom Kerry refers to Tariq Ali acknowledges the help given to him in producing the book by his colleagues of the IMG. The article in question was, in fact, discussed in draft form with a member of the United Secretariat (Strong).

It is not the intention of this letter to take up the politics of Tom Kerry's article. However, we want to pose a number of implications of an attack like this.

Firstly, we would point out that the charges by Tom Kerry against Tariq Ali are:

- (1) he contributed to the myth of a Mao-Stalin rift; and,
- (2) he regards Mao as one of the great revolutionaries of the 20th century.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW has not always regarded this view as heresy. In the Fall, 1960 issue of the journal in (an) article by Murray Weiss, the then editor, it was written:

"....The Chinese Communist party did not act according to Stalinist theory and practice when it led the revolution to power....If, by following the Stalinist program the Chinese Communist party had overthrown imperialism, landlordism and capitalism, then indeed it would be necessary to reexamine the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism....The Chinese CP 'in defiance of Stalin's edicts' took power. According to the recently 'leaked' records of the July 1945 Potsdam Conference, published in the MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE August 22, 1960, Stalin, in his meeting with Churchill and Truman, referred to Chiang Kai-Shek as 'the

best of the lot.' Stalin said he 'saw no other possible leader and that, for example, he did not believe that the Chinese Communist leaders were as good or would be able to bring about the unification of China.'

"Clearly the Kremlin wanted the Chinese CP to continue its ruinous policy of working for a coalition with the Chiang regime. It was only when the situation became so rotten ripe for the overthrow of the inwardly decomposing and demoralised Nationalist government, and when the elemental movement of the agrarian revolution swept the Chinese CP leaders along with it that they could no longer abide by Stalin's directives. This is the simple fact (sic) about how and why the Chinese CP took power." (original emphasis throughout - the article was a polemic against one Walter Kendall, the deletions are references to him).

In the Spring 1962 issue of the journal, in a joint article by Murray Weiss and Bert Deck (managing editor), one could read:

"....the Chinese CP refused to give up its own armed forces, the Red Army, in the course of its coalition attempts with Chiang Kai-Shek. This key decision in turn enabled and even compelled the Chinese CP to stand at the head of a socialist revolution..." (and later in the article,):

"In a comparable manner (supporting John L. Lewis against the AFL bureaucracy) today, we support Mao without being Maoists. To be more concrete: on the main theoretical questions in dispute between the Russians and the Chinese, we think the Chinese are correct. In addition, the Chinese leaders base themselves on revolutionary social strata aroused by 650 million people entering the arena of history."

But there is more involved than this.

It is quite contrary to the traditions and practices of democratic centralism to have uncontrolled public discussion of differences in the form of leaders attacking each others' views. Such debate is, of course, permissible and can be valuable provided it is controlled, comradely and with full consultation. If it is left to the whim of individuals only chaos and confusion, which will disorient our membership and periphery, will result.

We must point out that there are on occasion views expressed by our comrades of the SWP in their publications with which we find ourselves in disagreement. Sometimes these views are reproduced in INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS and, therefore, distributed in Britain. Despite this fact we would never think of differentiating ourselves publicly from these views unless we had carefully discussed the matter and consulted all concerned. The same goes for other sections' views. We are sure that there are other sections which, from time to time, have similar feelings. What would happen if we all behaved in the manner of Tom Kerry?



Let us conclude by saying that we will consider the incident closed if our views are made known to the members of the SWP and the leaders of sections and groups of the International. We have no wish to change the warm and fraternal relations which exist between the IMG and the SWP, on the contrary it is because we wish to maintain these relations that we have to make our views known. Because the ISR is now on sale in Britain we are acquainting all members of the IMG with our views. At present we do not envisage the necessity of making a public statement.

Revolutionary greetings,

PETER PETERSON

(For Political Committee of the IMG)