

Horowitz

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295 Huntington Avenue, Room 307  
Boston, Mass. 02115

October 21, 1970

Organizational Secretary  
SWP N.O.

Dear Jack,

The Boston SWP Executive Committee was recently asked whether Party comrades were under discipline with regard to the upcoming youth discussion. The question was raised by a comrade who does wish to raise questions and differences -- if it was not violating our norms.

We discussed this question and decided we would like to report to the Branch that Party comrades would not be under discipline in the upcoming youth discussion. Before reporting this we would like confirmation that this would be within our norms.

We discussed this question at length because we are faced with a potential problem here. There are backroom discussions going on which are slightly disruptive to our functioning. We will report in detail -- at a later date -- all that we can about the beginnings of a tendency involving substantial numbers of youth comrades. For the moment, however, we feel a full and open discussion of the questions and differences being raised in the corridors would be very fruitful. The youth discussion offers us an opportunity to take these questions out of the backrooms and fully into the open where both sides of each can be presented. We feel that this would be much less disruptive than the present situation.

Comradely,  
s/ Mike Kelly  
Organizer

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873 Broadway  
2nd floor south  
New York, N. Y. 10003  
October 29, 1970

BOSTON

Mike Kelly

Dear Mike,

I'm enclosing a recent exchange of correspondence with Susan LaMont on party procedure in the YSA pre-convention discussion.

This material is for your information and guidance in branch work and is not for general membership distribution or discussion.

I hope to receive soon the more detailed report you referred to in your letter of October 21, 1970.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

873 Broadway  
2nd floor south  
New York, N. Y. 10003  
October 29, 1970

Boston

Mike Kelly

Dear Mike,

This is in answer to your letter of October 21, 1970.

All party members are under party discipline at all times and, of course, are obliged to advance the political line of the party. Differences of opinion held by party members regarding the party line are resolved within the framework of the party organization at such times and under such circumstances as set forth by the party constitution and the resolution on party organization principles and practice adopted by the 1965 party convention.

It does not violate our norms for party comrades who are members of the YSA "to raise questions and differences" on YSA line, tactics, practice, etc. in the YSA pre-convention discussion bulletins. In fact we encourage all YSA comrades to present their ideas in writing during the pre-convention period to facilitate clear and open discussion, exchange and finally decision on disputed questions by the YSA.

Comradely,  
s/Jack Barnes  
Organization Secretary

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P.O. Box 7817  
Atlanta, Ga. 30309  
Nov. 2, 1970

Jack Barnes and members of the Political Committee  
SWP National Office

Dear Jack,

I was very pleased to receive the material on the Middle East from the PC minutes of Oct. 17, 1970. I find it very helpful to see both positions stated in writing, although I have of course avoided the disputed questions in my public talks and internally.

I disagree with Bob and Berta on the questions of self-determination for the Israeli Jews and agree with the PC on this point. However I fear that the PC memorandum raises more questions for me than it answers. Therefore I would appreciate clarification of the questions enumerated on the following pages of this letter.

But before I get to my questions, let me inform you that clarification of our political position on the Mideast as soon as possible requires a bit of urgency in the light of the fact that American radicals other than ourselves are beginning to discuss the differences between the various guerrilla organizations, and between Matzpen and the tendencies in the guerrilla movement. Gene Guerrere and Susie Teller, two staff members of The Great Speckled Bird, Atlanta's underground paper, just returned from the Mideast trip sponsored by the Boston Middle East Group. Both Guerrere and Teller spoke at our forum on the Jordanian civil war, at which I gave the major address. During the question period, they mentioned the differences between Matzpen and Fateh, thoroughly garbling both positions. It would have taken a half-hour presentation to respond to their misimpressions, a discussion which would have been inappropriate. But the incident should serve as a warning of the necessity for us to analyze what the various tendencies are saying and where we stand.

My questions on the PC memorandum follow:

1. Although I disagree with comrades Bob and Berta, I find nothing in their letter of September 22 that contradicts any previously stated political position. Therefore I am a bit bewildered by the PC's presentation of a line document as the party's official political position prior to any internal discussion.
2. Since many more than the five comrades around the country who received the PC information will be and have been speaking on the Middle East, how are other party speakers being made aware of the PC's position?
3. Point 4 of the PC memorandum states that, "The Palestinians are a part of the Arab peoples, but they are also a distinct national grouping." This formulation is not axiomatic; it deserves explanation, especially since the Arab guerrilla organizations apparently disagree among themselves on this very point. The material that I have read

implies that Fateh agrees with such a viewpoint, but that the DPFLP and the PFLP do not. If we take one position, it is incumbent upon us to explain why we believe the other position to be incorrect.

a) The argument has been raised that a purely Palestinian nationalism would get in the way of Arab national unity against Zionism and imperialism. Furthermore, Fateh uses this purely Palestinian position as one of its justifications for not intervening in the internal affairs of Arab states.

b) I don't understand the historical basis for considering Palestine to be separate from the rest of the Arab nation. The Palestinian revolution can still be the vanguard and the current focus of the Arab revolution without having a separate national identity. Point No. 8 of the PC memorandum -- that the Arab revolution will unfold unevenly rather than simultaneously liberating all 80 million Arabs -- is correct regardless of whether the Palestinians constitute a nation. If Palestinians have a distinct national identity, is Iraq a separate nation from Syria? Are Syria, Iraq and Palestine a separate nation from Arabia? Are the Bedouins a nation (King Hussein would probably like us to believe so)? It seems to me that one of the great strengths of the Arab revolution is the fact that the imperialists have been able to make the inhabitants of the various Arab states believe that their national identity ends with the state boundaries carved up by the imperialists. The overriding unity of language, culture and history dating back to 1400 AD enables Arabs from Morocco to Iraq to identify the Palestinian struggle as their struggle.

4. In answering Bob and Berta, the PC memorandum states (bottom of p. 4): "The question of whether or not the Israeli Jews form a separate nationality from world Jewry is subject to theoretical investigation. [my emphasis] A strong case can be made for the judgment that they do." This weak phraseology doesn't strengthen the argument against Bob and Berta. Why not state that the Israeli Jews do indeed constitute a nation -- an oppressor nation, which therefore cannot expect self-determination?

This question deserves better than "theoretical investigation." It deserves resolution by our party now, for very practical reasons:

a) Much of Zionist mythology, including the discriminatory Israeli citizenship laws, is fostered by lack of clarity on this very question. The Zionists contend that all of world Jewry is one with the Israeli Jews. But any national identity of American Jews as Jews is even more nonexistent today than in the time of Trotsky's writings on the subject.

b) Fateh, even in its latest position paper published in The Militant, calls only for a "democratic, secular Palestine." I believe this position to be inadequate and somewhat playing into the hands of the Zionist propagandists. It is clear that the difference between Arab and Jew is more than a religious difference regardless of Zionist propaganda to the contrary about a home for all the world's Jews, and the common misconception that Arab and Moslem are synonymous.

c) The DPFLP is much clearer than Fateh on this question, recognizing that a national liberation struggle means ending oppression of one nationality by the other.

5. Taking into account both the above discussion and the correct statement on p. 3 of the PC memorandum that "it would be premature for us to give any one of them [the Palestinian guerrilla organizations] special support over the other." I question whether it was wise to print in The Militant the text of Fateh's statement on how to bring about democracy in Palestine while not giving similar coverage to the position of the Democratic Popular Front. Doesn't the Militant series give the impression that we are taking sides among the guerrilla organizations?

6. If any guerrilla organization deserves attention in the wake of the Jordanian civil war, it seems that it should be that group that successfully raised and implemented transitional demands; namely, the DPF, which bourgeois as well as left-wing observers credit with being instrumental in the formation of the people's militia and the soviets. These two forms of transitional organization deserve closer scrutiny in the pages of our press. (As the enclosed Atlanta Journal article indicates, a militia led by the DPF still controlled Irbid as of Oct. 15.) It is of course to the credit of Fateh and the other guerrilla organizations that they apparently participated in the soviets and the militia.

7. While the subject of whether the Israeli Jews have a right to self-determination is being raised, I believe that it has already become apparent that Bober's position on this matter has at times publicly endangered a united defense of the Arab revolution. Bober's letter to the editor of Commentary answering the vicious article by Carl Gershman in the August Commentary contained an unnecessary paragraph polemicizing about the differences between the ISO and Fateh. One only encourages further witch-hunting by saying, in effect, "I have nothing in common with Fateh," in response to the smear of guilt -by-association used by Gershman. Bober apparently fails to recognize the fact that it is sectarian to take such a stand when the task at hand is a united defense of the Arab revolution. But the DPF, a rival of Fateh, apparently has a much more non-sectarian approach toward Fateh, according to Bob Langston's interview with the DPF spokesmen that was printed in The Militant last summer.

As I believe Bober's letter to Commentary indicates, insistence on the "right of Israeli Jews to self-determination" can only lead to a sectarian blind alley and failure to defend the Arab revolution. Bober should have indicated that, although the ISO and Fateh have differences of opinion, they both agree about the essential task of defense of the Arab revolution and the Palestinians' right to self-determination. (The Article by Micha in the latest international information bulletin is an even further retreat from defense of the Arab revolution, but there's no need to go into that here.) But we would be equally mistaken -- in an opportunistic direction -- if we were to leap to support of the positions of one tendency in the guerrilla

movement just because that tendency is the largest or best known. Points 3 and 4 of this letter in particular raise questions about how we have arrived at positions corresponding to those of just one of the major Palestinian guerrilla organizations.

I would appreciate an answer to these questions from one of the authors of the PC memorandum. In addition, I am hopeful that my questions will help to sharpen the draft by the PC that will be introduced at the next plenum or convention.

Comradely,  
s/Joel Aber

EXCERPT FROM LETTER FROM ERNEST TO JOE

I received the PC minutes with the documents on Palestine. I hope you understand what this means: that yet another subject is thrown into international debate. It is impossible for the International not to take a stand on the Palestine question, and independently from any debate which goes on inside the SWP, for us it would be political suicide in the Middle East not to come out sharply in criticism of the El Fatah strategy of armed confrontation with the Israeli army, in alliance with (and without an internal struggle against) the other Arab governments. All the rest flows from the judgment that the petty-bourgeois Fatah leadership is incapable of leading and even organizing the broad masses in the Arab World, because it depends on the military support or tolerance of their rulers and exploiters. I cannot understand how you can deal with the Middle-East without clearly stating this basic aspect of permanent revolution. We have now no choice but to present a basic document on the Middle East to the next IEC, and try to keep it non-polemical with the SWP document. But readers comparing the two will inevitably draw their own conclusions.