

RESIDENT NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING, October 1, 1968

Present: Dobbs, J. Hansen, L. Jones, DeBerry, Ring, Sheppard,  
A. Hansen, Lavan, Vernon, Roberts, Jenness, B. Barnes,  
Scott, Graham, Reed.

Visitors: Thomas, Dawson, Singler, Lund, Bolduc, Seigle

Chairman: A. Hansen

AGENDA: 1. Court Martial Proceedings at Ft. Dix  
2. World Tour Report

1. COURT MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS

Jones reported.

Summary court martial of Allen Myers took place today. Civilian counsel, Kennedy, could not be present and could not send any replacement. Kennedy requested a delay until mid-October when he would be free but the request was denied. Myers had only military counsel present.

Various motions to delay the court martial, to have a stenographic record of the court martial, constitutional points were all denied or tabled.

The government had a simple case to prove: (1) that there had been a leaflet, (2) that Allen had distributed it, (3) that Allen was aware of the regulation against such distributions.

They failed to prove any of these things and the court martial was dismissed for lack of evidence.

There was a lot of press coverage of the proceedings and about 20 GIs were hanging around to see what was going on.

The dismissal was followed by a successful press conference.

Fred Halstead gave out some of his campaign literature to GIs and was detained and ejected from the post. We will try to challenge this ruling.

2. WORLD TOUR REPORT

Sheppard reported. (Written report to follow).

Meeting adjourned.

For NC Information Only

REPORT ON HALSTEAD-SHEPPARD TOUR  
GIVEN TO RESIDENT NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF OCTOBER 1, 1968  
BY BARRY SHEPPARD

The report will be divided into two sections. The first will describe what we were able to find out about the general political situation and the situation of the Trotskyist movement in the countries we visited. The second section will deal with our trip to Saigon and contact we were able to make with GIs in other countries.

I. General Report

Our first stop was Japan, where we attended three antiwar conferences. The first was a youth conference, organized by some of the factions of the badly split Zengakuren. The second was the A and H Bomb conference organized by the Japan Socialist Party (there was another A and H Bomb conference held simultaneously organized by the Communist Party, which we were not able to attend), and the third was of a broad anti-Vietnam war group called Beheiren. All three conferences supported antiwar action on Oct. 21 (a report of the results of these conferences appeared in The Militant).

The war in Vietnam has become an important question in Japan. Japan is being used as a base for U.S. imperialism in Asia and, naturally, for the Vietnam war. U.S. bases in Japan are used as supply and troop depots for the war. The antiwar struggle tends to center around opposition to the U.S. bases, the transport of U.S. munitions, fuel, etc. between bases and from Japan to Vietnam, and other manifestations of the use of Japan by the U.S. for the Vietnam war effort. (Some of these struggles were reported in The Militant.) These struggles are aimed not only at the U.S., but also at the Japanese government and the U.S.-Japan security treaty which provides for such use of Japan by the U.S. for military purposes.

At the time of the signing of the security treaty, in 1960, and the period immediately before, there were mass antiwar actions against U.S. bases and against the treaty, spearheaded by the student organization Zengakuren. The treaty is up for renegotiation in 1970, and it appears that antiwar activity will increase as these negotiations approach, and we can expect massive opposition to the treaty to develop. This time, in addition to the general antiwar feelings of the masses, resulting from World War II and the atom bomb, there is the issue of the Vietnam war adding fuel to struggle.

Indications of the rising mass feeling against Japanese complicity with the U.S. war in Vietnam were the decision by Sohyo, Japan's largest union federation and generally under the influence of the Socialist Party, to call a general strike on Oct. 21 against the war and the announcement by the head of the railway workers that his union would attempt to physically stop the transport of U.S. munitions and jet fuel. For these bureaucrats to make such statements indicates the pressure from the ranks. Another indication was the reaction I witnessed, from a crowd which had gathered around a student street meeting, when the police broke up the demonstration (see report in The Militant).

The Zengakuren is badly split. Up until 1958, the Zengakuren (which means All-Japanese Federation of Autonomous Student Governments) was under the control of the Communist Party. As a consequence of a general ferment in the CP in the latter half of the 1950's, a large part of Zengakuren split from the CP toward the left. It was this group which spearheaded the 1958-60 demonstrations. After 1960, however, it went into decline and a series of splits occurred. Now, there are four groups claiming to be "Zengakuren," in addition to the CP-controlled "Zengakuren," which still exists. In other words, a real "Zengakuren," or federation of student governments, does not exist. Each of the left Zengakurens outside of the CP are in reality little more than front groups for the different anti-Stalinist political formations. All of these formations are denounced as "Trotskyist" by the CP. Their actual political positions represent a range of views, generally ultra-leftist and "third camp." Differences over the nature of the Soviet Union seem to be the major differences between the groups, and while some are explicitly "state capitalist" in position, these differences are obscure. There is a great deal of sectarianism and factionalism between the groups, including, at times, physical clashes. All the Zengakuren groups are street-fighting groups, with a tendency towards adventurism (one group attempted to set up a "Latin Quarter" with barricades, etc. after the French events, and were crushed), but on the other hand, their militancy is respected by non-affiliated radicals we spoke to.

Partly as a result of this factionalism and sectarianism, new formations have developed in the midst of student struggles. We found 54 universities were on strike and occupied when we came to Japan, and the leadership of these strikes consisted of united-front type committees, with many radical students in the leadership who do not belong to any of the Zengakuren groups (see interview by Fred Halstead with Tokyo University students printed in IP).

The Trotskyist movement as it is presently constituted arose from the same ferment in the CP that led to the split of the Zengakuren youth from the CP in 1958. It is therefore a basically young movement with young people constituting the bulk of its membership.

Since the early 1960's, the Trotskyists have worked in the Socialist Party. In 1966, the Trotskyists in the League of Socialist Youth (LSY -- the youth group of the SP), were expelled and formed the LSY -- Internationalist Faction. The LSY-IF is an independent youth group. In the Osaka region, and in the Sendei region, Trotskyist youth remain in the LSY.

There are three main groupings of Trotskyists in Japan. One is in Tokyo, another in the Osaka region, and the third in the Sendei region. Coordination between the three geographical groups has been bad, and there are also political differences between them, the main one being the issue of whether, or when, to launch an independent youth group. This discussion centers around the existence of the LSY-IF. A national conference was to be held in September to improve national coordination and strengthen national leadership (we have since learned that this conference took place).

It was our impression that the Tokyo group and the LSY-IF had closer connections with the Zengakuren militants, while the Osaka group had better connections with working class youth through the Socialist Party.

## India

When we arrived in Bombay, we were greeted by comrades and a group of workers at the airport -- a reflection of work done by Socialist Workers Party members in the union these workers belong to. The Socialist Workers Party is the name of the Indian section of the Fourth International.

Our only stop in India was in Bombay, and we weren't able to see other areas. A national strike in the newspaper industry was in progress when we arrived, with SWP leader Kolpe participating in the leadership of the strike. This was the first industry-wide strike in India since independence (see report in The Militant). We were told that there was currently something of a strike wave in Bombay. SWP members have been active among workers in Bombay, and are in the leadership of unions or union organizing committees in some factories.

Fred spoke to outdoor meetings (through an interpreter) at two factories where our comrades have influence, and at a meeting of government workers preparing for the big strike that occurred on Sept. 19.

We both spoke at university meetings. The student response was something like that on U S. campuses in the late 1950's. We were told that in Kerela and Bengal the student movement was on a higher level.

The Trotskyist movement in India got its first real start during the second world war, when, because of its refusal to

subordinate the fight for independence to support of the war, it grew in influence. In the period from about 1948 to 1965, it engaged in a series of entrism maneuvers, most of which, we were told, were disastrous. It was from this negative experience that the SWP was formed as an open Trotskyist group in 1965.

The SWP has been able to grow in the last three years, and has recruited some good cadres from the "left" CP. (The CP has two splits into two major groups. The "left" group was originally pro-Chinese, but has now an independent position in regard to Moscow and Peking). The SWP has been the most consistent of all the left groups in maintaining a principled position with regard to the Chinese-Indian border clashes, and virtually the only group to oppose the popular front arrangements in Kerala and Bengal entered into by both wings of the CP.

The utter failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to solve the most elementary problems facing the nation, and the resulting ruination of the peasantry, the poverty in the cities, etc., keeps pushing the masses toward struggle. In this sense, the opportunities for the SWP are good. Their problems relate to their relatively small size and the difficulty in securing funds because of the general poverty. The fact that 14 separate languages are spoken in India creates an additional problem, in that pamphlets, newspapers, etc. have to be printed in different languages.

### Egypt

We made contact in Egypt only in the last night we were scheduled to be there. While I spoke with members of Al Fatah (see Militant), Fred had a long conversation with a left wing journalist.

This journalist said that the situation in Egypt had moved to the left as a result of the June 1967 war and defeat. After the war, the Egyptian army was totally decimated, and no force stood between the Israeli armies and Cairo. He told us that a section of the officer caste, reflecting a sector of the bourgeoisie, were hoping for a defeat (although not as severe a defeat as was actually the case), and as a result, a more moderate government that would open the door to greater ties with the U.S. This almost happened, he said, when Nasser resigned in favor of the more right-wing vice president just after the war. Nasser's resignation speech was the first the masses, who had not been actively drawn into the war, knew of the defeat. Their spontaneous reaction was a mass demonstration demanding that Nasser remain and the struggle against Israel continue. The journalist said that two million took part in this demonstration, with people coming in from all around Cairo, commandeering army trucks and public busses to do so. This demonstration was as much against

the vice president and against closer ties with Washington as it was a pro-Nasser demonstration, he said.

Since then there have been other mass actions. Early in the year, a mass demonstration protested the light sentence handed to one of the officers charged with criminal irresponsibility in the June war. As a result of this demonstration, Nasser for the first time allowed the delegates to the ruling Arab Socialist Union congress to be elected instead of appointed.

Now, the journalist said, the class struggle has sharpened in the Arab Socialist Union, in the army (since to rebuild the army, many workers and peasants had to be raised to officers), etc. Left figures like himself (he spent five years in prison under the early Nasser regime) have influence in the press and in a wing of the Arab Socialist Union.

He also pointed to the growth of influence and prestige of Al Fatah, as the only Arab force which was willing and able to continue to fight against Israel after the defeat (see interview with Al Fatah).

### France

The general situation is known to the comrades, so I will be brief. Our friends in France do not think that there will be an immediate repetition of the May upsurge. The gains won by the workers have not been eroded yet by inflation. While there is a feeling among many workers that more could have been won, there is no feeling of defeat. The combativity of the students and workers remains high. The general orientation of the Trotskyists is to keep the struggle going among the students, while avoiding any direct clash between the students and the authorities, as an example to the workers.

The former JCR experienced a growth of size and especially of influence during and after the May-June events. Now, the PCI and JCR both have been replaced with a new formation around the newspaper Rouge. The old L'International and Avant Garde Jeunesse are no longer published. Rouge is being edited by both younger and older comrades working together.

### Germany

In 1962 the youth section of the Social Democracy was expelled and went on to become the German Socialist Students Federation (SDS). Our comrades were opposed to the formation of SDS, and hadn't done much work in it until the last year or so. Now, they are putting out, together with some members of SDS around Rudi Dutschke, a newspaper called Was Tun (What is to be Done). At the SDS conference I attended, the Trotskyists had

a very successful literature table, selling \$250 worth of literature and 900 copies of the new issue of Was Tun.

Most of the membership of the section is young, and apparently of the opinion that more open work would be fruitful. Some of the older comrades in the Social Democracy and trade union bureaucracy are opposed to this orientation. There is to be a conference in November to settle this question.

## England

The comrades know that in face of Healy's defection from the Fourth International, a new section has had to be built up virtually from scratch. Together with a few of older cadres, two British comrades recruited in another country have worked to build a new section. We can now say they have had considerable success in this, and have a respectable group of young people. They have obvious problems arising from this situation -- the lack of an experienced cadre and traditions -- unavoidable growing pains.

Most of their recruits have resulted from their antiwar work. They are the backbone of the British antiwar movement ( and have the same problems we do here, only somewhat magnified on the side of the ultra-lefts. Sectarianism and factionalism seem as strong in England as in Japan.) They have also recruited a number of people that were in or around Healy's organization at one time or another.

## II. Saigon and GI Contacts

We got into Saigon with no trouble, and were not bothered in any way either by the South Vietnamese or U.S. authorities. We spoke exclusively to rank and file soldiers (and two reporters). I presented myself as a reporter from The Militant and Fred, as the SWP presidential candidate. We spoke with GIs in a bar, in the USO and at the Long Bihn base. The results of these discussions were printed in The Militant, as were our general conclusions. Briefly, these were: 1) The soldiers were willing to listen and discuss about the war. We received no hostility from any soldier, whether he was for or against the war. 2) We found a minority to be for the war, and then they gave only the official arguments, and not very convincingly. A larger minority was very much against the war. Most were genuinely confused and hadn't made up their minds, but clearly did not accept the official line. We found that those who had seen some combat were more likely to be against the war (this was corroborated by a GI we met in Germany who had just returned from Vietnam). 3) The most pressing need is for information on the war and the antiwar movement. The GIs in Vietnam are, in our opinion, ready to read and learn from such information.

In France, a group of GIs who have gone AWOL and were part of the movement in Europe urging GIs to desert as a way of opposing the war, made an appointment to see Fred when he was in France (while I was in Yugoslavia). They told Fred that they had changed their minds on desertion, and now agreed with us that it is better for antiwar GIs to stay in the Army to utilize their rights to present their ideas to fellow GIs.

We found that, in general, the idea of individual desertion was on a decline. In the German Socialist Students Federation, which had been very strong for urging desertion, we also found a sympathetic response to our view. Our German friends urged Fred to take this question head-on in his talk before the SDS, which he did. There was a generally favorable response, and applause for Fred when he countered the line of mass work inside the army to the line of individual desertion, and a big applause at the end of his talk.

While we were at the SDS conference, we met a group of GIs from the Army base in Frankfurt. They had come to the university where the conference was being held and met us there. They knew nothing of the conference itself, or of SDS. They told us they had been coming to the university for three weeks or so, trying to find German students, whom, they had heard, were against the war. They wanted these students to meet more GIs in Frankfurt, and give them classes on the war and on other political problems. We introduced them to German students.

They also told us of a rock and roll concert in Frankfurt that would attract many GIs, and wanted to know if we had any literature we could pass out to them. We had 600 or so of Fred's "Open Letter to American GIs" so we went to the concert and passed them out. The response was generally good. It was another indication of the political opportunities now opening up inside the army.