

June 22, 1971

To The Members of the Political Committee:

Dear Comrades:

Last year, during the discussion on the Middle East, (April, 1970) I asked you for an opportunity to defend the MF against its accusers, as well as - most importantly - to acquaint you with its problems and difficulties. I regret this was not done.

As you probably know, I was one of the founders of the MF some 50 years ago; for many years its assistant editor under M. Olgin and since his passing, for nearly 32 years now, its editor-in-chief. During these 50 years we experienced many a crisis. Never did we meet with problems and difficulties such as we are faced with at the present moment. Never not in the bitterest days of the cold war was there an anti-Soviet hysteria in the Jewish community like the one raging now, with a reactionary fascistic outgrowth, the so-called Jewish Defense League. Never was there such chauvinism in the Jewish community, particularly in connection with the crisis in the Middle East. While it would be a serious mistake to think that the Jewish community is entirely devoid of its liberal and progressive traditions - there is still, for instance, a proportionately large Jewish involvement in the peace movement, as well as in the struggle for civil rights - matters are quite different as far as the majority of the Jewish press is concerned, particularly the two Yiddish newspapers, the Forward and the Day Morning Journal. There are no bounds to the anti-Soviet hysteria, to the chauvinist and outright racist propaganda in these papers. Both of them are editorially for the Vietnam War, in support of the Meany labor bureaucracy.

The MF is constantly at war with this press - among the shop workers, the retirees, the general Jewish public. Some of the campaigns of the MF are of national and even international importance, such as the campaign against the Brussels anti-Soviet conference, for instance. The MF is conducting a constant struggle against the so-called Jewish Defense League, exposing the slogan of Let My People Go and is simultaneously conducting an educational campaign by publishing almost daily, material on conditions in the USSR and the Jewish people there, their participation in the building of socialism. Now, in connection with the 30th anniversary of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union (June 22, 1941), we have begun (June 13) a series of articles on the role of the Red Army and of the Jewish people in the defense of their motherland and their participation in the Soviet armed forces.

I wish to lay particular stress on the role of the MF in the struggle against racism; white chauvinism. For some inexplicable and even maddening reasons the MF itself is being branded as racist, white chauvinist. This can only call forth shock and dismay among the people responsible for the MF, among its builders and thousands of devoted readers, as well as among the leaders of the Jewish progressive mass organizations who have been tested in many a struggle. Utterly groundless in themselves, these accusations are certainly of no service in the struggle against racism; objectively, they can only harm this struggle.

At the meeting with your committee regarding my status in the CP, I rejected the charge of racism and white chauvinism in the MF as an injustice. A charge of this type against a valiant and consistent fighter against racism and white chauvinism will not be well taken by those who know what the MF stands for - its readership, devoted fighters for progress.

Not that no mistakes are made at all - they certainly do occur, unfortunately, in the process of work, especially in a daily newspaper with its deadlines and pressures; also, considering our crying shortage of forces. We must learn from these mistakes, try to avoid them in the future. As a whole, however, the MF deserves to be commended for its role, instead of being denigrated. Our struggle against anti-Semitism in the U.S.A. is never separated from the struggle for the Blacks, as well as for Puerto Ricans, the Chicanos.

The N.Y. State Committee has now involved us in the campaign for Angela Davis and as a result we have stepped up this campaign for the last few weeks. Regrettably, we were kept at a distance until now, without even getting the communications from the Angela Davis Committee regularly; (I was never contacted by anyone of that Committee).

While this does not absolve us for not stepping up the campaign much earlier, it certainly was a contributing factor, particularly in view of our dire lack of editorial forces.

We did publish in the course of many months, news stories, editorials, feature articles, poems about Angela Davis. At our Town Hall jubilee meeting on April 3, I called for her freedom. I did the same at a big MF meeting in Miami in February as reported by Comrade Pat Toohey in the D. W. At the concert of the Clubs and Societies at Philharmonic Hall in February with an attendance of over 2,500, the leader of that mass organization, G. Sandler, called for the freedom of Angela Davis. But there was no sustained campaign as the one we have developed recently in the MF.

I have dealt briefly here with a number of important issues. In a general review of the role of the MF, I would have dealt with, of course, our constant effort to mobilize the Jewish people in the struggle for peace in Indo-China, against American imperialism generally, the role of the MF as a progressive labor paper and its particular effort among the needle workers, as exemplified by its coverage of the ILGWU convention recently held in Miami; its struggle for higher pensions. I shall have to devote a little more space here to the issue of the Middle East since this is the issue which prompted your committee to place before me on June 7, the alternative of either resigning from the CP, or be expelled.

The objection raised by you concerning this issue, against the MF and myself, are certainly understandable. One must, at the same time, point out with appreciation the understanding and tolerance of the leadership during these past four years when the Middle East crisis was at times more acute than at present.

It is well known that there is a trend in the international communist movement and in the socialist world--a minority trend, it is true--which tallies more or less with the position of the MF and the leadership of the progressive Jewish mass organizations in the USA (and other countries) on this subject. Here, too, one must point out with appreciation the understanding and the tolerance in the international communist movement and the socialist world in relation to this minority trend. Along with this, one must bear in mind the particularly sensitive situation a progressive Jewish newspaper of a mass character is faced with as well as the difficult role of the leadership of progressive Jewish mass organizations.

Permit me to draw your attention to a lesson we learned from our history. In the month of August-September, 1929, the MF, as well as the progressive Jewish organizations were in a crisis in connection with the unrest in Palestine at that time. We came into a head-on collision with the Jewish community. Although we were much stronger numerically at that time and the crisis was much milder than the present one and of short duration, we paid dearly for our stand, having lost a great many of our readers and having weakened our mass base. Years later, we were criticized for our lack of flexibility, for our failure to avoid this head-on collision with the Jewish community (from which we were ostracized). That crisis was child's play compared to the present one in the Middle East, both in intensity and duration, when there is a Jewish State and after the Jewish people lost six million men, women and children during World War II. There can be no question that, were we to apply now in relation to the Middle East, the tactics of 1929, the MF would long ago have ceased to exist and the progressive mass organizations would have been shattered, if not totally destroyed.

May I remind you that our Jewish mass organizations --the Clubs and Societies with around 12,000 members, the women's organization, the Ykuf and reading circles, the choruses and mandolin orchestras, the progressive children's schools and other institutions embrace a mass movement reaching into scores of thousands -- members, followers, participants in celebrations, concerts. Many of these are mobilized for May Day demonstrations, Soviet celebrations, as well as for party activities, for the DW. To shatter or destroy this force would only benefit the reactionaries, the racists, the anti-Sovieteers, etc. What damage this would have caused the general progressive movement can easily be imagined. In addition, the very force which is now exerting its efforts precisely on the issue of the Middle East--the

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only force in the Jewish community fighting for the UN resolution 242, would have been destroyed.

As of now, we are still a force among the Jewish workers, as well as in the Jewish community generally to a certain extent, in contact with elements of the general Jewish organizations. As an instance, the Declaration of the progressive Jewish leadership on the Middle East adopted at a big mass meeting on September 29, 1969 calling for a solution based on the UN resolution was quoted in over 40 Anglo-Jewish publications. Were we to change our position we would be ostracized as in 1929 and the years following, practically until June, 1941. Our effectiveness would have been nullified in relation to all vital issues.

This is not "opportunism." As stated above, we are part of a trend in the international progressive movement on the Middle East question, although it is not the character of the six-day war which is at issue now but the mobilization of a broad democratic front for the solution of the crisis based on the UN resolution, irrespective of one's opinion about the war! (Please see my article Four Years Since the Six Day War, English section of the MF, June 13 and 20, copy of which is attached).

The question perforce must be asked: will it be a service to the Party and the general progressive movement if the MF repeats the mistake of 1929, in a much more serious situation? Will it be of any service in the struggle for a solution in the Middle East and in relation to the problems referred to above--the anti-Soviet hysteria, the Vietnam war, the struggle against racism, the Angela Davis case, etc., etc.?

Another question must be asked: there was understanding and tolerance in the course of four years--along with friction and dissatisfaction, it is true. Why must the problem be brought to a head now when a settlement in the Middle East, if not in the offing is certainly less than four years away?

Frankly, I cannot see how the attitude of the MF towards the Middle East question and my role in it could be changed. I am stating this after a thorough examination of the entire issue with myself as well as with the other members of the Party on the MF and in the mass organizations leadership. Since I believe in the importance of the role of a Marxist party, the C.P., in the U.S.A., of which I have been a member for over 50 years, I cannot and will not bring myself to resign from it, as suggested by your committee.

Sincerely, though upset and
disturbed,

Paul Novick

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Very truly yours,
[Signature]

John Edgar Hoover