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The Red Mole, 182, Pentonville Road, London N.1

5 July 1971

Joseph Hansen
Intercontinental Press
New York

Dear Comrade Jo:

I am writing to discuss ICP's coverage of Bengal which relates very directly to our work with Bengali comrades both in England and in Bangla Desh. I realise that you have a right not to publish the article which I sent you and which was published in The Red Mole. I'm sure your reasons were good ones. But when you publish an unsigned article entitled; BENGALI LIBERATION ARMY FIGHTING PARTISAN WAR (ICP/5.7.71) then one is forced to register both an objection and a protest, particularly as one assumes that this represents the viewpoint of revolutionary Marxism (i.e. the FI). Apart from the fact that the article is totally descriptive and based on hearsay and gossip (some of which I supplied Kolpe, but told him that it was not confirmed when I was in India), what is really distressing is the derisory way in which it deals with the East Bengal Communist Party (Allaudin's group): "who seems to have some base among the peasantry....." This is a downright slander. The EBGP as we correctly described in The Red Mole is the largest of the groups, was engaged in preparations for the armed struggle months before even the elections took place, has at least 2000 armed guerrillas and is the strongest component of the newly-created NLF.

Articles such as this, based on inaccurate information really harm our work as they paint us out to be politically sloppy and inadequate. It would be good to discuss this whole question with you when you next visit Europe, because we are engaged in serious work with precisely the people who are dismissed in the article.....

Incidentally I hope that you will be able to find some space for my article (The Red Mole was sent to you especially and I sent the article separately as well). Even though you might not think it represents the viewpoint of rev. marxism I can assure you it is useful and necessary for our work.

Fraternally,
s/Tariq

cc: Ernest Mandel

July 8, 1971

Tariq Ali
c/o The Red Mole
London, England

Dear Comrade Tariq:

Thank you for your letter of July 5 which raises the question of how Intercontinental Press has handled the events in Bangla Desh.

I would make the following observations:

1. You do not complain about any lack of material on this subject in Intercontinental Press. The truth is, of course, that this would be difficult. Since last March when the upsurge and subsequent slaughter occurred, every single issue except one has carried at least one and more often two articles on the events there. A goodly proportion of them were written by our comrades in India, a fact of which I think the world Trotskyist movement should be especially appreciative.

2. You do not complain about the general line of these articles. From this I gather that you would agree that by and large they have expressed the standpoint of revolutionary Marxism, whether signed or not.

3. You voice only two complaints: (a) That Intercontinental Press did not carry out your request to reprint an article, "For a Red Bengal," signed by you which was published in the Red Mole. (b) That instead Interncontinental Press published an article datelined from Calcutta which you assume was written by Comrade Kolpe although he did not sign it. (We consider a datelined article to be the equivalent of a signed article -- what the British press features as "from our correspondent.") You condemn this article, saying that "Articles such as this, based on inaccurate information really harm our work as they paint us out to be politically sloppy and inadequate."

On the first point, you imply that I judged your article not to represent the viewpoint of revolutionary Marxism or not to be "useful and necessary" for your work. I do not know why you entertain such suspicions. In the April 26 issue of Intercontinental Press you will find an article, "The Spark That Could Set India Ablaze," signed by you that I would regard as expressing the same line as the article published in the Red Mole, "For a Red Bengal." You did not send us that article. It did not appear in the Red Mole. We found it in the Irish Times and reprinted it from there because we thought it was timely, informative, and in correspondence with the general position of our movement. This ought to show that no prejudgment exists here on articles bearing your signature.

We did not reprint your article "For a Red Bengal" for the simple reason that we received a series of articles from India on the developments in Bangla Desh, many of them written as eyewitness accounts or interviews on the scene. For once we were faced with an embarrassment of riches and we had to choose.

In such a situation I followed the old rule of revolutionary journalism -- if all other considerations are equal, give the preference to the story from the field.

Whatever practical requirements were involved in your work were taken care of, I assumed, by publication of your article in the Red Mole.

As to your differences with Comrade Kolpe, I had received no word on this from either you or from the United Secretariat. Your criticisms thus came as a considerable surprise to me.

You will appreciate that I want to learn Comrade Kolpe's views on this. I am therefore sending him a copy of your letter together with a copy of this reply.

Fraternally,
s/Joe

cc: Kolpe
Ernest

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July 8, 1971

Dear Comrade Kolpe,

I am enclosing a Xerox copy of a letter dated July 5 sent to me by Comrade Tariq Ali, together with my reply. These are self-explanatory.

I should very much like to learn your opinion of the criticisms leveled by Comrade Tariq against the article "Bengali Liberation Army Fighting Partisan War," which was published in the July 5 Intercontinental Press.

Comradely yours,
s/Joe

cc: Ernest
Tariq