

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003

October 12, 1971

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is the tour schedule for Sibylle Plogstedt. Since all regional centers have already been contacted by telephone about the tour dates, no changes should be necessary in the schedule. If any local finds that it will be necessary to change the dates, the National Office should be contacted immediately.

The purpose of this tour is to build the defense of the revolutionary socialists in prison in Czechoslovakia by getting out the truth about their situation to thousands of American students. To this end, large meetings should be organized on as many campuses as possible. These meetings should be extensively publicized through leaflets, posters, stories and ads in campus newspapers, radio announcements, etc. Because of the extraordinary credentials and background of the speaker, and the widespread interest in socialist politics among students, we expect that it will be possible to build sizable meetings on dozens of campuses in the course of this tour.

A number of militants are still in the Stalinist prisons in Czechoslovakia, charged, among other things, with being associated with Trotskyism and the Fourth International. It is essential that all speaking engagements for Sibylle Plogstedt have a broader sponsorship than just the YSA, SWP, or YSJP. In setting up speaking engagements, every left-wing organization on campus should be approached, including Black and Brown groups, feminist groups, PCPJ, IS, YWLL, etc. Student governments, clubs, debating societies, university departments, faculty groups should also be asked to cosponsor the talk. It is possible to obtain very broad support for this tour and we should make every effort to do so. For this reason, and also to provide a few breaks in what will be an exhausting tour, Sibylle Plogstedt should not be scheduled to speak at SWP forums. If necessary, it would be better to cancel a scheduled forum and urge people to attend a broadly sponsored meeting for Sibylle Plogstedt instead.

It is not likely that any right-wing organizations or reactionary Eastern European groups would offer to cosponsor a speaking engagement in hopes that it would provide anticommunist ammunition. But if such a situation were to occur, such sponsorship should of course be rejected. In the publicity we should emphasize that she is speaking as a revolutionary Marxist, a fighter for socialist democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Broad sponsorship will also be crucial to obtaining the honoraria we need to finance this tour. With the enclosed

biographical information and background material we can realistically ask (for example) Eastern European Studies Departments or Political Science Departments to sponsor a talk by Sibylle Plogstedt and pay a \$500 honorarium.

Because of the international travel involved, the expenses of the tour will be very high, and locals should audaciously seek out the largest possible honoraria. It should be possible to do so without cutting into the money we want to raise for other revolutionary speakers--on campaign tours, regional exchange tours, etc.--because of the broad appeal this tour will have. Locals should plan to go beyond their usual sources of honoraria in setting up this tour. Obviously, locals will not be able to get large honoraria for every speaking engagement. However, at every meeting a fund appeal should be made after Sibylle Plogstedt's speech, and a collection should be taken up. The fund appeal should be based on the need to continue work in defense of the imprisoned revolutionaries. While no tour quotas as such have been set, every area should aim to get at least one large honorarium.

Honoraria are usually paid in the form of a check made out to the person speaking. We should endeavor to pick up the check immediately after the speaking engagement--delays at this point can often result in losing the honorarium altogether. If the university insists on mailing the honorarium check, it should be sent to:

Sibylle Plogstedt
c/o Caroline Fowlkes
1563 Ocean Park Way
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

Locals should deduct from the cash collection their own expenses in organizing the tour, and then forward any remaining funds to the YSA National Office. If the expenses for some reason exceed the collection, this fact should be noted on the enclosed report sheet and the local will be reimbursed.

Because of the short time available for the tour in each region, most if not all of the speaking engagements will take place in the regional centers. However, it has been our experience that larger honoraria can often be obtained out in the regions than in the centers. For this reason we suggest that, under the coordination of the regional center, applications be made for honoraria of \$500 for Sibylle Plogstedt at every campus in the region where we have comrades. If any of these schools agree to pay several hundred dollars, it would clearly be worth going ahead with a speaking engagement. The regional centers will have to take responsibility for organizing and coordinating any intraregion touring.

A more or less incidental benefit this tour will have for the revolutionary movement is in exposing the Communist Party and Young Workers Liberation League, which give wholehearted support to the repression of revolutionary socialists carried out by the Soviet and East European bureaucracies. Locals should be

sure to set up talks on any campuses where the YWLL is strong, even if it is not possible to arrange honoraria at these schools.

The greatest possible use should be made of the campus press on this tour. Aside from building the meetings through the campus papers, we also want to suggest that they interview Sibylle Plogstedt and run extensive feature stories on her. The packet of background material on the Prague trial included with this letter should be used not only in setting up honoraria but also to give to reporters who want to know more about the case. We can point out that this material, along with an interview, could provide the basis for an in-depth feature that would be of interest to many students.

A comrade in each area should be immediately assigned to organize the Plogstedt tour. If any questions come up, locals should contact the YSA National Office. Also, we would like to have progress reports sent in on what meetings are being scheduled, what honoraria have been obtained, etc.

Comradely,

Andy Rose

Andy Rose
YSA National Office

TOUR SCHEDULE -- SIBYLLE PLOGSTEDT

Nov. 1	Philadelphia
2	Washington DC
3 - 5	Atlanta
6 - 9	Boston
10 - 14	Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto
15 - 17	Cleveland
18 - 20	Detroit
21 - 23	Chicago
24 - 25	Twin Cities
26 - 27	Denver
28 - 30	Seattle, Vancouver, Portland
Dec. 1 - 3	Bay Area
4 - 7	Los Angeles
8 - 9	Houston
10 - 20	New York (also covering any engagements in Philadelphia and Washington DC)

SIBYLLE PLOGSTEDT BIOGRAPHY

During the "Prague spring" (1968) of intellectual ferment and discussion in Czechoslovakia under the liberalized Dubcek regime, many workers, students, and intellectuals--especially among the youth--began to rediscover and explore ideas about proletarian democracy and workers' control. It was precisely this revolutionary awakening in opposition to bureaucratic privilege and Stalinist repression--not any concern about a non-existent plot to restore capitalism--that prompted the Soviet-led invasion in August 1968.

The invasion itself accelerated and accentuated this process, and active resistance to the occupation and the Husak regime continued for nearly two years. Groups were formed such as the Revolutionary Youth Movement, which published a manifesto in early 1969 stating ". . . socialism cannot be achieved without destroying the bureaucratic machine as a social stratum and establishing a system of self-management. . . . Self-management and its social consequences on an international scale will lead to the abolition of the state and the institutions connected with it."

Overwhelming popular opposition made it difficult for the Husak regime to crack down on left-wing opponents as rapidly or as thoroughly as it would have liked, but in late 1969 and early 1970, hundreds of young opponents of the Krenlin-backed regime were arrested.

Sibylle Plogstedt, a German student, began studies at Charles University in Prague during the summer of 1968. She was present in Czechoslovakia during the invasion and the turbulent period that followed. In January 1970 she was arrested, along with 18 other persons, and charged with belonging to a group called the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Czechoslovakia and carrying out "Trotskyist" and "antisoviet" activities. The initial charges claimed the group had been involved in acts of sabotage and arson, but when the government finally brought the defendants to trial, after holding them in prison for 15 months, it had to admit these charges were groundless.

The final version of the charges cited such acts as posting the "Manifesto of the Revolutionary Youth Movement" in the philosophy faculty of Charles University; encouraging members of the group to read articles by Trotsky, Bukharin, and Djilas; and producing 400 mimeographed copies of a book entitled Bureaucracy No--Revolution Yes--as proof of "antisocialist" activities supported by "foreign enemies of socialism"!

Sibylle Plogstedt was specifically charged with having arranged a meeting in West Berlin between members of the group and Ernest Mandel, a well-known Belgian Marxist and a leader of the Fourth International; with having distributed leaflets about the Soviet invasion in Prague in August 1968; with having written articles that were printed in the French Trotskyist paper Rouge; and with having provided "ultraleft" literature from West Germany to other members of the group.

At the trial, which took place in March 1971, it was revealed that an agent provocateur called Cechal had joined the group in the fall of 1969, proposed that it turn to "conspiratorial work," and urged that it "physically liquidate" a supposed traitor. These suggestions were rejected. At its next meeting the organization decided to dissolve. Cechal opposed this decision, recommending that the group continue its activities. He had already sent his report to the secret police, and a few days later the arrests began.

An international defense campaign was waged before and during the trial of the Prague 19. Demonstrations took place in New York City and several European capitals; a number of prominent figures of the European left, including Jean-Paul Sartre, signed a letter protesting the trial.

The judges at the trial refused to allow testimony aimed at explaining that the defendants' activities had the objective of advancing socialism, not undermining it. For example, a defense lawyer was prevented from asking one of the defendants if the idea of restoring capitalism ever came up in the group's discussions.

A March 19 dispatch from Prague in the Washington Post reported that on the morning of the sentencing, friends of the accused gathered in the courthouse and "gave a clenched-fist salute to the defendants as they filed into the courtroom and sang the opening of the Internationale." According to the March 21-22 issue of Le Monde, "Nearly all the accused affirmed in their final statements that their activities had been inspired only by the interests of socialism."

One defendant was acquitted, two were given suspended sentences, and the rest were sentenced to from 14 months to four years in prison. Sibylle Plogstedt was sentenced to two and a half years, and ordered deported when the sentence was completed. The state prosecutor has appealed to have some of the defendants given still harsher penalties.

On May 13, 1971, Sibylle Plogstedt was unexpectedly released from prison and expelled from Czechoslovakia. Since her release she has toured Europe, speaking in defense of the other members of the group still in prison. On June 22 she addressed a crowd of 3,000 at la Mutualite in Paris. This summer she spoke in Korcula, Yugoslavia, at the Yugoslavian Summer School of the Praxis Group. She has also spoken in Copenhagen, Berlin, and other cities.

This fall Sibylle Plogstedt will be speaking throughout North America on "The Struggle for Socialist Democracy in Czechoslovakia: The Truth Behind the Prague Trial." For the first time, Americans will have a chance to hear the truth about

the antibureaucratic opposition movement in Eastern Europe-- from the unique perspective of a revolutionary student leader who was in Prague during the invasion, was active in the overwhelmingly popular resistance, and spent 17 months in Czechoslovak prisons.

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Sibylle Plogstedt is 26 years old. She is the author of "Sozialforschung im Dienste der Gegenaufklarung" (1969) ("Social Research in the Service of Counter-Education"), and Management und Selbstverwaltung in der CSSR--Burokratie und Widerstand (1970) (Management and Self-Management in Czechoslovakia--Bureaucracy and Resistance). She is currently working on a book devoted to concepts of emancipation in socialism.

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Suggested speaker's fee: \$500