

November 10, 1971

To the Members of the National Committee
of the Communist Party, USA.

Dear Comrades:

The National Office has submitted to you (1) the statement I wrote and forwarded to the National Office last June 22 (not "Sept. 1971" as erroneously marked on the copies you received), as well as (2) the statement of charges against me as drawn up by the sub-committee of the Political Committee dated Sept. 29. This statement of charges against me came to my attention only on Oct. 29 and I am herewith submitting my rejoinder to it, in an extremely limited form of course. (Due to ill health I was unable to do it before).

1.

On Oct. 15-16-17 the National Convention of the Morning Freiheit was held at the McAlpin Hotel in New York with an attendance of close to 300 delegates from the various Morning Freiheit committees in New York and many other cities—Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Miami, Washington and a number of other localities in New Jersey and Connecticut. The national leaders of the Jewish Cultural Clubs and Societies, the Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs, YKUF and the Reading Circles, progressive Jewish schools, people's choruses and orchestras were among the delegates.

The convention unanimously approved my report on behalf of the editorial staff of the MF, covering the American scene, the Jewish community, the Middle East, the socialist countries.

The line of the MF, its principles and tactics, is the line of the national leadership of the progressive Jewish mass organizations and of the leaders of the local MF committees in New York and nationally. This includes of course the editorial staff of the MF. The policies of the MF therefore are the product of the thinking not of just Paul Novick. Have all these leaders and active workers, tested in many a struggle, many of whom belong to the Party, succumbed to nationalism?

Perhaps if you stopped to think about that you will question the verdict of the sub-committee regarding Paul Novick. Paul Novick and the others are fighting nationalism and chauvinism. Apparently, much more is involved here.

I could also point out that the policies of the progressive Jewish leadership in Canada and in France are approximately the same as those of the MF. But let us acquaint you with the following:

The September 1970 issue of "Sovietish Heimland," the Yiddish monthly published in Moscow, carried the following call signed by 59 Soviet Jewish writers:

"The Soviet Yiddish writers express their satisfaction that due to the struggle and efforts of the peace loving forces the military operations in the Middle East were temporarily halted. The significance of this act is that a path has been opened for a just peace between the Arab nations and Israel on the basis of the United National Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967.

"We are highly appreciative of the role of literature and the press in this situation and we appeal to Jewish writers all over the world to assist in the creation of an atmosphere of understanding and friendship between the peoples of Israel and of the Arab countries.

"The vital interests of the people of the Near East demand the establishment of a peaceful climate and for this it is necessary to return again to calm and to a peaceful life for millions and millions of women, men and children—Jews and Arabs."

As you will note, there is nothing here about Israeli aggression, nothing about the Six Day War at all. This is a correct, Leninist approach if one is aiming at mobilizing the broadest possible democratic front in the Jewish community for the UN resolution of Nov.22,1967.

This has been the approach of the MF all along. The Six Day War is not and cannot be the issue now, unless one is to be dogmatic and divisive - which would preclude all effort for such a broad anti-imperialist front.

The MF has fought for the UN resolution from the very beginning. Some of you may remember the meeting of the National Committee of Jan., 1968, where I spoke for that resolution as a member of the Committee at that time. (Incidentally, at that meeting I was granted the right of dissent on the character of the Six Day War and I therefore continued as a member for the entire term of the National Committee until the National Convention in the summer of 1969.

Space does not permit me to dwell on the charge that we are not interpreting the resolution properly. I could easily prove that others who did not recognize the resolution in the beginning are guilty of that. I will state that it is grossly incorrect, unjust and misleading to charge that the line of the progressive Jewish leadership "differs little from the formulation of the Meir regime." I regret this type of careless argumentation. The truth is that in those very same statements of the progressive Jewish leadership on the Middle East the Meir government was criticized. As to the MF, it is unrelenting in its constant sharp criticism of the Meir government, as its readers will testify.

2.

The attitude of the MF (not just of Paul Novick) toward the Soviet Union has been the same ever since the 20th Congress in 1956. That is - of a staunch friend, while reserving for ourselves the right of constructive, friendly criticism. In our view, this is a proper line both in principle as well as tactically in the struggle against the anti Sovieteers. My pamphlet, "Jews in the Soviet Union" written after I returned from my visit to the USSR in November-December 1964 is along the same line. This pamphlet was sold in the party bookshops and praised by the party leadership. This same line was developed in the Draft Resolution on the Jewish Question published in The August, 1966 issue of Political Affairs. (Incidentally, the final text of this resolution was written by H. Lumer, who voted for it in the then Jewish Commission). Along this line, we are constantly combatting the anti-Soviet hysteria. Only the MF and the progressive Jewish leadership is conduction such a struggle in the Jewish community. Only the MF and the progressive Jewish leadership conducted a struggle against the Brussels anti-Soviet conference in February of this year. The MF publishes more Soviet materials than any other newspaper in the USA, portraying the building of socialism and the participation of Jews in it. To state that "Novick's nationalism has led him into an increasingly anti-Soviet path" is something which I must emphatically and scornfully reject. I do not blame the comrades Claude Lightfoot and Jose Ristorucci for saying that: I place the full blame on the "expert," or "experts" who are supposed to know Yiddish and who have been misleading the party leadership for a long time with regard to the MF - towards which they are bitterly antagonistic.

It is a palpable untruth to say that the MF is for Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union. While we are for granting permits to those Jews who apply for exit to Israel - as is the Soviet policy now - we have been constantly fighting the slogan of "Let My People Go." We have stated numerous times that the overwhelming majority of the Soviet Jews are Soviet patriots participating in the building of socialism. I have also stated that in my speech in Town Hall on April 4, at the 49th anniversary celebration of the MF (second part of the speech), published in the MF of April 13. The "experts" could not have failed to see that part of my speech.

3.

Characteristic of the methods of the "experts" is the following charge:

"For many months after the fight to free Angela Davis began it received little more than lip service from the MF and from Novick himself. Only when it was made clear that the Party took seriously the failure to join in this struggle, which is in fact a test of every Communist, did the situation change."

It is of course a good thing to have a newspaper and an editor-in-chief who, whatever their shortcomings may be, pay attention to the opinion of the Party and do embark on a campaign for Angela Davis. But in view of what really happened, one is amazed at the fable the "experts" are presenting.

The truth is as follows: On June 3 a committee consisting of Comrades Rasheed Storey and two other comrades came to see me about the Angela Davis campaign in connection with a conference which was called for June 8 at an uptown church. I told them what the MF has been doing in this campaign and that we would have been able to do more if there was a better contact between the MF and the Party or the Angela Davis Committee. I thanked them for informing me about the conference and I saw to it that the MF was represented there. But what did we do before June? If the "experts" failed to see all of our articles, news stories, editorials, poems about Angela Davis, they certainly should have noticed the spread in our Rosh Hashona issue of Sept. 19 - a big photo-montage of some of the material on Angela Davis in the MF. (The montage is enclosed herewith). There is for instance a photostat of a feature article by Leah Nelson, president of the Emma Lazarus Federation with a photo of Angela Davis published on Jan. 7. There is a feature story on Feb. 2 with a photo of Angela on the occasion of her birthday. On Feb. 5, there was a prominent story, a report of the Manhattan Center meeting. The photo-montage shows a big feature article on March 3 by A. Maymudes of Los Angeles with a photo of Angela. Are all these and many other materials prior to the visit of the Party committee on June 3 just "lip service?" Or the poem by H. Schwartz on April 4? Was my speech in Miami in February, as reported by Comrade Pat Toohey in the DW, "lip service?" Or my speech at Town Hall (first part) published in the MF of April 11? *was the Poem by Edith Legal lip service*

How could they present this fable - just in order to denigrate the MF and its editor? As a matter of fact we published quite a few articles on Angela Davis prior to Jan. 1. The photo-montage could cover only part of our materials during the first six months of this year.

4.

On July 9, Comrade H. Suller addressed to Comrade Gus Hall on behalf of the entire editorial staff of the MF a letter rejecting the charge of "racism" against the MF. I wish the members of the National Committee would acquaint themselves with this document. Comrade Gus Hall, as other comrades unable to read Yiddish, were grossly misinformed by the "experts" who have nothing but hate for the MF. The letter of Comrade Suller also deals with the totally unfounded charge as to our attitude in the teachers' strike. I can only add that the charge of "racism" against a progressive newspaper and its editor who are valiantly and constantly fighting racism, as well as fighting the false and slanderous slogan of "black anti-Semitism," is not only an outrage in itself but objectively is an assist to the racists. In the interests of the struggle against racism this kind of harrassment should stop; the MF should be praised for its outstanding contribution in this struggle, as well as for its role in constantly fighting for Negro-Jewish unity. The MF should be encouraged and helped in its struggle. I could supply you literally with hundreds of articles and editorials proving the correctness of our approach on this issue.

Here is a most recent example of harrassment and slander. The "Committee for a Just Peace in the Middle East," in a leaflet announcing a lecture by H. Lumer on Oct. 29, after quoting from an article in the English pages of the MF warning against US war hawks like Senator Buckley and others who voice their support for Israel, added the following:

"Can the Freiheit be against Buckley but support the policy of the Israeli Government in maneuvering to hold on to the Arab lands and thereby preventing a peaceful solution of the Mid-East conflict?"

This was, of course, an obvious falsification of the position of the MF with regard to the Israeli government, a falsification of well-known facts. I doubt that the Committee will gain any laurels for that fabrication. But that is how far people who hate the MF are ready to go, even if it undermines their own credibility among the readers of the MF.

Ever since February, 1969, when the letter to the membership was circulated about the MF, stating no less that the "MF is misleading its readers", the aim of the "experts" who have been misleading the leadership of the Party was the destruction of the MF. The question must be asked, who will be served if the MF is forced out of existence? Certainly, the Jewish chauvinists and anti-Sovieteers will be served. Certainly, the Jewish Defense League will be served. Certainly, the Stulbergs of the ILGWU and the other henchmen of Meany, whom the MF is constantly fighting, will be served. The destruction of the MF may mean the destruction or the weakening of the progressive Jewish movement in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and other centers. Who will be served by that? Certainly not the progressive movement, certainly not the Party.

5.

To sum up. The character of the Six Day War cannot be the issue now, not if the aim is to fight the chauvinists and the annexationists in the Jewish community, not if the aim is to establish the broadest possible democratic front for the UN resolution of Nov. 22, 1967.

The charges of anti-Sovietism and racism must be totally rejected. Such charges can only objectively help the anti-Sovieteers and the racists. If mistakes occur in the course of work, under pressure, as I have explained in my June statement, they must be corrected and we should be assisted in that in a comradely manner. Such wholesale unfounded charges due to the misleading "information" of the "experts" are a disservice to the Party. The many thousands of readers of the MF will be amazed and shocked to realize what their paper and its editor-in-chief are charged with. They know the truth. That is why they are literally sacrificing themselves for the MF, having raised last year over a quarter of a million dollars for the paper.

The history of the labor press in the USA, knows of no such example of devotion for a paper in the course of close to a half a century! These thousands of readers, staunch fighters for progress, tested in many a struggle, believe in the MF and they love it - for its struggle against the Vietnam war and American imperialism, against racism and anti-Semitism, for Negro and Jewish unity, for Angela Davis, for the UN resolution on the Middle East, for its struggle against the union bureaucracy in the interests of the rank and file, for its friendship for the Soviet Union, for helping to build the Jewish progressive mass organizations and progressive Jewish culture. This is the paper that is being shaped and created daily by its editor-in-chief and editorial staff in conjunction with the entire leadership of the progressive Jewish movement.

It will be a sad day if, for all his services and efforts, the editor-in-chief is expelled. It will be a sad day for the entire leadership of the progressive Jewish movement in the U.S., who are fully in accord with him, a sad day for the editorial staff, particularly for its party members, as well as for the members of the Management Committee who are all constantly collaborating with Paul Novick and who have stated that, if he is guilty as charged, they are guilty too.

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