

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

October 6, 1976

TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed are copies of an open letter from Fred Halstead to Corky Gonzales and a statement being circulated in Denver and around the country concerning recent threats and acts of violence by the Crusade for Justice. This week's Militant will reprint these along with a news story from Denver detailing the recent developments.

These actions by the Crusade pose a grave threat to the Chicano movement. A nationwide response repudiating the use of violence within the Chicano and radical movement is urgently required.

We want to move immediately to get signatures on the statement from leaders and prominent activists in the Chicano, Black, and Puerto Rican movement, the labor movement, women's groups, campus and community organizations, and civil liberties struggles.

Copies of the signed statement should be sent promptly to Corky Gonzales, Crusade for Justice, 1567 Downing St., Denver, Colorado, 80218, with copies to Fred Halstead, c/o SWP, 1379 Kalamath Street, Denver, Colorado, 80204.

Among the initial signers of the statement are:

Denver Chicano community

Josephine Perez, West Side Action Center
Adolfo Gomez, director, Auraria Community Center
Kathleen Roybal, Platte Valley Action Center
Alicia Lucero, West Side Youth Development

Nationally

Cecilio Camarillo, editor, Caracol, San Antonio
Froben Lozada, chairman, Chicano Studies, Merritt College

Denver/2

Abelardo Delgado, Chicano Poet, Salt Lake City
Dr. Armando Gutierrez, vice-chairman, Texas Raza Unida Party
Juan José Peña, chairman, New Mexico Raza Unida Party
Miguel Zárate, Young Socialist Alliance
Luis Fuentes, former Superintendent New York City School
District 1
Miguel Angel, chairman, Ethnic Studies, Laney Community
College, Oakland, California
Philip Berrigan
Robert Allen, editor, The Black Scholar

Additional Denver Chicano community

Elfego Baca, chairman, MEChA, Metro State College
Everett Chávez, Professor of Chicano Studies, University
of Colorado at Denver

Comradely,

Larry Seigle (BM)
Larry Seigle
National Office

OPEN LETTER FROM FRED HALSTEAD OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS
PARTY TO RODOLFO "CORKY" GONZALES

Denver, Colorado
October 2, 1976

Dear Corky Gonzales,

Around 2:30 p.m. on October 1, Steve Chainey, the Denver Socialist Workers Party organizer, and I went to the headquarters of the Crusade for Justice in Denver. We had been requested to do so by the national offices of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance.

The purpose of our visit was threefold: to offer any assistance we could in the Crusade for Justice suit against government police agencies; to invite you to speak on your suit at a coming public rally in Denver; and to speak to you about a threat of physical violence made by a member of the Crusade for Justice against a member of the YSA.

We had been told that Ernesto Vigil, a leader of the Crusade, made a physical threat against Elfego Baca, the chairman of the Metro State College MEChA who is also a member of the YSA. It is common knowledge that there are disagreements between members of the Crusade and the leadership of the Metro MEChA. In itself, there is nothing unusual about disagreement, but we are concerned about rising tensions and the threat of physical violence.

We intended to ask you to join us in discouraging violence over disagreements in the movement.

When we entered the Crusade headquarters we were told you were not there but that we could speak to Maria Serna. When we told her of our concern about the threat, she said we should speak to Ernesto Vigil. She sent for him.

Vigil entered the office accompanied by another man whose name I do not know. When I told Vigil about my concern, he did not deny having threatened Elfego Baca. He simply said it was none of my business. Throughout the conversation both Steve Chainey and I were calm and used a friendly tone. At no time did we threaten violence, or make any movements that could have been interpreted as threatening.

Vigil ordered us to leave the building. As we left the office on our way out of the building, I paused to say that

if Elfego Baca was harmed we would be obliged to make public the previous threats.

Vigil's response was to punch me repeatedly in the face while the other man punched Steve Chainey. Neither Chainey nor I made any attempt to strike back, we simply attempted to leave the building. Nevertheless, they continued punching. By the time we were able to get out of the building both of us were bleeding profusely. Chainey had a bloody nose and a cut lip. My nose was broken and I had cuts on my face that required several stitches.

As we were walking away from the building, people outside expressed concern about the blood on our faces and asked what had happened. I heard someone shout from behind me, "That's what you get for threatening people's lives." This was an obvious attempt to justify a completely unprovoked assault.

We made no physical threats while we were in the building and we make none now.

We are completely opposed to the idea that violence can be used to resolve any dispute among those fighting for the oppressed. Such violence simply provides an opening for the police and police agents to divide us and turn us against ourselves. FBI documents that have come out over the last year or so show that one of the first tactics they use is to try to get movement groups fighting among themselves.

If you allow physical intimidation to become a trademark of the Crusade, it will be a grave disservice to all those fighting for a better world.

I strongly urge you to take all the necessary steps to see that this kind of violence is not repeated.

I await your response with great concern.

Sincerely,

/s/Fred Halstead
for the Socialist Workers
Party

DECLARATION AGAINST VIOLENCE IN THE MOVEMENT

Disturbing reports of the use of physical violence by members of the Crusade for Justice have come to our attention. This underlines the urgent need for decisive action to deescalate tensions in the movement and to insure that physical intimidation does not interfere with the free exchange of political views.

Recent public revelations about the FBI have shown that fomenting violent conflicts within the movement is one of the government's favorite disruptive tactics. This is all the more reason for us to work to bring such incidents to an end.

We hope you will take a stand in favor of the simple democratic right to express a point of view without fear of physical reprisal from anyone, including those who may disagree within the movement. Taking such a stand certainly does not mean repudiating the right of self-defense against violent attacks. It means making clear that differences among those fighting for social justice cannot be resolved by fists or other weapons. Any attempt to do so simply provides openings for police and other enemies of the movement to tear us apart.

Further, it certainly does not help us oppose the government's use of violence against us if some of us use it against people who may not agree with our point of view.

The forces opposing progressive social change in the United States are very powerful. The unity necessary to overcome these forces can only be achieved if we respect each other's democratic rights.