

Peter Seidman
Socialist Workers Party
New York

Lea Tsemel
Israel

Dear Lea,

Enclosed is an exchange of correspondence regarding your tour of the United States. I believe the content of the letters is self-explanatory.

Since the proper resolution of the complaints raised in these letters affects your work most of all, I felt it would be best to consult with you before proposing any actions other than the ones indicated in my enclosed replies.

My impression, from our discussion at the conclusion of your tour, is that you were generally in agreement that the tour was a political success. Despite our mutual disappointment in the financial loss, we were all satisfied with the results as a whole.

However at that time I was not aware that some people in Boston thought that collections in Boston were taken in such a way that the impression was given that funds would not be used to pay your tour expenses.

Naturally, I am firmly opposed to any policy which collects money for other than the publicly stated purposes of the collection.

The crux of the matter, I think, which is overlooked in the letters from Jacob and Leah and the Massachusetts Committee for Palestinian Human Rights is that your tour of the United States was indeed a help in your work in Israel. Only a very literal and formal approach would dictate the alarm expressed by Jacob and Leah in their letter.

Because Jacob and Leah's concerns have already been echoed in the letter from the Massachusetts Committee, I think we should act quickly to resolve this. Any taint of scandal that is allowed to develop around your visit here will not only be used against the SWP, but will certainly detract from your ability to win further support in this country.

Our opinion is the following: Viewpoint's tour was indeed a big help to your work and that it is legitimate for the Speakers Bureau to seek to do all it can to raise money in order to meet the expenses of the tour. It was not a matter of Viewpoint making a profit from the tour, but simply meeting expenses. Since the final financial results won't be known for several months, a decision should be made at that time.

Meanwhile, all those involved in the tour should agree to be more careful in future efforts of this kind so that we can all concentrate on the important political work in defense of Palestinian human rights that is our main task.

Please let us know your opinion, so that we can consider this matter further.

I will write you further soon on the latest developments with the Palestine Human Rights Campaign.

Comradely,

Peter Seidman

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New Point Speakers Bureau
Mass. Committee for Palestinian Human Rights
Subject: Advance from Lea Tzemel visit

Friends,

It has been brought to our attention that Lea Tzemel, has returned to Israel, from her tour in the States, without a cent for her work.

We understood that admissions collected at Lea's talks were to go toward covering the cost of her travel expenses.

However, the Mass. Committee took the initiative at these events, of making plugs, to collect funds, specifically to aid Lea in her work.

When people reached into their pockets to donate, they were under the impression that they were contributing to Lea's work in Israel, and not to covering the expenses of New Point Speakers' Bureau, they'd done that at the door already.

We feel very strongly that this situation must be rectified as we feel that this has been a breach of good faith toward those who contributed.

We would appreciate it if you would assign a representative to attend a meeting with our steering committee, to discuss this.

This representative may call: Andrew Janikian at 868-4300 area code 617, between 9:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m. to set a meeting time.

We would appreciate your immediate attention concerning this matter, as we view it to be a serious one.

Thank you

Mass. Committee for
Palestinian Human
Rights

VIEWPOINT SPEAKERS BUREAU

A Division of Pathfinder Press, Inc.

December 12, 1977

Massachusetts Committee for
Palestinian Human Rights
Box 58 Kenmore Station
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Friends,

We were very sorry to learn from your letter received here December 3 that you feel there "has been a breach of good faith" towards those who contributed to collections taken at meetings for Lea Tsemel at Boston University and Harvard University.

You indicate that your feelings are based on the belief that funds collected "specifically to aid Lea in her work" were instead "put to curtailing the expenses of Viewpoint Speakers Bureau."

Further, you say that it has been brought to your attention that Lea Tsemel has "returned to Israel from her tour in the United States without a cent for her work."

We believe there are a number of misunderstandings expressed in your letter.

First, Viewpoint proposed an expensive project such as this tour of the United States only because we thought it was important for Americans' to hear what she had to say. Surely you will agree that the tour itself was also a help to Lea Tsemel's work.

Obviously this is the only reason Lea Tsemel would have left her office for a month, and accepted other expenses, to come to the United States.

But in order for Viewpoint to be able to carry out this and other projects--which no other professional speakers bureau in the United States would conduct--there must be a policy that those organizing Viewpoint tours in local areas take responsibility for helping to cover Viewpoint's costs.

Without this rule, Viewpoint would be unable to continue to bring individuals of the stature of Lea Tsemel to this country.

That is why we urged all those organizing tours in local areas to raise significant funds to cover the cost of Lea's tour.

The total cost of Lea's tour was almost \$3,000. Lea spent three days in Boston out of a total of twenty-four tour days. Since one-eighth of her time was spent in Boston, Viewpoint would have needed around \$370 from Boston to cover tour expenses if the expenses were divided evenly. However, given the size of Boston and the experience we have that the opportunities to raise money in Boston are greater than in some smaller cities on her schedule, Viewpoint hoped to receive at least \$450-500 from Boston. This expectation, it turned out, was a little more than the amount Viewpoint actually received from Boston, \$375. The total amount raised in Boston, \$503, was in line with our original projection. However, your committee deducted its full expenses before sending us the balance. Thus Viewpoint was put in the position of having to make up the full deficit from Boston.

You can imagine the additional problem created for Viewpoint therefore, when we now learn from you that people were asked to contribute funds under the impression that this money was to be used for any other purpose than first meeting the costs of Lea's U.S. speaking tour.

Viewpoint would never have agreed to such an arrangement in advance. In fact, we could never have even brought Lea to the U.S. if that were the general arrangement. But now you are accusing us of a "breach of faith" and say that our attempts to finance a tour for Lea Tsemel are being conducted at the expense of furthering her work!

This not only makes no sense to us, but it contradicts the understanding Viewpoint had with Lea Tsemel from the very beginning of her tour on how finances would be organized.

Although Lea and Viewpoint were disappointed that the tour did not produce a surplus, we both agreed at the end that her tour was a political success.

Moreover, by speaking to thousands of people directly and tens of thousands more indirectly, it seems clear that Lea has built up a potentially valuable number of U.S. supporters for her work.

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We in Viewpoint are satisfied with the tour, despite the fact that the tour produced what we expect will be for us a major financial deficit. Even if every area pays in full the money it has pledged--something which rarely happens in our experience--we will still have a deficit.

But your letter, if we understand it correctly proposes that the approximately \$300 raised in Boston collection speeches now be added to that deficit!

We very much regret, of course, that some people in Boston were given a different impression during the collection than was the case in other areas of the country.

We agree with you that money should not be used for purposes other than those for which it was collected.

However, we believe that Lea Tsemel's tour as a whole was seen by her as a means of advancing her work in Israel. We are writing to Lea Tsemel to ask directly for her views on how this problem can best be resolved.

I hope that this letter answers the questions you have raised.

Sincerely,

Anne Teesdale
Viewpoint Speakers Bureau