

J.C.
1 University Ave. N.E.
Mpls., Minn. 55413

SEP 28 1971

Sept. 26, 1971

To the P.C.

Dear comrades,

The enclosed letter to the Boston Executive Committee is self-explanatory. The other letter, to David Fender, is explained in the first letter and is enclosed for your curiosity. As a precaution, I checked with Comrade Charles S. to see if it is undisciplined to send a letter to the Boston Exec. on this subject, and he said there was not a chance.

Comradely,

David K.

David K.

1 University Ave. N.E.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413

September 26, 1971

To the Boston Executive Committee:

I would like to inform you that I have received in the mail a copy of "Charges Against the Communist Tendency" dated September 19. There was no cover letter or return address, but I assume that it is a copy of charges you have filed and submitted in writing to the Communist Tendency, and which comrades of the Communist Tendency have sent to me.

You might be interested to know that while I was in Boston briefly while on vacation recently in Massachusetts, I had a personal visit with Comrade Fender, which became a political discussion when he told me that he thought the Communist Tendency would be expelled. I tried to explain why this is a mistaken attitude to have toward the leadership, that it will expel a grouping for its political opinions or for a statement it makes that it will continue to exist as a faction. I continued to explain this to him in a letter, a copy of which I enclose in case you are curious. You may imagine my surprise to see that what he predicted came true! You might laugh at the irony, as may Fender, but I find it sobering. Perhaps that consideration prompted him to send me a copy of the charges.

These charges which you have submitted (I enclose a copy in case there is an error) are not the usual sort of charges one might expect in a party which tolerates internal differences, even factional differences. The defendants are not charges with violating the unity in action which a revolutionary party needs, of course, in order to exist, but only with making a statement that they will not dissolve their faction.

Yet, you imply in your quotation of The Organizational Character... that the defendants, if found guilty, will forfeit their right to membership. Thus, you threaten a faction with expulsion for simply remaining a faction.

These charges which you make, then, are not a minor local issue confined to Boston. Rather, they bring into question the whole organizational character of our party. If the charges stick, if the Communist Tendency is expelled (or forced to recant and dissolve), then, in effect, all factions in our party will have been declared outlawed. This could have grave implications for the former members of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, which has been declared a "faction" by the leadership, grave implications for all those who are acting factionally in sending large numbers of comrades to the Berkeley-Oakland branch in order to build up the strength of supporters there of one resolution or the other, and grave implications, in fact, for all critical-minded comrades who maintain their criticisms or who maintain contact with each other, after the convention. It could also have grave implications for the way in which the party treats the critics of its policy, generally. If a simple state-

ment to the Boston branch could be understood as "an attempt to re-open the discussion," then couldn't a letter to a comrade, or even a discussion over beer, or even a stray opinion dropped in conversation, be considered grounds for expulsion? The danger is thus raised of enforcement of ideological monolithism between conventions, which might well be followed by total monolithism.

It is for this reason, because the charges which you make against the Communist Tendency are of national and even international importance, that I am writing this letter to you.

* * *

These charges were made following a statement by the Communist Tendency stating to all that it will continue to exist as a faction, and criticizing the Proletarian Orientation Tendency comrades for dissolving. This statement was quite natural, flowing from the Communist Tendency's position that the party is "right-centrist" and that a faction is needed to "fight for the life of the party." It was not to be unexpected, and if comrades saw such an "undisciplined" and "disloyal" statement coming, they should have proposed to the convention that the Communist Tendency be expelled if it did not dissolve afterwards, or promise to do so. If maintaining a faction is "undisciplined," then anyone who had read the Communist Tendency's documents could see it would be "undisciplined" in that way after the convention.

But the statement, a declaration that the Communist Tendency had not changed its views and would continue to exist as a faction, was not undisciplined. It was not an attempt to re-open discussion on questions decided at the convention, and you quote nothing in it to indicate that it was. In fact, Comrade Fender told me that the Communist Tendency had no intention of trying to re-open discussion on the floor or through their own leaflets and bulletins, since their ideas had already been published in the Discussion Bulletins.

The Communist Tendency is not alone in making a statement after the convention. Other statements have been made here in Minneapolis, at least. Comrade Fred Ferguson made a statement, speaking for the former Proletarian Orientation Tendency members, saying that the POT had dissolved and the members would continue to build the party, abiding by the convention decisions. He did not recant. He was not accused of trying to re-open pre-convention discussion. Nor was the party organizer, Bill Anderson, who made a statement welcoming Fred's statement, put on trial. Nor were the many comrades who made convention reports or who participated in the tasks and perspectives discussion. They were not threatened with expulsion for making statements expressing their opinions or intentions.

But the Communist Tendency, just for making any statement at all, (you do not even quote from it in your charge one of "indiscipline"!) is accused of "indiscipline" for "an attempt to re-open the discussion on questions decided by the...Convention."

It is, then, evident that the "crime" of "indiscipline" of the Communist Tendency is in doing nothing more than stating its

intention, openly and honestly, to continue to exist as a faction. There is nothing else that distinguished it from the innumerable other statements that have been made since the convention by innumerable other comrades.

Comrades, you should know better than to try to expel comrades for maintaining a faction. The party has never outlawed factions as such, before or after convention.

In fact, we are at this time in contact with at least two factions (in the Argentinian IRT and in the British IMG), with which we agree. In the IMG, the minority tendency re-formed just two months after the 1970 conference of the IMG, and issued a statement which not only declared the intention to re-form as a tendency, the same so-called "indiscipline" as the Communist Tendency is accused of, but which also spent three and a half pages, small type, developing a position contrary to that taken by the IMO conference. This statement was made available not only to the IMG membership (we trust), but also to the entire membership of our party. The minority in Britain was, without any doubt, both correct and within its rights in re-forming. But if the majority leadership of the IMO decides to expel these comrades for maintaining such an "undisciplined" thing as a grouping between conventions, and we have expelled the Communist Tendency, we will have a hard time protesting any such procedure in the IMG. In fact, as you can see, this trial of the Communist Tendency makes a burpocratic development in Britain more likely.

Your charge of "indiscipline" for the Communist Tendency's statement that it will not dissolve would be funny if it were not so deadly serious for its harm to party democracy. Did you expect that the CT would dissolve? Of course not. One would have to have assumed that the CT was hiding something, in fact, if they didn't make a statement as they did. But, as a reward for being principled and honest despite its sectarian position, the CT is put on trial. This charge of "indiscipline" for this statement does nothing but foster secret factions in our party. It rewards comrades with such serious differences as the CT has, for going underground and having factional discussions behind the back of the party.

Comrades, do you remember how Trotsky, in the Shachtman fight, even suggested to Comrade Hansen that an agreement be proposed, granting rights to factions after the convention, even the right of publishing their own internal bulletins for distribution to all members? Trotsky was willing to go so far to prevent a split with this thoroughly unprincipled petty-bourgeois clique-faction as to offer, though "deplorable," public symposiums on the disputed topics. And it was Trotsky who considered himself more severe against the ideas of the Shachtmanites, than the party leadership!

The Communist Tendency has never asked for such extravagant concessions. It has not even asked for continued discussion, which in this case might be justified, since the CT has never been an-

swered politically. It has simply made a statement indicating it will continue to maintain its existence as a faction in our party, which is its right; and yet you seem to feel it is your duty to bring the CT up on charges. This is not your duty; rather it is your duty to integrate the members of this faction into party work to whatever degree this is possible.

In this case, it would be a mockery and a sham if the Communist Tendency were expelled or suspended. This is because, unlike the case of the Robertscites' expulsion, the Communist Tendency has never been answered politically. As an individual, Comrade David Fender was answered politically on two questions, the antiwar question and the youth organization question, in 1967 and 1969. But at the 1969 convention, what was to be the real character of the party leadership's approach to this kind of sharp criticism was indicated by Tom Kerry, who did not answer Fender politically so much as personally. He called Fender's ideas "ultra-left bullshit and garbage," without discussing them. He compared Fender (unfavorably) with the "Crazies." While Fender may have been himself motivated by personal vindictiveness, his polemic took a political form, unlike Comrade Kerry's. Unfortunately, but predictably, Fender was able to recruit a faction of eight comrades to form the Communist Tendency. Rather than being answered for his ideas, which were by then a seriously sectarian distortion of the party's revolutionary program on certain questions, he had been branded a "Crazy," stigmatized, as if that would make no one listen to him, and accused on the side of calling Cuba "Stalinist," and "rejecting participation in the antiwar movement in principle." No wonder he won the ear of some comrades!

The Communist Tendency wrote a document which was extensive enough to deserve a full analysis and criticism in reply, by the leadership. Comrade Mary-Alice^{Waters} even said it was full of "lies and distortions," but no one pointed any out. This document laid out the whole program of the Communist Tendency: feminism and the nationalism of the oppressed were called "petty-bourgeois," the antiwar movement was called a coalition with the exploiters, and so forth. To top it off, the party was called "right-centrist." But instead of answering the Communist Tendency, comrades accused the Proletarian Orientation Tendency falsely of holding these positions, and quite ignored the Communist Tendency until the convention. At the convention, the CT position was systematically misunderstood. Comrade Mary-Alice^{Waters} accused the Communist Tendency of holding that the 1963 Reunification was unprincipled, a position which the CT does not hold. Comrades present were educated as to the principled basis of the Reunification, but not as to where the CT is wrong on the international questions. Comrade Jack Barnes said that the CT considers the party to be a "zombie," therefore dead, and wondered why such "necrophiliacs" stick around, ignoring the declared reason for the CT's existence, which is, as they put it, to "fight for the life of the party." Hence they see the party as alive -- not well, but not a reformist corpse. Hence it is their perspective to work in the party, not to leave it. Hence the only way we can convince them to give up their idea of winning the party to their basically sectarian

program -- is to answer them politically and thus make sure they gain no recruits. Political education, not trials and other organizational punishment, is the way that we will prevent sectarianism from growing in our party.

But, for some reason, no one felt it necessary to answer the Communist Tendency, answer it politically on its political program. Instead, the real response to the CT came in the speech by Comrade Tom Kerry, which will not go down in history as any brighter a moment for our party than the dark moment when Kerry called Fender a "Crazy" on the convention floor in 1969. This time again, in his brief discussion of the Communist Tendency, devoted entirely to Fender's personality, Kerry made another personal attack, calling Fender someone who, because of his beard and alleged "russian accent" (?), considered himself to be Trotsky reincarnate. Fender's problem, you see, is psychological, not political, according to Comrade Kerry. This reply entertained the convention audience, but it grievously miseducated the party and the YAsers present.

For this reason, because the Communist Tendency has never been answered politically, it will be especially harmful to the party if this faction is expelled. Outside the party, it will grow faster than inside. And the harm done to the party itself in the process of such expulsion will be enough to make it not worthwhile even if the ideas of the Communist Tendency could be destroyed by organizational means.

* * *

Your second charge, of "disloyalty," seems more plausible than the first, which is really nothing else than an attack on the right to maintain a faction. If the comrades of the CT are really disloyal, then they are, of course, subject to suspension or expulsion. But here you seem to read too much into the statement, just as when the comrades of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency were declared a "faction" and a "clique" with no evidence presented.

The quote you furnish to show that the CT members might not be active participants in party work is one whose whole point is to criticize the POT for dissolving, and to promise, "The CT has no intention of giving up the fight." Its thrust is not to declare opposition to building the party but to declare the alleged necessity to maintain a faction. This said, the CT comrades should, of course, clarify what they mean in this quote, and whether they intend to participate in party work. In the same way, they should clarify what they mean by "by any means necessary." If, at the trial, they indicate that they will not be active in the party's work, one cannot protest disciplining them.

I do not know about other CT members, but is not David Fender in charge of the Boston branch library? Is this not sufficient to keep you from putting him on trial for "disloyalty" and inactivity?

Like the "indiscipline" charge, the "disloyalty" charge as

you make it will foster secretly disloyal factions. For political clarity, the CT, if it is disloyal, should be allowed to demonstrate it in action. It is not a case here of a large faction which could at some point disrupt party work, if allowed to remain in membership. It is a tiny faction, whose only crime of "disloyalty", as your charges themselves state, is planning not to do anything, allegedly.

It is not only the Communist Tendency which can be accused of going against The Organizational Character.... In a passage which your charges do not quote, it reads,

To safeguard party unity in debating and deciding policy, a conscious effort is made to teach comrades to argue out problems on the basis of principles and to act always from the standpoint of principle. Along these lines the party has developed in a free and democratic internal atmosphere. All individuals and tendencies have a full chance to contribute to the development of the party and to the shaping of its leading cadres. (Page 4. My emphasis.)

Yet, not one member of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency was elected to the NC, full or alternate. This was after a discussion in which the minority tendency had obtained about ten percent of the membership's votes. Comrade Paul Boutelle, who was the only delegate not of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency or Communist Tendency to make criticisms on the convention floor concerning the Political Resolution, was not one of those nominated by the Nominations Commission, though he had previously served on the national leadership. (The composition of the NC as an ideologically monolithic body in relation to the convention discussion is in contrast to the national leaderships resulting from conventions in 1970 in Britain and in Italy, where small minorities were given more than proportional representation.)

In Berkeley-Oakland, an apparent national operation is underway, seemingly to oust the former Proletarian Orientation Tendency comrades from even local leadership positions. In Minneapolis, Comrade Fred Ferguson, who has functioned in very responsible positions in the past, has been given the sole assignment of delivering the Militant to stores, and has been told that "under no circumstances" will he even be allowed to work on the antiwar fraction!

In short, the party leadership as a whole considers, no less even than the Communist Tendency itself, that this recent discussion has been a factional one and continues to operate factionally. "All individuals and tendencies" are not given a chance to develop the party. Rather, they are treated punitively for their positions in the pre-convention discussion.

* * *

It is necessary to write this letter because this trial of the Communist Tendency, especially the first charge of "discipline," is a threat to the organizational character of our party. It is also politically inadvisable and harmful, as

I have tried to show.

As a supporter of the NC and PC resolutions since I resigned from the Proletarian Orientation Tendency at the convention over the Palestine question, I don't want this letter to be used factionally. I am giving copies only to the PC, to Charles S. and Helen S. But if the Communist Tendency is suspended or expelled, especially if the unjust charge of "indiscipline" is applied, I do not see why the trial and the opinions of comrades on it should be kept any secret within our movement.

Yours for party democracy,

David K.
David K.

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1009 University Ave. S.E.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55414
September 19, 1971

Dear David,

It was good to get together with you for a personal visit, which, however, became an interesting political discussion. It was too bad not to be able to socialize more with Martha, and with Mary and her friend.

I'm enclosing the Open Letter to Members of the P.O.T., which you asked me to send. Since it is after the convention, I will consult with the N Cer here and if he advises me to, will inform the center of having sent you this letter and document. Since I am not in any faction, I want to inform them of this kind of correspondence, but I feel that you have a right to see this Open Letter, as a leader of a grouping, now that you have asked to.

I would add some things to our discussion, which came a little as a surprise to me, though I had heard that you were concerned about possibly being expelled.

Not only would I say that there is no reason why you should be expelled, but also I think that it is harmful for one to expect it with nothing more for basis than the fact that the Boston organizer said there "would be a statement" on the CT continuing to exist (the only possible statement would be that you have a right to exist, if disciplined, and that any party discussion will be under control of the leadership). This is because for you to assume that "the date has been set," etc., for your expulsion could only lead you to think of the circumstances for your hypothetical expulsion as irrelevant and immaterial, since it will supposedly happen anyway. This, in turn, could lead you to neglect party discipline, since it would supposedly not matter whether you are expelled for indiscipline or for your ideas.

But, in reality, it would matter very much, if you were kicked out, whether you were expelled for indiscipline or for your ideas. If you were expelled for your ideas, without any indiscipline, myself and comrades all the way up into the leadership would have to rethink our assessments of the party. And there is not any reason to expect this kind of expulsion.

But if you commit indiscipline and are expelled, which I trust is no more likely than the possibility that you would be thrown out for your opinions, then it would be necessary, not to reassess the idea that the party is by and large revolutionary with a Bolshevik leadership, but rather to battle you as an enemy and watch you move farther and farther away from a revolutionary program. And to vote, first of all, with both hands and both feet, for measures against breakers of discipline.

So, if you will pardon the hypotheses, even fantasies, that is why I think you should take an attitude that there is no reason for you to be given the boot, which is the attitude, I am sure, of most comrades, including Minneapolis comrades.

I didn't answer your argument that the leadership did not deal with you politically and therefore can only deal with you organizationally.

The answer is that there is a certain distinction between not being able to answer your arguments and not seeing fit to answer you. Personally, I think that the leadership decided, partly, that to answer some of your criticisms might lead to a troubled discussion, or might lead where one did not want to go, as you pointed out to me (i.e., they could not answer you on certain points) and that, in addition, on the whole, it would not be worthwhile bothering with the tiny CT. It is in the same way, perhaps, that I was not answered. So it is not quite true that that leadership could not answer you at all politically. If your faction grows, I am sure that you will get a political answer, not just from me, but from the leadership all the more. I remember especially the NC comrade who said that every minority is right about something. Maybe someone like him will take the trouble to tear your document apart in order to divide what is correct from what is wrong (if not, I will). It is not excluded, if comrades decide that it is worthwhile answering you. Even if your faction does not grow, perhaps they will see that it is necessary to answer you politically.

Finally, I will list for my own memory some of the answers you gave to my questions concerning possible charges that might hypothetically be made against you.

(1) You do not double-recruit YSAers, but you will answer questions if they ask you any. If you were ordered not to answer questions of YSAers about your differences, you have no reason to violate this discipline. (But you say "it is impossible to double-recruit YSAers," which I don't understand at all.)

(2) You consider it your right to submit international discussion articles, and will not refrain from doing so even if the party refuses to pass your document on to Europe. In short, the highest body is not the party leadership, but the ranks of the international.

(3) You carry on activity for the party. (It goes without saying, of course, in addition, that the CT members pay sustainers and attend branch meetings). But you might miss certain functions, banquets, etc.

(4) You think that characterizing the party as right-centrist will not lead you to indiscipline or split. (But you did not say at what point the party might become reformist, in your opinion, or if you would leave it at that point.)

(5) If you were undemocratically suspended, you would publish a public paper even while appealing.

Of course, as I said, I agree with you in general on the organizational questions (1) to (3), but I disagree on the hypothetical questions (4) and (5). In any case, no one can expell you for (4) and (5), since they don't involve indiscipline at all. To say that your "right-centrist" analysis will lead you to break discipline is like saying that my ideas will lead me to reconciliation with the leadership--it remains to be shown, at least.

I hope that next time we get together, there won't be things like anticipated expulsions hanging over the conversation, and we can have just a friendly chat, which need not center on the differences inside the party.

Comradely,
s/ David Keil

P.S. If comrades who see the envelope are curious about what I am sending you, as I am sure they will be, please be sure to tell them.