

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 10, 1972

No. 15

NEC Present: Andy, Mirta, Laura, Geoff, Steve, Tom, Byron,
Malik, John H., Fred, Bob, Terry, Delpfine,
Caroline

NEC Excused: Andrew, B.R.

Convened: 1:50 p.m.

Chairwoman: Delpfine

Agenda: 1. John Z. Trial

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Presentation on procedure by Mirta.

Discussion: Tom, Mirta, Geoff, Mirta, Bob, Mirta,
Andy, Byron, Mirta, Andy, Steve, Bob,
Mirta, Geoff, Byron, Andy, Steve, Mirta

Mike P. called in.

Presentation by Mike P.

Discussion: Steve, Geoff, Mike, Tom, Mike, Laura,
Mike, Delpfine, Mike, Mirta, Mike, Steve,
Mike, Tom, Mike, Andy, Byron, Mike,
Andy, Mike, Caroline, Mike, Mirta, Mike,
Geoff, Mike, Steve, Mike, Geoff, Mike,
Mirta, Mike, Laura, Mike, Bob, Mike,
Fred, Mike, Byron, Mike, Bob, Mike,
Laura, Mike, Malik, Mike, Mirta, Mike,
Laura, Mike, Fred, Mike, Delpfine, Mike,
Terry, Mike, Andy, Mirta, Mike, Andy,
Mike, Bob, Mike

Mike P. excused.

Jim McC. called in.

Presentation by Jim McC.

Discussion: Andy, Jim, Delpfine, Jim, Geoff, Jim,
Byron, Jim, Laura, Jim, Steve, Jim, Mirta,
Jim, Bob, Jim, Byron, Jim

Jim McC. excused.

John Z. called in.

Discussion: Mirta, John Z., Malik, John Z., Andy, John Z., Steve, John Z., Byron, John Z., Tom, John Z., Geoff, John Z., Fred, John Z., Delpfine, John Z., Bob, John Z., Laura, John Z., Delpfine, John Z., Laura, John Z., Geoff, John Z., Steve, John Z., Delpfine, John Z., Tom, John Z., Byron, John Z., Laura, John Z., Geoff, Bob, John Z.

Statement read by John Z. (attached).

Discussion: Andy, John Z., Geoff, John Z., Caroline, John Z., Fred, John Z., Bob, John Z., Malik, John Z., John H., John Z., Delpfine, John Z., Terry, John Z., Tom, John Z., Byron, John Z., Bob, John Z.

John Z. excused.

Discussion: Andy, Byron, Steve, Laura, Andy, Delpfine, Tom

Chuck P. called in.

Presentation by Chuck P.

Steve S. called in.

Presentation by Steve S.

Discussion: Tom, Steve S., Byron, Steve S., Andy, Steve S., Chuck, Tom, Chuck, Tom, Steve S., Steve C., Andy, Steve S., Chuck, John H., Steve S., Steve C., Steve S., Geoff, Steve S.

Mike P. and Jim McC. called in.

Discussion: Mirta, Laura, Tom, Mike, Malik, Steve C., Jim, Andy, Jim, Mirta, Jim, Andy, Jim, Byron, Jim, Mike, John H., Mike, Caroline, Mike, Caroline, Mike, Bob, Jim, Delpfine, Tom, Mike, Jim, Mike, Laura, Mike, Jim, Mike, Steve C., Jim, Malik, Jim, Mirta, Andy

Chuck P., Steve S., Mike P., and Jim McC. excused.

Motion (by Andy): To recess the trial and refer to the N.O. the drafting of a statement of the NEC's position on the John Z. case, based on this discussion, for discussion and vote by the NEC at a future meeting.

Discussion: Andy, Steve C., Caroline, Andy, Byron, Mirta, Steve C., Caroline, Andy, Geoff, Malik, Geoff, Byron, John H., Andy, Tom, Bob, Mirta, Steve, Byron

Motion Carried

Adjourned: 7:00 p.m.

(Transcribed from tape of trial proceedings)

STATEMENT OF JOHN Z.

First of all, I think that it is significant and says something about an organization, when in a period of mounting class struggle and in a period when the international working class is preparing for one of the greatest battles in history with the bourgeoisie, the leadership of both the party and the YSA, I think are thrown into crisis. And I think it's a crisis which they can neither understand nor even begin to analyze. Now, I think the move on the part of the leadership to expel comrades who have been, or who are, in opposition to the present course that the YSA is following is part of this crisis. I think it is much easier to expel, or even transfer politically, any opposition which raises what I feel are very important and necessary questions; questions that have to be answered. I think there is a history to this in the party and the International, I think beginning with the expulsions of the opposition in the '61 - '64 period and some further expulsions after that.

I think, as I said before, that the charges made against me by some of the comrades, and if I'm correct, by one individual who is, at present, outside the YSA, are totally and completely false. These charges: I consider them nothing but fabrications. And I consider those comrades involved with this liars, who seek to advance their positions by having an oppositionist expelled.

Now, I think this state of affairs is only possible in an organization which has abandoned Trotskyism, and is now thrown into crisis by the forward movement of the working class, in its inability to meet the challenge posed by history. That is, of leading the working class to power. Now the United Secretariat itself is in a new crisis. But no discussion is held, the few questions of theory are shoved under the rug; the Marxist method is abandoned for what seem to be the greener pastures of the middle class; the strategy of the Transitional Program, which in this period means the defeat or the victory of the working people, is thrown out the window in favor of reform demands, which I feel are designed to appeal to and satisfy the petty-bourgeois radicals and liberals and no one else. References to the Transitional Program are made as if it were a museum piece, when, in reality, it is today when it takes on its full meaning.

Now, I think that the base of this abandonment of Trotskyism is that the YSA has abandoned the Marxist method. The perspectives of the New Radicalization, and the necessities which the crisis of the system poses before the working class, that is the building of its own party, are two diametrically opposed perspectives. I feel, that whereas the theory of the New Radicalization begins with pragmatism and surface impressions, the perspective of fighting for the independence of the working class and its own party begins with the movement of the working class, as a class, over issues which reflect the fundamental fight over surplus value, over the capitalist system itself, and fights for the students and organized workers, unemployed,

and a section of the middle class, to be rallied around and behind the working class, in its class organization, the trade unions.

I feel that the theory of the New Radicalization clearly reflects the pragmatist method, when it sees various sections of the population, particularly the students and the petty-bourgeoisie, moving in reaction to various aspects of their alienation in multiclass movements around national and democratic demands. Now, it views the movement of the working class as primarily subordinate to, and as a result of, this radicalizing process. Workers start becoming radicalized as gays, women, Blacks, but we don't really see them as being radicalized as workers.

Now, it has been this abandonment of Marxism, which I feel today is leading our organization into open collaboration with the Stalinists and the petty bourgeoisie. I think this is nowhere clearer than in the antiwar movement. The struggle is no longer one of irreconcilability between us and the Stalinists and the Social Democrats of all stripes, but one of reconciliation at all costs, and this under the guise of defending the Vietnamese Revolution, and the gains of the working class in this period, is not by organizing peace groups, but by organizing the working class into a labor party around the fight for the Transitional Program, and the seizing of power.

I think we have seen the results of our great work in the antiwar movement. We have seen, to the point where in Washington, D.C., for example, in order to maintain collaboration with the Stalinists and liberals, we even went so far as to support a prayer vigil. I think, you know, is this our Leninist-Bolshevik perspective? And I think this wasn't just a mistake, but a reflection in a very concrete way of what it means to abandon dialectical materialism for pragmatism. We now go scurrying even after the witch-doctors of the twentieth century, namely the Church.

I don't think it is enough to react to the movement of the American working class, to reach into one's bag of demands and pull out something which is appropriate. Which we do, for example, in calling for a labor party while at the same time refusing to take up the struggle in the unions, the factories, and the schools to build it. We refuse to recognize the fight and fight to understand that a strategy within the American labor movement can only be developed on the basis of an international perspective. This is why the recent developments are not seen within the framework of this international perspective and the revolutionary character understood. Thus we can call for a labor party while really, essentially, refusing to do any work in the trade unions.

The party, along with the YSA, refuses to see this new crisis of capitalism which is forcing the bourgeoisie to attack the working class and declare war, trade war, on Europe. Because, I think, along with Comrade Mandel, we view the economic problems of American capitalism as simply brought about by the Vietnam War and the strength of European capitalism.

I think the truth of the matter is that the economic problems are caused by the contradiction in capitalism as a system which find their highest expression in the United States itself. I think it is this which has forced the American bourgeoisie into a conflict with the colonial masses which lies behind Vietnam and the conflict with the colonial masses, which forces it into a conflict with the workers in Europe. I think that what this means is also that Nixon is forced into a confrontation with American workers, at the same moment he faces a tremendous movement of workers and peasants in colonial countries, in the development of a revolutionary situation in the United States. I think that, understood this way, we can confidently fight for American workers to take up the political struggle in a revolutionary way. We can link the struggle for a labor party with a socialist program and develop both in a bitter fight against the labor bureaucrats.

Lacking international perspective, I think the party and the YSA do not do this. We either abstain altogether from the labor movement, or put forward demands which in no way pose the question of socialism. We limit our approach to what the labor bureaucracy is already doing, or what can at best be only educational proposals. We do not go beyond the bounds of the trade union bureaucracy.

As Trotskyists, are we fighting for an international perspective, or are we proceeding in any sense from a national one? One of the articles in The Militant once put it this way: "Any real program to fight inflation must begin by calling an immediate halt to this war, and for a stop to this wasting of the nation's resources." Do we begin from the question of the resources of the nation, do we pose as the best fighters for national interests or as the most uncompromising internationalists? These are questions which both, I think, the party and the YSA leadership have to answer. I think they can no longer be avoided. These questions will have to be answered.

Now one cannot simply parachute into the working class at the moment which seems most opportune for fruitful work; unfurl the banner and expect millions to follow, which is essentially what Comrade Novack is putting forward. I think it is necessary to go through an agonizing and difficult and bitter fight to turn one's forces, no matter how small and how minute, toward the working class. Fight with all the history and theory of the movement to develop a revolutionary foothold in this class, and construct a Marxist cadre in this way. I believe this is the only basis on which we can build our cadre and build the revolutionary party.

I think both the party and the YSA have abandoned this fight for the get-rich-quick schemes on the campuses. This is not Trotskyism but the result of its abandonment. But the leadership is quiet. Where is Mandel with all his great theories? He keeps quiet on a lot of things these days. What does the party have to

say when the Argentine section openly embraces the Social Democracy, and one wing embraces terrorism? Oh yes, we are told that this is really not conducive to building the revolutionary party, but where is the answer that tells us why this came about in the first place?

At the last party convention, Comrade Mary-Alice Waters went into this big run-down about how really major differences no longer exist in the United Secretariat. Why then all this backstabbing and unprincipled combinationism which we see today in the International? I think that Pablo has left the International but his method is still the innkeeper of the United Secretariat. I think a conscious and theoretical struggle must be waged against Pabloism, and what he represented, and what he represents today. I think this cannot be done without a struggle to understand from the standpoint of Marxist philosophy, the real source of revisionism of Marxism which lies at the heart of Pabloism.

This, however, I don't think is just a mere historical exercise. Only through the sharpest struggle against the presence and influence of bourgeois methods of thinking inside the working class movement itself can dialectical materialism be developed and the movement prepared for the correct orientation in this new situation.

Thus, it is not just the past struggles against revisionism, but the struggle to deepen that fight today, that inoculates the movement against revisionist methods and thereby makes possible the construction of a mass revolutionary party. This I consider, above all, a daily theoretical battle against those pressures to which Pablo and the present leadership of the United Secretariat, the party, and, to an extent, the YSA succumb to. Trotsky once said of the Third International, it has taken the road of reformism at a time when the crisis of capitalism definitely places the proletariat revolution on the order of the day. Today this can be said of the United Secretariat.

Regardless of what happens here, I will remain a Trotskyist, and will continue to fight as a Trotskyist, if not in the YSA, then outside of it.