

873 Broadway
2nd floor south
New York, N.Y. 10003

December 17, 1969

TO ALL NCers AND ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

The attached letters are being sent to you for your information. The questions raised by comrade Gregorich and comrade Hansen's answers are of educational value.

Comradely,

Joel Britton
National Office

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3861 Montevista Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44121

November 28, 1969

Joseph Hansen
Editor, INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS
New York, N.Y.

Dear Comrade Hansen,

I am writing to you in regard to two articles which appeared in the last two issues of the IP. On page 1021 of the 11-17-69 issue is an article entitled "The Neo-McCarthyism of Spiro T. Agnew," and on page 1037 of the 11-24-69 issue is an article introduced by the caption "Nixon Reactivates McCarthyism."

I am disturbed by the titles of these two articles for several reasons. First of all, as I understand from my reading of party documents, our definition of McCarthyism is that it is "the American form of fascism." As far as I can tell, in all that the party has published on McCarthyism it has never changed this definition. Thus, on the basis of my knowledge, I must assume that when a party publication says "Nixon Reactivates McCarthyism," the party thinks that the American form of fascism has been reactivated -- is active, functioning. Do we believe that fascism has been reactivated when we say this, or do we mean something else by the term McCarthyism?

If by the use of the term McCarthyism we mean "the American form of fascism," then I think that the two articles should explain very clearly the main features of this "fascism," not just the red-baiting aspects of it, since we know that: (1) not all red-baiting is fascism, and (2) red-baiting is not the most important aspect of fascism. To give such titles to articles without explaining the nature and significance of fascism will miseducate both our comrades and other readers.

If, however, when we use the term McCarthyism we now mean something other than "the American form of fascism," we should explain what we mean. If we do not explain, then it appears that we equate McCarthyism with red-baiting. In short, if we have re-defined McCarthyism, how have we re-defined it?

Last of all, do we mean two identical things, two similar things, or two different things by the two terms "neo-McCarthyism" and "McCarthyism."?

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I hope that you take the time to answer my questions on this particular term since, as your documents on Latin America and China in the recent discussion period illustrate, neither terminology nor sentence structure should be taken lightly by Marxists.

Comradely,

s/Barbara Gregorich

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December 11, 1969

Barbara Gregorich
3861 Montevista Road.
Cleveland, Ohio 44121

Dear Comrade Barbara,

We appreciate receiving your letter concerning the terminology used in Intercontinental Press relative to Nixon's attempt to reactivate McCarthyism.

First of all, I should like to indicate that Intercontinental Press is not "a party publication." However, we can leave this aside in considering the questions you raise.

You begin by stating that from your reading of party documents, McCarthyism is to be defined as "the American form of fascism." Unfortunately, you do not indicate what party documents you have in mind.

Let us assume for a moment that your definition is correct. Then we would have to assume that the United States has already gone through a period of fascism since it did go through a period of McCarthyism. To my knowledge the SWP has never taken the position that the United States has already experienced a fascist regime. Such a position would have flown in the face of the facts, not to mention the basic Trotskyist theory as to the nature of fascism. From this my conclusion would be that your definition of McCarthyism is faulty.

While McCarthyism, in my opinion, was not the American form of fascism, it represented something more than mere red-baiting. It went further than red-baiting in such ways as establishing a political criterion for government employment which was extended throughout the basic industries and far beyond them. People were fired from their jobs because of their political views and many were imprisoned for the same reason. But the basic organizations of the workers such as the unions were not smashed. There were other classical features of fascism that did not appear. McCarthyism could be said to have established a climate propitious to fascism, but that was as far as it went.

Nixon was a leading figure in the McCarthyite period. He rose to national prominence as a practitioner of McCarthyism. In face of the opposition to his continuing the war in Vietnam, it is quite natural for him to revert back to the methods he

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practiced in the late forties and early fifties. It can hardly be denied that this is what Nixon has done through such moves as inspiring Agnew's attacks on the antiwar movement and on the communications media.

As to the two headlines you mention, I do not see any problem there. Neither headline, of course, is to be given the weight of a political analysis. They constitute labels for the articles they headed. "Neo" McCarthyism would signify a new edition of McCarthyism.

Whether Nixon can succeed in reactivating McCarthyism remains to be seen. In my opinion, he will not succeed. But with state power in his hands, certain things are within his power. He can deal blows and inflict setbacks on the antiwar movement, particularly if the activists fail to appreciate what he is attempting. Our job is to attempt to alert them and to participate with them in mobilizing effective countermeasures.

Comradely yours,

s/Joseph Hansen