

PFOC'S RESPONSE TO THE CRITICISM FROM THE AFRICAN PEOPLES SOCIALIST PARTY

The African People's Socialist Party (APSP) has recently made public serious criticisms of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC), stating that the politics and practice of PFOC are in basic opposition to struggles for national liberation and in particular to the struggle for African independence, and that PFOC's politics serve as a cover for imperialism in the solidarity movement. These charges come from a Black nationalist organization that we have worked with for the past two years, an organization with whom we have struggled to build solidarity relations through our work in the Dessie Woods Support Coalition (DWSC), the African National Prison Organization (ANPO) Solidarity Committee and through other forms of political and material aid. We have taken the criticisms very seriously, but we cannot agree with them as correct characterizations of our overall politics and practice. The charges that our politics and practice are ideological imperialist and destructive to national liberation make it impossible to continue to work in a principled way under the leadership of the APSP and consequently we have withdrawn from work in the DWSC and the ANPO Solidarity Committee. We are writing this statement to clarify our general politics in the situation. However, we understand that the real demonstration of what we say is in our on-going practice in building solidarity with Black liberation and national liberation and in helping to develop anti-imperialist movement within the US oppressor nation.

The APSP charges that PFOC is attempting to "recreate the state organized destruction of the Black Liberation Movement of the sixties" (Burning Spear May '79 p. 22), promoting contradictions and divisions between Black forces in order to build our organization and assume leadership and control of the Black Liberation Movement ourselves. Moreover, they are making dangerous and untrue charges that we are endangering the physical security of the APSP.

PFOC recognizes that the white left has repeatedly and in many guises attempted to subvert and destroy the Black Liberation Movement under the cover of revolutionary rhetoric. Since the formation of our organization PFOC has been continually pushed by revolutionary Black and other nationalist forces to overturn politics and practice which place the interests and leadership of white people against the leadership and strategies of national liberation movements. (See our December 1978 public statement RECTIFICATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALISM). However, over the past period we have been trying to build solidarity with the Black Liberation Movement on the basis of principled solidarity and struggle with a number of different Black revolutionary

forces including the APSP. Our solidarity has been based on our understanding that at this stage there are a number of different forces within the Black Liberation Movement that are struggling to define line and strategy to win liberation and independence for African people within US borders and to unite the Black Liberation Movement. In this context, we as white people have been attempting to support the programs of different revolutionary forces. We do not see this to be in basic contradiction to supporting the development of a unified strategy and leadership for African liberation and independence. On this basis we have worked in the DWSC and in the ANPO Solidarity Committee under the leadership of the APSP in an effort to build solidarity with anti-colonial politics and strategy. We have also worked on other defense committees for Black political prisoners and POWs and have supported the development of revolutionary Black prison movement as part of building solidarity with Black liberation and anti-colonial movement as a whole.

The APSP has seen our relations with the Black prison movement and in particular with prisoners inside San Quentin as creating divisions among Black forces, placing "PFOC and the Black Liberation Movement in direct competition for the leadership of the African prison movement" (Burning Spear May '79 p. 18) and blocking their efforts to build ANPO. We cannot agree with these charges. Our relations with the prison movement in the Bay Area and around the country have been based on support for the struggle against the genocidal prison system as an important front of the Black Liberation Movement. In this context we worked within the August 21st Coalition, a prison solidarity coalition which was formed in the fall of 1977 in response to leadership from Black prisoners inside San Quentin. We have also supported the building of ANPO from within the August 21st Coalition and through our work in the ANPO Solidarity Committee. PFOC disagreed with the criticisms that the APSP made of the August 21st Coalition in the fall of 1978 that the Coalition was interventionist and responsible for divisions between the APSP and San Quentin prisoners. Despite our disagreements about the Coalition (which dissolved in September 1978) we continued to work in the DWSC and the ANPO Solidarity Committee. However, these disagreements about the character of our solidarity work have continued and have been sharpened by the APSP in the current criticisms of PFOC.

The APSP states that our ideological imperialist practice stems from our wrong line on white supremacy which is in direct opposition to scientific anti-colonial politics and strategy. They say that PFOC has reduced all struggles against colonialism to struggles against white supremacy (including African, Puerto Rican and Native American struggles) thus placing white people's

relations to imperialism at the center of our political concerns. In Breakthrough (our political journal) and in our practice in solidarity with different national liberation movements, we have struggled to put forth an understanding of national liberation/anti-colonialist movement as the leading force in the destruction of the imperialist system. We have struggled that revolutionary movement in the white working class must be based on solidarity with national liberation and must take leadership from these movements. We have also struggled that colonialism is built and enforced through the collaboration of the oppressor nation working class with the imperialist state and ruling class in colonial domination and genocide. The material basis of this collaboration, which is the principal obstacle to solidarity with national liberation in the white working class, is the system of white supremacy--the economic, political and social structure of privilege received by the oppressor nation working class as a result of imperialism's plunder of colonized nations' land, labor and resources. We do not think that this understanding of white supremacy is in opposition to solidarity with national liberation or in contradiction to targeting imperialism as the enemy of the world's people. An analysis of the relationship between white supremacy and colonialism is necessary to explain the current relationship of the white working class to imperialism and to develop a strategy for transforming that relationship. In Breakthrough and in our political practice we have struggled to expose and challenge the operation of white supremacy in order to build revolutionary solidarity with national liberation and anti-imperialist movement within the white working class.

In the approximately two years that PFOC has worked directly with the APSP, we have sought to build solidarity on principled grounds, neither negating political differences or raising them as splitting issues. When Joseph Waller first made a public criticism of PFOC's line on white supremacy at a public forum on February 18, 1978 (see Burning Spear June 1978), we disagreed with it but saw our disagreement as secondary to our commitment to build solidarity with the APSP. Over the next year we strengthened our commitment to the work to free Dessie Woods and to the struggle for anti-colonial politics. When the APSP made sharp criticisms of the August 21st Coalition and severed relations with that Coalition we still saw our disagreements as secondary to our solidarity responsibilities. However, the charges that the APSP has recently made that PFOC is ideological imperialist, is trying to destroy the Black Liberation Movement, and is jeopardizing the security of the APSP mean that there is no longer a principled

basis for PFOC to continue to work under the APSP's leadership.

We remain committed to the struggle to build solidarity with the Black Liberation Movement and other revolutionary national liberation movements.

Prairie Fire Organizing Committee