

On the Jewish Question

On the Discussion and Conference

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The decision of the 18th National Convention to hold a discussion and a national conference on work among the Jewish people and the fight against anti-Semitism was motivated both by the need of a full examination of the Party's work in these areas and by the existence of differing views on a number of important questions which needed to be threshed out thoroughly. At the time it was anticipated that the discussion could be completed within the prescribed period of approximately four months, and the conference was tentatively scheduled to take place in November 1966. As the discussion got under way, however, it became clear that much more time would be required; hence it was found necessary first to consider postponing the conference to January, then to suspend judgment on a date altogether until certain points could be clarified. We believe that it is now possible to look toward further steps leading to the holding of the conference within the next few months.

The discussion has brought to the surface the main ideological differences on the Jewish question and has made evident the sharpness of the divergences on these points. In these respects we feel that it has performed a positive function. It has, however, also had negative aspects.

In the heat of the debate, tendencies toward excesses in language and toward political labelling of comrades have appeared. Such tendencies are regrettable and should be corrected. We do not believe it is proper to characterize any of the comrades involved in the debate as "bourgeois nationalists," "national chauvinists," or "anti-Soviet" on the one hand, or as "national nihilists" or "sectarians" on the other. Nor should any comrade be labelled "irresponsible." A number of problems and misunderstandings arose also from failure to give sufficient consideration to the content of the draft resolution before releasing it for discussion.

Most serious, however, is the fact that the discussion, in its concentration on the points of difference, drew attention away from those cardinal points on which there is unanimity. Among these are the alarming growth of anti-Semitism in the United States,

coupled with the upsurge of neo-Nazism and revanchism in West Germany, and the need to mount an all-out struggle against these threats to the Jewish people and to peace and democracy generally. Among these, too, is the need to combat the cold-war campaign against alleged "Soviet anti-Semitism," inspired by the State Department and Right-wing reaction. The focus of the discussion on general ideological questions has likewise served to divert us from proper consideration of the concrete problems of day-to-day work among the Jewish people and the building of progressive influence within the Jewish mass movements.

The discussion will continue, but we feel it is necessary at this point to direct our main attention to these questions, which are the key questions for development of the Party's work in this field. It is necessary to create conditions for concentrating the deliberations of the conference on the practical problems of furthering the work of the Party in the Jewish field, on elaborating the Party's position and tasks in the vital area of general agreement, and on resolving those ideological differences which prove capable of resolution, leaving those which do not for further discussion after the conference.

We believe that local meetings and discussions should be organized with this aim in view, and that on the basis of such preparations it will be possible within the next few months to hold a fruitful conference which will help ultimately to resolve ideological questions in the way in which they can best be resolved—in the course of struggle against anti-Semitism and among the masses of the Jewish people.

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Proposals For Improvement

The draft resolution on the Jewish question, in the writer's opinion, represents a big step forward in clarifying the Party's position on this important matter. The recognition of the significant role the Jewish community plays in many parts of the country, including practically all major centers; the positive statement on the right of Israel to exist and the recognition of the legitimate interest of American Jewry in Israel; the recognition of the existence of many problems in relation to the life of Jews in the Soviet Union—all of these are important elements in establishing a well-founded approach to the Jewish question. If accepted