

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
March 16, 1976

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND ANTIRACIST WORK DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

The significant changes taking place in the Nation of Islam provide us the opportunity to meet and hold discussions with members of the Nation about these changes and to encourage them to get in local struggles. Reports from different branches indicate that many members of the Nation have been very friendly and open to discussions on a wide range of subjects, including the desegregation struggle in Boston and the situation in southern Africa. (Enclosed are reports from Denver and from Philadelphia on recent discussions comrades have had with the Nation, and reports from the New York Local Executive Committee and from Chicago on the Savior's Day meeting held on February 29.)

The Savior's Day convention, the second to occur since Wallace D. Muhammad took over the Nation of Islam last year, was projected by the Nation as an historic one. The bulk of the presentations focused on the new changes that Muhammad instituted in the last year.

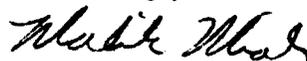
The speech by Muhammad centered on the financial situation of the Nation and their plans to bring the Nation out of debt, and their progress over the last year. According to the March 12 Bilalian News over 80,000 people across the country listened to Muhammad speak. The entire convention was televised via Telstar satellite. In total, the closed circuit program was seen in 17 major cities and 50 prisons.

Muhammad, in his speech, indicated that the Nation would begin to separate Mosque activities more from their business functions. He also reported that the amount of new converts to Islam was up 27 percent; first-time visitors to Mosques was up 54 percent; and the total attendance was up 47 percent from last year. According to Bilalian News over 2,800,000 people attended the Nation's Mosques in 1975.

Branches should continue to seek discussions with Nation members and try to get them involved in local community activities and political events. In particular, we should encourage Mosques to endorse the April 24 march on Boston for school desegregation. The March 12 Militant had an article on Abdul Haleem Farrakhan's press statement in support of busing and school desegregation in Boston. We should show this statement to Nation members.

Progress reports on further discussions with the Nation should be sent to the National Office.

Comradely,



Malik Miah
SWP Black Work Director

FOUR REPORTS ON THE NATION OF ISLAM

1. Report from Denver

February 16, 1976

National Office
Dear Comrades,

This is to report to you on our first formal contact with the Nation of Islam here in Denver. They have only one Mosque in the city, and it seemed that they had been a little behind in picking up some of the national changes that are taking place within the Nation.

Last week, however, one of their members called Phil D., a Black comrade in the party, about coming to a meeting of the Mosque to speak about the fight against racism. This Muslim had heard Phil speak at one of the campuses and knew him as a member of the party and as an activist in SCAR.

Phil spoke for about twenty minutes, covering busing, school desegregation, cutbacks, Angola, and the general question of mass action. He was quite well received and there was much discussion about the need for action. There were some forty or forty-five Mosque members present. Four Militants were sold to Mosque members, and the impression was given to Phil that he would likely be invited back to speak at some later time.

Phil also invited the minister of the temple to speak at our Malcolm X forum this week. While no definite answer was given, the response was extremely friendly. He only wanted to check his schedule to see if he could make it.

While the meeting was all Black, one white comrade went with Phil to speak to the Muslims specifically about the campaign around Angola. Again, the response was quite friendly and there was some real interest in getting involved. They said they would have some people, or try to have some people, at the coalition meeting next week.

Comradely,
s/ Rich Feigenberg

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2. Report from Philadelphia

February 26, 1976

Doug Jenness
SWP National Office
Dear Doug:

This is to inform you of the contact that we have had with the Nation of Islam in Philadelphia.

Contact between Militant salespeople and Bilalian News salespeople have been very good since the first of the year.

We have been able to carry out friendly discussions and exchange newspapers.

At the end of January one comrade was able to have a long discussion with a Muslim who is a member of the Community Affairs Committee of the Nation of Islam. He expressed a real interest in establishing collaboration between the Nation and the Party.

The first week of February, he came into the bookstore and I was able to meet with him briefly. He bought a copy of the Militant, took our political resolution and our campaign literature.

During our discussions he referred to the changes taking place in the Nation of Islam. He described the Nation's lack of involvement in community struggles as sectarian and indicated that they were going to be functioning differently from now on; that they were going through many changes.

A number of concrete proposals were made during the course of our discussion.

First, I raised the idea of the Nation becoming a sponsor of and having a speaker at our Miah forum in Germantown on Angola. He was very receptive to the idea and said he would raise it with the Minister of the main mosque here.

Secondly, I raised the idea of an official meeting between representatives of the Nation and the SWP to discuss our programs, activities and any areas of potential collaboration. Again, he said he would raise the idea.

Both of these proposals were raised after our general discussion in which George 4X Carter raised a number of possibilities for collaboration.

He indicated he was very interested in our forums and wanted to attend regardless of what decision the Nation officially made regarding participation in the Angola forum. He also said that there were a number of his friends in the Nation that are interested as well.

He also raised the possibility of the SWP having a representative on the platform on Savior's Day. He indicated they would be having a number of invited guests.

He also threw out the idea of being a guest speaker (the SWP) on the Nation of Islam's radio program here in Philadelphia.

Because things are moving slowly in the Nation, an official decision could not be made. But George and a couple of other Muslims did come to two of Miah's meet-

ings on Angola. They attended the Temple University forum of 150 and our first Militant Labor forum in Germantown of 60. At each meeting we offered them tables for Bilalian News, which they used.

At our initiative, we now carry a bundle of Bilalian News in the Bookstore. The last time George came into the headquarters, he bought "What Socialists Stand For" and The Last Year of Malcolm X, by Breitman.

George's father, George 3X Carter has also contacted us and indicated to us that as a member of the Public Information Committee of the Nation of Islam he would be willing to list our events in "Showcase," a freebie which is printed by the Nation and widely distributed in the Black community.

Comrades Tony A., Matt H., and I recently attended a meeting of the Nation which was held at one of their Mosques here on February 22. George 4X Carter invited us to hear a National Radio Broadcast from Chicago that Wallace D. Muhammad was giving. Our main purpose was to meet people and to pursue the possibility of an official meeting (we had been told by George that no definitive decision had yet been made regarding a meeting.)

Because the meeting was so structured we accomplished little of what we had projected. We did, though, get a better idea of how they are organized.

As soon as we arrived Matt and Tony were escorted in one direction and myself in another. We were frisked and our belongings were searched, which I understand is a normal procedure. There were about 500 people at the meeting with the room divided in half, women on one side, men on the other. We were seated in what was obviously a visitors section. As far as I could see, there was only one other white in attendance besides Matt and myself.

We got there one-half hour early in order to talk to people before Muhammad's address. All our coming early did was enable us to listen to Minister Akbar (?) from Chicago. Both of the addresses were basically religiously oriented. It was, I think, a religious justification for many of the changes taking place and those that still lie ahead. They talked about the Koran, the new interpretation, and the new world.

There was a reference to the Christian Church being responsible for the perpetuation of racism, and of "sexism."

Muhammad discussed getting involved more with the community. "Brother, can we help you? Brother, can we lend a hand? Brother, we are ready to die for you."

This, in contrast to going through Genesis, Adam and Eve, Noah's Arc, etc., got much more of a response obviously, from the people in attendance.

Tony and I left after two hours but Matt stayed on. He reports that all the visitors were asked to stand (about 90-100) and then people who wanted to join were asked to raise their hands. Ten did. This, I might point out, was only one of six meetings that were taking place at Mosques around the city.

We have been invited to attend Savior's Day.

We want to pursue our contact with the Nation on two levels. One, officially trying to establish an organization to organization meeting, and secondly, through individual political discussions and contact.

I want to end this book, but first I want to make a couple of other points.

First, George does not appear to be freelancing, but does seem to represent a certain section of the Nation that is interested in making official contact with us. Although he's quite young, late 20s, he's been in for quite a few years. His father has also been in for a long time. George relates how Malcolm X used to come over to visit his father when he was young.

Second, our discussions have been light and cordial, not "heavy" political discussions. It appears that he does not want to overstep "official" channels.

Third, George 4X seems to be very well known and quite respected in the Nation. In discussions with other members of the Nation of Islam, it appears that they are familiar with the contact that George is establishing with the Socialist Workers Party.

Comradely,
s/ Terry Hardy

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3. Excerpt from New York Local Executive Committee Minutes

Nation of Islam Savior Day - report by Little

1. Religious event, aimed at outsiders,
2. Four to five thousand attended the meeting which was aimed at recruitment to Nation.
3. Meeting reported achievements of Nation and answered New York Times report that they were in financial trouble. They reported that they were growing and expanding significantly.
4. Featured speakers were Farrakhan and Wallace D. Muhammad. They explained the turn of the Nation as the correct thing to do, essentially justified by Allah telling Wallace D.
5. Not real clear where they are heading from the meeting.
6. Observations:
--change in attitude towards women mostly for

outside consumption

--atmosphere is stunning in its discipline and organizational seriousness

--noticable number of Latins, one of the reporters to the meeting was a Puerto Rican lieutenant in the Fruit of Islam,

Discussion: Studer, Little, Manuel, Studer, Myers

Additional points made under discussion: want to step up our approaching the Nation, for instance through sales and forums.

Motion to approve the report carried.

4. Report from Chicago

March 3, 1976

National Office

Dear Malik:

Here are my notes on Farrakhan and Wallace's speeches.

Farrakhan's speech

Farrakhan gave an introduction to and an interpretation of Wallace's speech. He said that Wallace was going to make changes and give an insight into his father's method. A new direction was necessary to facilitate the growth of Black people and the Nation. This was the most difficult and trying time in forty-six years. They must take up the responsibility of remaking the world. On the Holy Koran: All religions have failed including the Muslims. It is necessary to go back to the beginning. The Arabs rejected Mohammed. The slaves and Blacks took it up--in Ethiopia. Bilal called out the works of Mohammed as well as his descendants in Africa. This is the solution for those with an identity crisis (which is what Black people have). It is necessary to bring all people back to God-to Oneness. The international tour with religious and political leaders tore down barriers. They went with Mohammed Ali to a number of countries including Jamaica, Brt. Honduras; they met the great Idi Amim and were at the OAU meeting. One of the African leaders, I forgot which one Farrakhan named, took them in a helicopter to spread the ideas of Islam. They went to Ghana and Farrakhan gave praise to the greatness of that country. He said the importance was getting out the religion of Islam, not building a following by color, but the word of God, so color doesn't matter. We must throw away color hangups because Islam is not just a ghetto group.

He said that Islam began in the Black community, the ghettos of Detroit, Chicago and others, and has expanded to an international people. There has been a radical change in its members.

There is a crisis of leadership in this country--the choice is between Wallace or Reagan. Islam rejects this and builds its own self into a working and united body. The

past was an incubation period, a baby nation, thrust in a hostile environment.

They are expanding in the community and are teaching the ministers to take on social involvement. The voice is not enough. Teachers, speakers, administrators are necessary so the ministers will be well qualified social change agents. They will move away from customized teachings from the initial incubation period to expand to bring their direction to where the world Muslim movement is. (They will come more in line with orthodox Islam.)

The Minister from Spanish Harlem gave a more militant talk than some others, I think. He began by praising Allah in Spanish, which was unusual to say the least. Then he said that Latin America was suffering from the arrival of the Europeans and the indigenous people were corrupted by the conquerors. The Indian culture and the pride that the Incas had before the arrival of the Europeans was destroyed and they were killed in the name of Christ. The Church enslaved the people of Latin America. It promises heaven after death and keeps us poor now. The church lies and brings racism. Racism exists in the U. S. because of the language and because the U. S. fosters divisions among the people of Latin America. He then went on to explain the solution, the Islamic religion.

Notes on Wallace's speech "Self-government in the New World":

The Muslims were at a low point following the death of Elijah but now they are coming forward at an unusual time. The Muslims have religious as well as business needs. Through them, physical needs (clothing, etc.) were satisfied. This is necessary in any society. Jobs were provided, good clean practices were shown to whites. But the organizational structure became strained by the rise of business because the Muslims were not just religious any more but complex business matters developed. This was a problem because the members came from the most oppressed in the Bilal community who through business went from unskilled Negroes to a respected community of nation-minded people. Elijah Mohammed knew everything--he was a shop foreman, supervised all but needed a business dept., needed guidelines for business matters, taxes, accounting, corporate work. There was also intimidation and harassment from government because of tax problems. They did not pay taxes and were not accepted by the government as a legitimate religious body. These problems were due to a one-man nation with the one man ill. It was inefficient because the leader was not around. There was no structure for operation of the business. They put in lawyers and accountants to strengthen the business. The Mosques were stronger. An organizational structure to accomodate this movement is necessary. Finances must be separate from business. A division of labor within the nation is necessary to allow for growth.

The staff on business was expanded, with three departments in the organizational structure. A Human Affairs dept. has been started to take out programs used in Islam into the Black community as a whole. (Three departments: Mosques, business, and Human Affairs.) This is a three-tier structure with religion, business, and social programs. One of their problems is that they had no accounting systems. It is not true as the press reports that they have 75-80 million in assets because there is no accounting system to know how much they really have. Their economic health is bad like other businesses in America, they have a cash-flow problem. They found the problem and are recovering from a financial illness of fifteen years. They will update their business.

They could not get religious loans. Mohammed used tricks to give the illusion that business was booming because to win people to the truth you needed to seem profitable. There was mismanagement. They had to pay more than other people for properties. Their factories were not producing millions but losing. Now with the changes they can begin to make profits. Muslim countries lent Islam the money. To keep what they have they will have to institute an austerity plan. Cutbacks will be necessary for expansion. Mohammed planned these problems so when he died people would be unable to take the money and run but would be tied to a problem and forced to work. (This explanation got cheers from the audience.)

They will have to streamline priorities and change them with the business coming first. They will use the membership more in the business. They will separate the business from the Mosque so the people will become used more in the business than the Mosque. The business was poorly managed because it depended only on believers. They will get the ministers out of business and instead have management teams to get rid of graft and mismanagement. Central control went too far. They will need to distribute the control and have members in management. They had had growth through the Mosques. They have bought much property, not just to benefit a few that no one can identify with.

On the Bilalian News, Circulation dropped 28 percent since 1974 with 400,000 per week by the end of '74; now it's up to 500,000 per week and they have a drive for one million per week by the end of year. (On educational network last week I heard the paper's editor explain the

change in format away from the religious stuff on the front page in order to increase circulation.)

Wallace talked about setting up community centers in the Black community with censored films without sex and violence, and playgrounds open to all children, not just to Muslims; also restaurants. They will have to decrease the number of their schools. Wallace went into the development of the Muslims. That Fard was a shrewd planner. He saw the church in the Black community and the role it was playing in the '30s to keep Blacks down, and the role of drugs. He saw that you could not attack religion so have to be religious yourself to win over Black people away from drugs and the church. He saw that you needed material objects, not just spiritual to live in the real world, so he developed the material (businesses, etc.). One problem was that the Muslims did not deal enough with the real world because Mohammed knew that the white world was dying but he did not want to see Blacks born into a new world with someone else's leadership. The two voices that the whites have to offer are socialism and capitalism, but to go with either is to serve under someone else because neither socialism or capitalism is ours. Blacks needed a political voice, not just having their economic needs taken care of. The Cuban revolution shows the pride of the Cubans in self-government, but it is different here. The Cubans identified with Cubans and identified with themselves in pride of themselves. Here Blacks have no pride. Africans have pride, but none here because Blacks see themselves as slaves. We saw ourselves as spooks (ghosts, no identity) and wanted to be like whites. The Bolshevik revolutionaries try to make you even more crazy. They preach Marx, Engels, Lenin, and are crazy loons (these are W. D.'s words). They are dummies, they can't give you anything; they are too poor. They keep you from being yourself. They can't help you. They are alien to you. They preach white doctrines. They are like foreigners. Socialism is white thinking.

I have just put down my notes that I copied almost verbatim. These are not all direct quotes, because I had a lot of sentence fragments that I had to construct into sentences for you to understand.

Anyway, since Wallace Spoke, two members of the Nation have come to the SWP's northside headquarters and we have had discussions with them.

Comradely,
s/Suzanne Haig