

SWP N.O.

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To whom it may concern,

Enclosed find some material on the discussion now going on among Farmworker supporters over the union leadership's attitude toward the Marcos regime in the Phillipines.

The Chavez summary is official union material~~xxx~~ mailed out from their office, so is public knowledge and can be published. The other letters are for your information, but not for publication.

~~xxxx~~ I've given a copy of these to Harry Ring. A friend of mine here in San Francisco (where I'm now campaigning) gave me this material. Please leave off the names I have crossed out if you reproduce this.

Regards,



Fred Halstead



United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO
Northern California Boycott

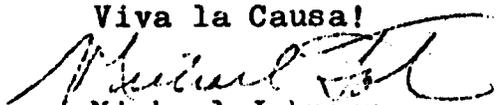
746 Divisadero St., San Francisco, CA 94117 phone 567-1562

November 3, 1977

Dear

Enclosed please find two copies of the statement which Cesar issued following his trip to the Philippines. I hope that it helps to answer any questions which ITU members in the different chapels may have about Cesar's trip. I also asked Susan Senger if she knew why some of the ITU people (yourself included) were not receiving the newsletter regularly. She said that she would check with you about it, and that the answer might be to keep the ITU list separate from the rest of the mailing list, so that we could be sure that the ITU mailing goes out each month in good order. I will continue to work with Susan to make sure that the ITU members receive their newsletters. Thanks for everything..

Viva la Causa!


Michael Johnson

SUMMARY OF REMARKS BY CESAR CHAVEZ

October 15, 1977

Delano, California

There are two issues surrounding my visit to the Philippines: what I did and saw while I was there; I can, of course, answer those questions myself and I will try to do that. The second issue concerns criticisms of the Philippine government. Many who wrote me last August wished to place the burden of answering these charges on me. I am not an expert on the Philippines. I don't want to be put in the position of defending allegations about the Marcos regime, and I can't and don't want to be a spokesman for the Filipinos or their present government. For this reason I invited representatives from labor and peasant groups to be at the meeting.

I went to the Philippines because of the Filipino farm workers who play an important role in the farm workers union. Since the beginning of the Delano Grape Strike in 1965, I have pledged to them that I would visit their homeland to learn first-hand of their culture, history and people. I have planned to go in the past and have cancelled those plans because of one or another emergency in the union. Last spring, on my return from a visit to Mexico, I went into an election campaign in the Coachella Valley. There the Filipino members noted my visit to Mexico and asked me about the Philippines once again. I decided to go and made definite plans for the trip.

Before I went I set several objectives: I wanted to visit labor and peasant organizations and meet with their memberships and leaders, see the agrarian reform program and study agriculture in general. I also met with delegates from many nations attending a seminar on collective bargaining sponsored by the United Nations' International Labor Organization. During the trip I met with leaders of most of the major labor organizations and nearly all the peasant groups. In 17 days, working 14 to 16 hours per day, I visited 13 Philippine provinces and spoke to thousands of Filipinos.

I was extremely impressed by the Filipinos' friendliness, hospitality and integrity, and by the many commonalities between the Mexican and Filipino peoples. I was moved by their commitment and purpose as they try to solve the many serious problems they face. I was also amazed by how strongly they felt about our union's modest efforts to serve Filipino farm workers in the U.S. and by how well known the American farm workers struggle is in the Philippines. We made many friends with the farm workers and with other workers and their leaders.

A few days after I arrived in the Philippines, I met with President Marcos. In a private exchange, we discussed elections; Marcos said he would call for free national balloting. Following our meeting, Marcos met with a visiting delegation from the U.N.'s ILO; I also



was present. There he publically restated his decision to have elections. I thanked him for that statement and said I thought it would be welcome news in the U.S. At that meeting, our union was presented with a certificate of appreciation for its work with Filipino farm workers here. Before receiving the certificate I conferred with the leaders of the Philippine labor and peasant movement who counseled our union to accept it.

The same day I met with Marcos I also granted an interview to a Bernard Wideman, who said he was a correspondent with the Washington Post. I told him I had praised Marcos' commitment to hold elections and repeated to him what labor and peasant leaders had told me.

Wideman's July 29, 1977 article in the Post sparked confusion and concern among some of our church friends. I want to set the record straight: I did not praise martial law. I did praise President Marcos' call for elections and certain government programs I visited.

I have received three types of letters regarding my Philippines trip. Some letters express concern and request information on the visit. Others raise criticisms or objections to the trip. Still others attempt to blackmail the union by threatening us for having made the visit. We value the support we have received and this is our response.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I received the letter which contained Cesar Chavez' stated reasons for his recent actions in the Philippines, which included accepting a presidential appreciation award from the right wing dictator Ferdinand Marcos and making some favorable remarks on some of the regime's policies. The arguments in the Chavez summary are not convincing to me, at least, and open up as many questions as they attempt to answer.

This incident is not the only factor which has disturbed me about recent trends in the Farm Workers Union. Another is the purging and the red-baiting of non-farworker volunteer activists who had done so much to help keep the UFW alive through some tough years.

I have been in assistance work for the Farm Workers since the very beginning, quite deeply in the early years and to a lesser, yet consistent, extent over the past few. To me, the UFW represented the best in the American labor movement. I hold a low opinion generally of the business unionism that prevails overwhelmingly in American labor. The UFW emerged as one of the exceptions--it had social vision which extended far beyond the confines of the narrow Comperian tradition. It promised to be an important element in developing an effective movement of social justice to counter the insanity of our predatory capitalist system. But now it seems that the UFW is fast going the way of all union flesh in this country and appears little different from the usual opportunistic, bureaucratic business unionism. In some ways worse. As much as I detest the man, I don't know if even George Meany has accepted a medal from any fascist dictator. I submit a number of clippings which may be of interest to the Committee.

1. THE MARCOS INCIDENT. While Chavez may not have praised martial law, his letter says: "I did praise President Marcos' call for elections and certain programs I visited." What does this mean? With a dictator like Marcos, commitment to "free election" hold as much water as the promises of Ian Smith in Rhodesia and of Vorster in South Africa--some day--meaning never. What programs? In any oppressive dictatorship, apologists can dig up some points to try to justify it. Mussolini got the trains to run on time and drained the swamps. Hitler built autobahns and the Volkswagen--the peoples' car. Many naive tourists got guided tours of Stalin's Russia and came away impressed, by eyewitness. Lincoln Steffens went and said: "I have seen the future and it works," at a time that Stalin was butchering and incarcerating millions of peasants in his forced collectivization programs. The latter-day seekers of the Big Rock Candy Mountain return from Communist China singing all kinds of praises of one of the most totalitarian societies in the world--wrongly termed socialist--and really as close to Orwell's 1984 as any country can get in the complete control of its citizenry by its ruling hierarchy. So such favorable observations mean little in the total context. I refer you to Tom Ueber's series in the Chronicle about the Philippines, particularly the enclosed clipping for Nov. 18, where he describes what a hellhole it is for the peasants, who lead lives similar to those of the desperate mahogany-cutting slaves of the Mexican Chiapas in D. Bruven's jungle novel, The Rebellion of the ~~Changos~~.

Chavez talks of his relations with Filipino labor and peasant "leaders". Who are these leaders? Please note the enclosed article, "Filipino Workers Resist Marcos Repression", in the Weekly People of Oct. 22, 1977. It would seem unlikely that any truly independent labor leaders would urge Chavez to accept any kind of award from Marcos. The article tells of the forced disbanding of labor organizations in the Islands, the jailing and harassment of unionists, and the banning of strikes to make the economic climate "attractive" for investment by foreign (mostly American) corporate interests. The story talks about the only permissible trade union body, The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, as "distinguished mainly for its all-out support of the government's anti-labor policies." Are then these "union leaders" from organizations something akin to Hitler's and Franco's labor fronts or the company unions of Brezhnev's state capitalist regime in the USSR? Or are these just frightened people who say such things to try to save their own skins from incarceration? It would seem that any independent trade union militants in the Phil--

piners would now be in prison, dead, or cradling a carbine in one or another of the guerrilla armies popping up to throw off Marcos' stifling yoke.

The enclosed WLD magazine article of 11/21/77 tells of a critic of the trip who "alleged that Chavez' concern was political—to marshal support among pro-Marcos Filipinos inside and outside the UFW in time for union elections this fall." If this opinion has any basis, it would make Chavez' actions even more unconscionable. It would not become a matter of Chavez "using" Marcos for his own ends, as much as it allows a greater benefit for the tyrant of Manila to provide some respectability for his regime in the outside world. As a long-time disciple of the famous disciple of non-violence, Mohandas K. Gandhi, it is a grim irony that Chavez would accept for any reason a citation from an autocrat who rules his society with a loaded gun. One cannot imagine Gandhi ever accepting an award from the British imperial rulers of India.

The enclosed Industrial Worker article of 10/77 says that when outgoing UFW Executive Board member Phillip Vera Cruz tried to protest at the recent UFW convention about a representative of the Marcos dictatorship being invited to address the convention (1) he was not allowed to speak. The article further says that "Chavez explained that Vera Cruz was not allowed to talk 'because he was going to insult our guest.'" What the hell has happened to union democracy in the UFW if a member of the union wants to object to such a smelly situation and is allowed no voice? I have met Brother Vera Cruz, a thoughtful, principled and highly-respected trade unionist, who now seems to count for less than some fascist thug bureaucrat from Marcosland. The whole matter plainly stinks.

2. THE PURGE. Another major issue that disturbs us greatly about the UFW is the reported "purge" of radical non-farmworker volunteers who have done so much to help the union survive some extremely difficult years. Without the thousands of young people who have assisted the UFW during this time I doubt if the union would have made it. I was disturbed a year ago when Nick Jones, national UFW boycott director, resigned to protest Chavez' "redbaiting" of union workers. But I let it pass then.

Now, according to the Weekly People of 9/21/77 (enclosed) in an article "UFW on Road to Business Unionism", Mark Crossman, a Chavez lieutenant was quoted as saying that when the union was waging its boycott of California grapes and lettuce, "we took in everyone and anyone who would help us. Many people joined in support of the UFW for their own purposes. We now say if any s.o.b. comes in with his own political or social agenda and tries to impose that agenda on this union, then we will kick him out."

I agree with the Weekly People's analysis when it says: "If the purpose of this was simply to increase the role of the rank-and-file farm workers in the administration of the union's activities and in the determination of union policy, then it might have been a progressive step. But all the signs indicate that Chavez and Crossman are seeking a simple purge to insulate farm workers from ideas more radical than their own."

It is true that no outside should tell any union how to run its affairs; that should emanate from the rank and file of the union itself, instructing their officers on what policies they want them to carry out. But there is nothing wrong with eliciting community support either when needed. From personal experience over the years in UFW support projects, I can well remember that a few small Marxist-Leninist vanguardist sects which participated by treating the UFW as a subordinate extension of their own politics, fancying themselves as THE revolutionary "leaders" of the working class, and making of themselves royal pains-in-the-ass in the process. But a vast majority of these student and non-student radicals I found to be selfless, tireless and dedicated workers, whatever their particular political orientation, who asked for not special favors and who were satisfied with seeing the UFW call its own policy shots in the various projects.

The UFW, although much stronger now than ever, is not entirely in the clear yet. In the battles ahead with the mighty powerful agribusiness interests they may still need considerable community help. Where are they going to get supporters as equally committed as the several generations of radicals who once populated the Farm Workers scene? From pro-Marcos supporters? From the multi-nationals whose investments Marcos is wooing to the Philippines by crushing all autonomous labor and peasant movements? We think not.

A few years ago, I was on a food caravan to a UFW strike area—I don't remember now whether it was in the Salinas or San Joaquin Valley area. There was an evening rally to highlight the weekend in which morale-generating shouting, footstamping and slogan chanting were part of the festivities. When the name of Cesar Chavez was mentioned a tidal wave of cheering went up like to some demi-god beyond all criticism. Unbridled idolatry. It frightened me to see someone, regardless of talents and dedication, ~~was~~ treated as a god in what is supposed to be a democratic trade union of ordinary men and women. From what I hear, Chavez has done nothing to dissuade this kind of larger-than-life hero-worship. This type of phenomenon can open the door to any self-serving demagogue. We don't need any more "everend Hoops. I am reminded of a quote from Michael Bakunin, noted 19th century anarchist revolutionary and thinker: "Nothing is as dangerous to a man's personal morality as the habit of coexisting."

Eugene Victor Debs, well-known early 20th century trade union and socialist figure, who himself was the recipient of considerable popular adulation, recognized the danger of this when he said: "If you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of the capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into this promised land if I could, because if I could lead you in, someone else would lead you out."

Whether the United Farm Workers Union is strong enough to weather this "cult of personality" surrounding its president and be an independent democratic entity controlled by its members from below, it's hard to say. It seems for now that the whole union structure is subordinated to the charismatic dominance of one person—not a healthy situation. (I make this observation as a person who once much admired Cesar Chavez, although I like to think I kept my respect within human proportions. I recognized his vast contributions to the union and even to social struggles beyond the labor scene.) Yet the present situation cannot be solved by outsiders. It is the business of the farmworkers themselves to make what they will of the union.

In the meantime, I cannot in good conscience continue on the now nearly nominal Farm Workers Assistance Committee of DATU Local #21. A few months ago I did contribute ^{to} ~~the~~ ~~committee~~ assist in putting out the farmworker local newsletter. Yet I cannot ask anyone else to give assistance where I would be hard put to do so myself from now on. If other feel they can do a good service with the committee, fine. But I no longer can.

Sadly, yet in continuing struggle,