

RD
January 29, 1985

Dear Peter:

What a whiff of a great amount of material you have discovered in Bess's files! If only you could have invented about 2 or 3 people in addition to yourself to dig into them and then send 2 more to help Mike and Olga to do the same for my files here, then, of course, you'd be a genius. Unfortunately, we have tasks, historic tasks, and not enough people to carry them out. So for the time being, I just have to be satisfied with a "thank you".

After you read the REB minutes and the Letter of the Week and knowing what you set as your tasks in L.A., beginning with the three classes on the Archives, I wouldn't be surprised that you would have said to yourself: "I wonder when she thinks I'll get time for what she's assigned me?" I must depend on the fact that I know you are a genius in creating time when history looks you in the eye. So here goes.

Insofar as the Lead on the Middle East, for which you have only two weeks, it would have to be more or less a taste of the 4 Ws only and what is current. But look at all that is current; here are the few I pinpoint: 1) Whether you take Israel as Israel has degenerated since the Lebanon invasion, or you take Israel claiming it will withdraw unilaterally, you will have the same results. And that is that it has been a great disaster no matter which is your focus, with everyone without exception losing.

2) Or if you take the Iran/Iraq War, which has been going on for five years, and doesn't look as if it will end until everyone is bled white, with what the new horrors of Khomeini on the one hand and Hussein on the other, thought they would achieve -- to rouse the martial spirit of their masses to conquer new land -- you would end up with the exact opposite of what was hoped for. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
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3) The point of all this is -- and I didn't even consider the Emirates or the Oil question or the two nuclear powers waiting to pounce -- that no matter what we would take up, you couldn't achieve anything unless, to begin with, you mention, right after the four Ws, that is your jumping off point, the 75-76 Civil War, which was crushed by friends and foes alike, Left and Right alike, international and national alike, so that whether it was the PLO suddenly welcoming Syria like a heaven-sent saviour of Islam, or the one who was a socialist and claims still to be that -- Jumblatt --, or the Communists, they all must face the fact that a Civil War is such an all-inclusive not-to-be-repressed outburst that is you squash them you literally can live for decades and still be dead.

Now choose which part of the Middle East you want to limit yourself to, and use this question of the 75-76 Civil War as the determining question, or rather as the question that will prove to you that there is no way to get out except through revolution.

Now, the second assignment, which I really think of more as an Essay, and for which you have a month and a half, and for which I

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imagine you have some material already -- it is very important, precisely because we have so few articles on India, to write a very substantial dialectical analysis. First, I want to tell you that this is one area where the IS has some very important things to say, even though, as usual, they draw the wrong conclusion. Comparatively recently, their Indian spets made a trip and spoke of democracy in a stupid way, but he had lots of facts and definitely took advantage of the fact that he knows India by regions and tribes as well as by economic analysis. At any rate, get hold of Nigel Harris' articles (he may also have a book). What I know historically about the attitude since the end of WWII is this: 1) We have always disregarded both Ghandi and Nehru, but I suddenly showed great sympathy when at the Bandung Conference, Nehru found himself in China and for the first time discovered that a great big chunk of India was portrayed in Chinese geography as part of China. I have a pretty good article and analysis of the '58 war, even though I don't remember if it was a Weekly Political Letter or an N&L article. I know that part of the West Coast was brought into it in the following manner: Allen was a close sympathizer but not a full member. Lillian, as usual, has friends in the Stalinist-Maoist-Populist-Oehlerite ranks and brought some of these to the meeting they had for me. They nearly assaulted me physically and I was so mad at Allen and Lillian that I decided not to sleep overnight there and drove like a maniac towards L.A. Be sure to get the official Maoist publication of that war that had a lot of maps and history. If I find my copy, I'll send it to you.

2) For a while -- I think the early '60s -- I wrote for an Indian Journal called Mankind, which doesn't exist now. But I do know that when I used to have contacts in the country of some sort it was all because of my knowing of the dispute between Lenin and Roy at the famous Second Congress. I'm sure there are books around that Roy has written, but of course all this is just background.

3) What you have to start with is that whether we take the very first revolution of India from British imperialism, no Marxist looked seriously at it, because they used it to show that nationalism is nationalism is nationalism, and they didn't change their position on it until Mao was victorious four years later. But I don't think we need to spend much time on Indira Ghandi's assassination, or the Sick problem, which is really 10th rate stuff compared to all those suffering Indian masses. I'll try to write to you again later.

Yours,

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