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## LETTERS

For reasons of space, we have reproduced content only, editing out all salutations, introductory notes, titles and affiliations. The order in which the letters appear is alphabetical, according to the last names of the writers. Some of these letters were written in the hope that their publication would encourage consideration of particular points raised in the Johnson-Cole resolution (see November-December Newsletter). We regret that they did not reach us in time for insertion in the last newsletter.

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I am ashamed that some members of the ASA have found it fit to attempt to abrogate the Johnson-Cole resolution. If they succeed in achieving that anti-African goal, I shall have to reconsider staying in the ASA and I will appeal to my fellow members who share my feelings to join me in an effort aiming at the creation of a separate Association which will have closer ties with our Afro-American brothers and which will reject as meaningless and reactionary the notion that scientific knowledge and research should not serve primarily the cause of right and justice.

Hassan el Nouty

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Referring to the letter of October 30 to Members of the ASA from the Executive Secretary, I am more than disturbed by the suggestion presented by Mr. Robert H. Bates in his covering letter for the mail ballot (enclosure C). (It brings alive all my sad experiences from the highly politicized and ideologically oriented universities in Socialist Czechoslovakia).

Mr. Bates states that "it became apparent at this meeting (in Boston) that unless the resolutions are adopted, the organization cannot further exist;

and that this is merely a statement of the reality..." Further, Mr. Bates states: "The feelings of betrayal... would be too strong." I cannot understand what kind of logic Mr. Bates is using that it permits him to make a conclusion of this kind.

From the General Account as of September 30, 1970, I understand that the total membership of the ASA was 1592 individuals. On the other hand, the Johnson-Cole resolution was approved by the unconvincingly small majority (151 to 138 with 13 abstentions, on second counting), which, further, came out of the unrepresentatively small voting majority of 302 individuals as compared with the 1592 members' body of the ASA. The 302 voting members present at Boston represent 18.09 per cent of the total membership and, therefore, the resolution was approved by the vote of only 9.4 per cent of the total membership. It is incredible that this 9.4 per cent makes it "apparent" (as Mr. Bates says), that the organization cannot further exist unless the resolution is adopted. (I speak in the singular because I do not think that Mr. Bates was referring to the resolutions on the status of women.)

My personal guess is that the mail ballot would hardly significantly increase the support for the resolution which stands against all basic principles of scholarship and which could pass only in totalitarian countries where science and scholarship are in political service of the ruling dictators.

Here we witness an attempt on the part of a small group to engage the whole body of the ASA, perhaps in pursuit of common goals, but in its own partisan way without making clear what this way will be. While achievement of those goals is questionable, the academic discreditation of the ASA is quite easily foreseeable.

Further, I would like to ask, who is betrayed by whom? The tone of the Bates resolution makes it clear that Mr. Bates is doubtful about the acceptance of the resolution by the whole body of the ASA if the problem is resolved by mail ballot. Isn't it correct that, if a resolution is unacceptable to the majority and it is not approved, then some minority will be disappointed? Isn't it the very natural flow of events where democratic rules still prevail? Or did we give up hope of being a democratically ruled organization?

What will happen if the resolution is approved, as happened at Boston? Will not the opposition to the resolution be disappointed? Or should this potential disappointed opposition have the feelings of betrayal and threaten the ASA with destruction? This did not happen at Boston where the resolution was approved by the unimpressive majority of the voting 18.09 per cent of the ASA members. Why should the very existence of the ASA be threatened by the people who are not sure that they produced an acceptable and convincing resolution?

Feelings of betrayal will hang over the entire organization if the ASA implements this resolution which lacks any academic merit and was approved by merely 9.4 per cent of the total ASA membership.

Cyril A. Hromnik

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I refer to your circular letter of October 30, 1970, in connection with certain resolutions taken at the business meeting of the ASA held in Boston on October 23.

I entered the ASA because it was an outstanding academic association with the furthering of scientific study of African affairs as its sole objective. I am therefore disappointed to note the political nature of the resolutions contained in Enclosures B and D of your circular. They are respectively: "Resolution on the African Studies Association's Committee for the liberation and dignified survival of African people," and "Polaroid Revolutionary Workers' Movement Demands that Polaroid:" (boycott South Africa).

I am a senior lecturer at a university, a multi-racial one, and within my field of activities I would like to point out the possible result of the above-mentioned resolutions (keeping in mind that to many South Africans "liberation movements" only euphemise "terrorism"): I have gone out of my way in the past two years to obtain academic cooperation between Afrikaans and English speakers,

and between White and Black African teachers in South Africa in the field of African Government and I am firmly convinced that this country is entering a phase of inter-racial consultation. Thus the first conference of South African teachers in African Government attended by White and Black Africans will be held in April 1971 (see p.26). Papers will be read by members of both races, and by Afrikaners and English-speakers.

In contra-distinction ASA produces resolutions that will bolster racial divisions based on fear and prejudice. By contrast, I am reminded of the gesture made by President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast when he suggested a peaceful dialogue between African States and South Africa. Have those who are responsible for these ASA resolutions considered whether they will promote the measure of cooperation already achieved among my White and Black colleagues in South Africa?

May I, in conclusion express the sincere hope that the ASA continue to improve academic cooperation and scientific development, a task for which it is eminently suitable.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr.) D. A. Kotze

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As Associate Project Director of Adult Basic Education (Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta), it was enlightening to have attended the ASA meetings in Boston, and to re-establish contact with the field. I hope the warring factions have begun to reach some level of increased communication, and that the ASA is able to combine scholarship with increased activism, especially toward American policies in Africa.

There were some very fine panels I attended and they appeared to be less traditional, more dialogue-centered. Some changes in panel mechanism could be examined. For example:

- 1) Abstracts of papers could be available at registration, enabling persons to make a better choice of meetings to attend.
- 2) Presentors could be limited to 10 or 15 minutes to summarize their papers (which could be made available at the meeting).
- 3) The chairman of each panel could be responsible for summarizing and focusing each discussion toward an established theme.
- 4) Discussion could occupy about half of each panel meeting.

The discussion of research priorities begun or continued in Boston should become a regular feature. I think that the ASA can do more to identify topics of importance to African countries and help graduate students gear their work to those critical areas. This activity would be especially helpful at ASA meetings, where dialogue on research topics could be stimulated.

It is always fascinating to me that so little attention on panels is paid to supposedly important topics, such as rural development, the varied roles education can play, agricultural development, and problems of overpopulation and urban density. I wonder if these topics and the persons capable of exploring them might not add a level of relevance midway between the poles of political involvement and detachment advocated in Boston.

There is one final comment to make, as a relative observer at the plenary sessions, I was struck by the ignorance shown of the types of resources ASA can command and the levers it could reasonably apply to effect policy changes members believe ought to occur. Nowhere in my hearing was an attempt made to clearly identify those resources, and point out the legitimate effect they could have. I believe this step is the one preceding any reasonable attempts to determine how involved the ASA, as an association, can become in political action or the level of accountability for activities it should be willing to accept.

Despite my relative "isolation", I hope to maintain contact with Africa and the ASA.

Charles E. Kozoll

With reference to the circular letter of October 30, 1970, I should like to make the following remarks:

Since I was unable to attend the annual meeting this year I find it difficult to understand how the "Revolutionary Workers Movement" ties in with the ASA.

Why would the ASA pass a motion against Polaroid Corporation because of Polaroid's business in South Africa when nothing is being done concerning the many other commercial and industrial interests invested in South Africa?

I am sure that the next ASA newsletter will contain some relevant information on the background to this resolution.\*

Also, I find no justification for an association such as the ASA to give financial support to liberation movements in Africa. To use membership dues for that purpose seems to be completely outside the range of tasks to be performed by an African Studies Association in the United States. To liberate Africa is solely an African concern and not an American one. To give in to pressure along this line would definitely turn the ASA into a political tool.

Appropriate steps to promote freedom and dignity for African peoples would be for the ASA to use all available influence with American Government and business interests to bring about a disengagement from Southern Africa. Citizens of countries practicing apartheid should be refused entry into the United States unless they denounce the racial policy of their country. Portugal should receive no further assistance, nor should the other European countries retaining colonial territories in Africa.

I find it remarkable that there were no other resolutions passed in this context except the ones on the Liberation Fund and Polaroid.

Wolf D. Radmann

\*Sorry, Ed.

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I am amazed that the Johnson-Cole Resolution was permitted to be introduced and was passed by the ASA. If our rules could not or do not prevent the consideration of matters of this type, then it is time to change the rules.

The ASA is an organization set up by scholars interested in Africa and in objective study of African problems. It has an 'academic concern' for what is happening in that continent. Its membership can express its opinion on occasions as individuals or groups. But it is certainly not a "Liberation Front". Nor is it a political organization fighting for African causes.

I therefore object to this foray into politics, in spite of my sympathy for the African people and for their struggle for basic human rights and for the dignity of man. As an Indian, opposition to colonialism and race discrimination is part of my mental make-up. I spent four of the best years of my life in British prisons fighting for my country's liberation from colonial rule. More recently, I have worked for over four years in various African countries as Ambassador, and have earned several honors and decorations from African governments as an expression of their goodwill and appreciation of my work.

I am afraid the ASA is being imperceptibly dragged into a situation where a certain group of members, politically motivated, are attempting to convert it into a political forum for purely material purposes. I feel this should be resisted.

Specifically, this resolution, in my opinion, is outside the scope of the objectives of the ASA and is beyond our field of competence. Consequently, it should be put to a vote of all the members. I would even go further and suggest that prior to this, a separate vote should be taken on the question of admissibility of this resolution for consideration by the ASA. I hope some such action will be taken without delay.

N.V. Rajkumar

In compliance with Article I, Section 9 of the By-laws of the African Studies Association, a referendum mail vote on the Johnson-Cole resolution has been implemented. Speaking only as a concerned ASA member, I urge you to affirm the resolution, particularly if the objections you have to it are restricted to the legal implications of some of its provisions, specifically those contained in Paragraphs II and IV.

I believe we may be assured that whatever projected actions, on the advice of counsel, appear to be illegal will not be attempted and that alternative procedures true to the spirit of the resolution will be devised. To ensure that the Association will diligently seek such alternatives, it is desirable that the membership assert its will that this be done. I know of no better way for the membership to do this than to affirm the Johnson-Cole resolution. To do so will be to underscore our determination to find effective means for achieving the goals expressed in Paragraphs I and III.

In the former we merely commit ourselves to find ways to lend our weight to efforts to overcome continuing obstacles to African liberation; in the latter we merely reaffirm the openness of our scholarly meetings. To appear to abandon these commitments would be an egregious error. To reject the resolution only because it specifies means for which alternatives will have to be found anyway would thus be futile and self-damaging.

I urge you, therefore, to affirm the resolution and append, if you feel you must, an expression of your expectation that the Board will not attempt to do what is illegal, but will seek feasible and effective means to implement the commitments expressed in Paragraphs I and III. Let us not go backwards -- it has taken too long to inch forward.

Marshall H. Segall

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Current demands for academic associations, like the ASA, to address the moral issues of scholarship are long overdue and most welcome. Such issues belong in the forefront of scholarly debate. They require the most open debate to reveal our shortcomings and engage our deepest moral convictions.

The prime condition of open debate is this: there must be no official orthodoxy. An official orthodoxy is contrary to the ideal of open debate. In the academic sphere, official orthodoxies detract from the efficacy of scholarship as a liberating force.

I believe that the growth and spread of scholarly work is a liberating force. The vocation of scholarship needs no formal fellowship or professional association; it needs no mock dignity. I do not care for scholarly associations that take official positions on substantive issues. They debase conscience to the level of conformity and erase the marks of courage from all conviction that does not oppose the official line.

The argument for an official orthodoxy is not improved by its linkage to a demand for racial representation. In our case, I do think that this proposal should have been argued by a special commission, as envisaged in the Burke resolution of October 1969. Instead, we have been required to vote on the merits of this question as part of an omnibus resolution and without adequate discussion. For my part, I remain convinced that scholarship is basically non-racial in nature. I would not vote for racial representation in a scholarly association because I think it is irrelevant to scholarship and degrading to all concerned.

Richard Sklar

I read the resolutions passed at the Boston meeting with considerable sadness. It seems to me inevitable that the ASA has brought upon itself loud and strong protests from a wide variety of sources, and that these sources show promise of yet further widening. Is it not due to our general lack of courage and wisdom in 1969 that we are now beset by new confrontations?

Surely, it was incumbent upon us to do more than pass a few mild resolutions which changed the chrome strips on our front bumper, but left us with the same chassis. Surely, it was incumbent upon us to take to heart the spirit of the Montreal meetings and propose fundamental changes in our structure to make it clear to all that we were what we claim -- an open organization, committed to recognizing freely all points of view, formed for the purpose of furthering and sharing academic knowledge through research, analysis, and the free discussion and dissemination of the fruits of scholarship.

Now we are caught up in the bag of trying to decide whether it is wise financially to support a political arm purporting to advocate "liberation", when we, as an organization, are far from "liberated". I fail to see how we as members can have any confidence in a Board charged with spending half of our dues to support causes relating to African survival and liberation, when we have yet to chart a course for our own ship.

We have come to such a difficult pass that it seems doubtful that the membership is capable of transmitting to our own Board any clear sense of its wishes as to what the Association should stand for, and in what direction it should point its prow. We seem rudderless: whatever strong wind comes along is our captain. Is it not high time to stop all of our rhetorical fist-shaking and, working through or outside of our organizational structure in such formal or informal bodies as may seem appropriate to the task, undertake a self-study? Can we not look into our history, assess our strengths and weaknesses and propose courses of action, renewed statements of aims and objectives, areas of possible future development, and possible structural modifications for consideration by the Board and the membership.

Darius L. Thieme

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It is with deep regret that I feel obliged to disagree publicly and fundamentally with two such old friends as Martin Kilson and Ruth Schachter Morgenthau. We all grew up together in African studies, so to speak. Each of us began a concentrated interest in modern Africa in the early 1950's, an era in which such study, if more adventurous because of fewer guideposts, was less beset by the many and subtle traps and obstacles that face us all today. It was an era of hope, not despair, and with hope all things seem possible. Today many things we would like to see happen cannot happen and we must all decide how to act in the face of these facts, without betraying either our integrity, our ideals, or our responsibilities.

This is a long preface to say that I have chosen a different path from either of them, or so it seems, and I should like to argue its merits in the hope of persuading others to join me.

There are, I take it, two fundamental questions at issue: one is whether some explicit recognition of the race of scholars should be made in the allocation of positions within the Association (and perhaps by extension in the allocation of research awards, teaching positions, etc.). The second is whether a scholarly association should commit itself as a collectivity to so-called political action in its general field of interest. There are, as everyone knows, a hundred variations of positions on these issues. I shall only address myself therefore to the fundamental issue of each. In both cases, I say yes and in both cases, Kilson and Morgenthau say no, although differently to be sure. (Perhaps Morgenthau assents partially to the first point.)

I start with some premises. We live in an era in which the political consciousness of Black men is high, higher than at any point heretofore in modern history. It is high and it possesses a quality of intensive anger against whites, especially but not only in the United States and southern Africa. A second premise is that, in terms of the realities and not the formalities of power, the United States is the most powerful country on the African continent, that its power is likely to increase not decrease as the next few years go by, and that by and large it is using this power to stand in the way of African liberation, directly and via intermediate forces. It does this not through misunderstanding the situation (and therefore is in need merely of "better advice" by qualified specialists), but as the consequence of its role as the primary politico-economic power of the world system. It seeks in every possible way to maintain this position of primacy because of the manifest material advantages it brings. Racism, in both overt and more subtle institutional forms, is a primary ideological ingredient of the American world system. Insofar as virtually all the members of the African Studies Association are direct beneficiaries of the present world system, none of us can escape moral involvement: we must decide whether our life-actions will sustain this present system or seek to change it.

Let me deal first with the issue of quotas. I am strongly in favor of quotas for oppressed ethnic groups, within the ASA and within all other institutions, as a transitional mechanism (recognizing that the transition may be a long one). I take a position comparable to that of Sartre in "Black Orpheus" on negritude: it is the negation of a negation. World history since the 15th century has created a situation such that, in the year 1970 in the United States, the use of universalistic testing mechanisms to allocate positions in society to individuals is inherently and inevitably a process which treats classes of individuals differently favoring (and by a large margin) those coming from upper strata of society. To achieve equal treatment, we must therefore compensate for the roadblocks in the present, and remove the roadblocks for the future. Quota mechanisms are the most likely way to achieve both these objectives, and simultaneously at that. I should be willing to argue this at far greater length, but space forbids it here. That is why I voted for the resolution of the Black Caucus at Montreal and, when that resolution was defeated, why I voted for the Burke resolution.

The second issue is politicization. I suspect we have all heard the basic arguments now ad nauseam. I shall therefore state my own position briefly. All social activity has political implications. One of the major functions played by most established social institutions is to support the premises of the social order by not questioning them. In my view, the proper role of intellectual institutions including, therefore, the ASA -- is to be in perpetual and creative tension with the political institutions. Normally, there is a difficult balance to be reached between the repressive point of the political system (that point at which opposition to the political institutions leads to total suppression of the intellectual institutions) and the point of complacent subordination, otherwise known as "neutrality" (and it is to this phenomenon that Kilson's charge of "sycophancy" would be better placed). The ASA has long leaned to the latter pole, as indeed have all of U.S. intellectual institutions in recent years. The issue of African liberation can scarcely be said to be peripheral to the interests of the ASA. Committing the organization to a moral (hence, political) stance on this issue seems to me now, as indeed it has always seemed to me, self-evident as the path of intellectual honesty, of political effectiveness, of moral necessity, and be it said of moderation. That is why I would have voted for the Johnson-Cole resolution, had I been at Boston, and why I shall do so if there is a referendum.

Immanuel Wallerstein