

March 28, 1969

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Dear Francis:

Until I received your letter I had heard nothing except a few thin rumors concerning the discussions with regard to Spetsai. Now, with the letter, as well as my conversation with Brian Clark today, I have at least some idea of what is going on. It would be of some interest to me to see the circular letter of the European Committee of Scientists for Democracy in Greece and I would appreciate a copy of that, if possible.

There are some comments concerning your letter which I would like to make. I must first point out that although I am an employee of the U.S. Government, and that the U. S. Government will support my trip to the school, the opinions expressed here are not in any way connected with my employment, but represent a completely personal view--that of a scientist and a participant in the summer school on Spetsai.

I deplore the current undemocratic regime in Greece and am deeply disturbed by the reports of the totalitarian measures used by the present Greek junta. I do not, however, consider that this viewpoint leads necessarily to the conclusion that the Summer School should be cancelled. I am planning on attending. Thus, I agree with your overall conclusion. I also agree with your statement concerning the fact that the political nature of governments has not widely influenced the planning of or attendance at international scientific meetings in the past. Further, I believe that practice to be proper, by and large. Most importantly, I agree with your "basic objection," as stated on page 3 of your letter.

You may know that there is a considerable interest here in changing the proposed site of the 1971 meeting of the FASEB away from the city of Chicago. This is in protest over the police brutality during the 1968 Democratic Party Convention. I have voted in favor of the proposed move and have been asked if that position is not inconsistent with my attendance at the school in Spetsai. My answer to that question is relevant to the current debate. As a citizen of the United States I have the responsibility to protest unjust governmental practices. Also, as a citizen, I have, at least to some degree, some political power to use in attempting to effect a change. With regard

to Greece, however, I have no power, and consider the suggested boycott a politically ineffective device. If I thought that an effective international boycott of Greece were possible, I would be eager to support it. Therefore, one must view the act of boycott as a very personal and private protest--not as a useful political activity. As such, its value is primarily to the individual boycotter and his conscience. Although I respect a personal decision to boycott, I feel that undue pressure on others to take the same action is unfortunate.

There are two matters discussed in your letter with which I do not agree. I also think that they are both irrelevant and dangerous to your position. These concern the dismissal of academic persons, and the alleged torture. Regardless of our private evaluations of those dismissed, the manner of dismissal is the crux of the issue and cannot be set aside. Similarly the fact that countries other than Greece also may engage in torture does not diminish the horror of torture. The possibility that either or both of these claims is true is what, among other things, leads you and me to deplore the regime. Therefore it is unnecessary to discuss them. It is dangerous to do so because no one of us is in a position to evaluate the truth of the claims. You cannot win a point with the Committee by arguing a non-confirmable fact. I assume that you brought these matters up because the Committee raised them. It would be a mistake to allow yourself to be driven into an indefensible corner as an apologist for the junta by the tactics of the Committee. I would then urge you to emphasize the other points in your letter and omit these two in future discussions.

The "conditions" you mention seem to me both proper and useful. I wonder whether they might gain added leverage if you could get NATO itself to make these demands on the Greek government.

One additional minor point. I was a little disturbed by your sending me the letter after indicating to Gros that you considered it confidential. I believe that it would be best to inform him that others (I assume School participants) have been made privy to the correspondence. I am sending copies of my letter to Alex Rich and Paul Berg.

Dan and I are looking forward to seeing you on Spetsai. Very best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Maxine Singer

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