

Oct 21, 1966

Dear Friends:

Ever since I got that remarkable letter from East Europe I began to realize that I had underestimated the international symposium, SOCIALIST HUMANISM. That is to say, at first I thought that they were too "abstract"; those articles on Humanism from East European countries did not criticize their own countries. Since then however, I have realized that this was the only way the authors could have gotten published, and it was their way of seeing whether Marxist-Humanists from the West would understand, and would begin a dialogue with them. This is just what I am in the process of doing, and for that as well as other reasons, I would like to urge both the friends and sympathizers to get a copy now that it is in paperback and we can get it for you at 20% off. (You would have to pay the \$1.50 in advance to us, however.)

Toward that end, I would like to call to your attention some of the articles that I consider especially valuable. We will begin with the only one from Africa, which I have previously often quoted, but this time I wish to quote from the article in the symposium because, being a poet, some of his expressions state beautifully what we may state prosaically: "Marx's originality is that starting from purely materialistic postulates, he arrives at a vision of man that yields, neither in truth nor in depth, to that of the greatest philosophers." (p.62) "for Marx, man is essentially a producing artist." (p.56) "Beyond the economic 'appearances,' it (Marx's thought) plunges into the human reality that causes them. For the factual view of things, Marx substitutes a profound insight into human needs. His is a new humanism, new because it is incarnate." (p.61)

Of the Yugoslav writers, I considered Danilo Sejovic most "political" in the sense that he criticizes Stalinism and Maoism quite specifically, and Mihailo Markovic most exciting because he is the only one who does not divide Hegelian dialectics from Marxian humanism, but, on the contrary, states that "Marx's dialectic is inseparable from his humanism... What Marx discovered in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind remained the essential feature of his method. Dialectic is primarily a method of criticism... Marx's main critique of previous forms of materialism was their lack of dialectic..." (p.86) Nor is he afraid to talk of ontology, epistemology and logic: "A humanist ontology is a philosophical theory of the objects of the human world... A humanist epistemology is a theory of human knowledge. Logic should not be reduced to the investigation of exact, purely formalized schemata of thinking..." (p.84)

The Czechoslovak writers do more than the others in relating humanism to existentialism and other forms of modern thought as strict philosophy. Read especially the contributions by Karel Kosik and Milan Prucha. I should also like to call attention to the new non-Marxist philosophers in West Germany who nevertheless are studying Marxism, most sympathetically. Read especially Iring Fetscher's "Marx's Concretization of the Concept of Freedom": "Never did Marx see in the mere mastery of man over nature the meaning of history and the essence of liberation to which socialism summons. One may almost cite the biblical phrase: 'For what is man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' ... In his works of the 1840s and 1850s .. Marx left us detailed information about this concrete free man who, 'in his individual work, in his individual relations, has become species-essence.' ... Only when he is liberated from the 'idiocy' of lifelong fixation to a trade, and from the slavery of wage labor, will such all-round appropriation of species-life by the individual be possible." (p.270, 266-7)

Now then I also believe we may be able to interest those who are not yet interested in NEWS & LETTERS Committees to become interested through such symposia where they both see other views of Marx's Humanism and see it, above all, not only as idea, but as movement. So why not plan an education on that book?
Yours, Raya

13938