

August 6, 1967

TO THE REG_NEB

Dear Colleagues:

In advance of taking up the responsibilities of leadership at the plenum itself, I wished to discuss this with you on the concrete level of what it means for our organization at this juncture of our development, as Marxist-Humanists confronted with an objective situation in the US which, on the one hand, is entirely spontaneous, but, on the other hand, the black nationalists will capitalize on it by claiming it for themselves and diverting it.

Since we are all Marxist-Humanists, and not black nationalists; internationalists, proletarian internationalists and not a "caste of globetrotters" (as a follower of Castro calls both the Russian and Chinese Communists), it would seem an easy task. It would appear necessary merely to repeat that, as against every variety of communism and nationalism, Marxist-Humanists stand for a theory of liberation that is realized in one way, and one way only: mass action. And because we stand for mass action, for spontaneous action, and listen to the voices from below, there is no difference between theory and practice as is seen in our one guiding principle: self-development.

Unfortunately, it isn't all that simple. Unfortunately, our leadership takes for granted ~~this~~ ^{that} in fact can come alive only if they themselves practiced this by having our distinctiveness stand out in every one of their organizational acts, be they within our own organization when the leaders manifest to the ranks just how they take a theory and apply it in actuality in objective developments. And by applying it also in actual class struggle and ~~in~~ in the Negro Revolution, it would, of necessity, have shown itself by people joining us, rather than we getting so absorbed in these "mass actions" that, in fact, everyone from "SC" to "black power" advocates, from "left" trade unions to theoreticians, ~~are~~ ^{are} ~~gaining~~ ^{are} ~~from~~ ^{are} us. ~~1/2 left~~ In consequence, unfortunately, the responsibilities of leadership is diluted to mean leading "a real struggle."

Members, then actual governed by their routines.

Now the reason I began with the past tense—"I wished to discuss with you"—is that one important thing made me change my mind. ~~I wish~~ I wish at this point to stop the discussion of our organization, and, instead, discuss the very latest and most popular of all the "New Left" Castro exponents—Regis Debray's REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION?—which is attracting the Stokely Carmichaels to the "Cuba road." (Every one must read this latest Communist theory for himself; it is issued by the Monthly Review (July-August 1967) and costs \$1.50, and see for themselves just how far theory has degenerated and just why this "shortcut to revolution" is gaining new adherents among the black nationalists.)

Regis Debray, being himself a Frenchman and an intellectual, cannot keep himself from theorizing, nor, despite all his protestations, does he want to. On the contrary, he expresses Castro's and Che Guevara's theories of guerrilla warfare better, as well as more frankly, than they themselves have done. Moreover, he has a provocative style (not to mention the actual provocateur's method when it comes to "Trotskyism" and even Maoism). Above all, he has "all" the possible answers to all the possible questions that, moreover, do not stop at the present, but extend themselves to "long consequences for the future." Let us begin with his conclusions:

- "Hence a line of action.
- "Hence an historic responsibility.
- "The setting up of military focus.

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("focal points", rd) not political 'focos', is decisive for the future...
"It is to point a warning finger at a dead-end street and to indicate a shortcut.

"(2) Without armed struggle there is no well-defined vanguard.... a claim to the vanguard role can be established only by confronting imperialism with acts....

"(3)... Those who have taken up arms in Latin America today have rallied around this line of action.... there must be one necessary concordance among all those who have resolved to make it (revolution)." (pp.119-126)

The definition that to be a revolutionary one must "make revolutions", ~~is~~ is Fidel's ~~is~~ the self-will, voluntarism of the dedicated few, irrespective of any mass following, stems of seeing everything "from above", "the leaders. Not only that. These leaders are further divided into lower ranks--the politicians and the higher, highest--the military men.

The glorification of war is so total that not only is it put above theory, above politics, above parties, but its every dictum (like the necessity of physical fitness) replaces the need for "A perfect ~~condition~~ Marxist education" ~~is~~ is not "at the outset" ~~an~~ "an imperative condition". Because "The value of a revolutionary, like that of a party, depends on his activity... essentially the party is the army", the true recognition of leadership demands not only that the political come up to the guerrilla fighter, not the guerrilla fighter to the city leadership, but also demands that the guerrilla leader be given "the resources with which to extend his leadership." (p.69)

whom he kills

Now that is one definition of leadership AND its responsibilities. ~~Its~~ Its arrogance, for Che, does not let himself be stopped by the courage of any Party ~~and~~ leaders. "You are capable of creating cadres who can endure torture and imprisonment in silence, but not of training cadres who can capture a machine gun nest." And just as physical fitness towers above Marxist principles, and capturing a machine gun nest ~~is~~ is more laudable than being able to withstand capitalist prisons and torture, so a general strike facing both capitalists and the armed might of the state is nothing ~~but~~ "wasted heroism leading nowhere." Better to know how to be mobile, how to maneuver, how to surprise the army with a guerrilla army. For "the nub of the question is not theoretical, it lies in the forms of organization through which the 'socialist revolution' will be realized." The "forms of organization", needless to say, turn out to be ~~guerrilla~~ guerrilla bands, even as "scientific socialism" turns out to be ~~guerrilla~~ Guerrilla warfare is to peasant uprisings what Marx is to Sorel."

should instead

Marx should never have praised so highly the peasant wars in Germany, much less dared criticize his closest collaborator, Engels, for "paying too much attention to military affairs" in the Civil War in the US. ~~He~~ he have wanted for Castro to teach the black nationalists "the art of guerrilla warfare." It surely is easier to teach one to make a Molotov cocktail than to teach ~~the~~ theory of social revolution, especially if one does not ~~understand~~ himself have the foggiest notion of the Marxian philosophy of liberation.

But do not laugh, and do not think ~~this~~ this is diversion from the Marxist-Humanist view of the responsibilities of leadership. For at the end of over 100 pages of attacks on theory and praise of practice. (Fidel has said "Everything is a matter of detail". "Hence" not only theory is of no use, but strategy too must be stood upside down and made subordinate to, and not govern, tactics.) At the end of a 100 pages against political leadership and exalting a new "style of leadership"--the military-- (and of standing everything else upside down as well and replaing "these enfeebled political vanguards") we suddenly, very suddenly, are told all this is necessary because "Thus ends a divorce of several decades between Marxist theory and revolutionary practice, . . .

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...The union of theory and practice is not an inevitability but a battle, and no battle is won in advance."

Sounds like us, doesn't it? Ah, I left out the last sentence, this union of theory and practice that is both so needed and is not a blueprint but an activity, well, it turns out that "if this unity is not achieved in guerrilla warfare, it will not be achieved anywhere." (p.107) *Do we see this to guerrilla war as sum and substance.*

Don't stop here; better is yet to come. Not only is the unity of theory and practice not for life, not for the masses, nor for any "vanguard" except in the army, but it will not tolerate any "dualism"; "The guerrilla force, if it genuinely seeks total political warfare, cannot in the long run tolerate any fundamental duality of functions or powers. Che Guevara carries the idea of unity so far that he proposes that the military and political leaders who lead insurrectional struggles in America can be 'united, if possible, in one person'...learning the art of war by making it" as Fidel had done and as Che is now trying to do!

So the "liberation" from old theories, old "vanguardists" was not only to subordinate politics to the military, the party to the guerrilla, the mass to the army, the army to the leadership, but to a SINGLE LEADER. And why? Well, "insurrectional activity is today the number one political activity."

It is this singleness of purpose, singleness of method, singleness of form of organization, singleness of leader which is supposed to reveal the "new dialectic of tasks". Ah, how that poor dialectic is mutilated, fragmented, and shorn of all spontaneous self-development, to fit into pre-conceived notion suddenly raised to "theories."

And yet it is no accident that either the dialectic or the unity of theory and practice was brought in; the compulsion to do so was precisely because of the political maturity of our age, precisely because the masses are demanding that they do not give their very lives to a cause merely for the excitement of guerrilla warfare, but ~~more~~ rather for a totally new life, in which (whatever be the "style of leadership") it all, once and for all, "ends a divorce of several decades duration between Marxist theory and revolutionary practice."

The question is: WHY IS IT THAT WE WHO FIRST THREW OUT THE CHALLENGE ABOUT FILLING THE THEORETICAL VOID IN THE MARXIST MOVEMENT SINCE LENIN'S DEATH are the ones who are self-conscious, and think we must show by activity other than thinking and uniting it with practice that we are "in the movement", instead of gaining from the movement those who would realize that without this unity of theory and practice, that NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES and only Marxist-Humanists organizations is the correct organizational practice? If we took this organizational practice as seriously as we take our theory, we would know how to expose (and not be afraid to expose) that this which calls itself "black power" is, in fact, the theory of the elite, the theory of the other world power, state-capitalism, the theory of those who copy all that is alien to Marxism, from chasing the Arabs and forgetting that they were the first enslavers of Africa, but attacking Israel as if Zionism and the Jewish masses are one; from the adventurist path of those who would doom the black masses by keeping them separate from labor in order to sound "revolutionary"; "activist" rather than concerned with philosophy and revolution as if one could possibly succeed in a genuine revolution without revolutionary theory.

Let us this plenum not go off into "activism". Let us rather attend to our own business, not in order to be unique, but because our uniqueness is, in fact, the most needed element in this fluid situation of hot summers that are long, and desert battles that are short, so that the dialectics of liberation is not degraded to the global struggle for power, but, rather, releases the mass self-activity because the leadership has recognized its responsibility to the organization. Yours.

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from
Seng