

October 13, 1968

To New Alternates to the NSB

Dear Friends:

I have not had the opportunity to address you before. Although I generally look for special ways to welcome additions to the leadership, and although I had spoken to the whole organization at the Executive Session on the Stewardship and Responsibility of Leadership, the first has been impossible because of my assignment while the second way does not have the stamp of individuality that growing into leadership demands. Therefore I welcome this opportunity of writing on philosophy. Perhaps it is as well since this will, of necessity, demand from you the philosophic approach to the minutest organizational problems as well.

Let us begin on this note on which I ended the letter to the organization as a whole regarding Chapter I of PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION, that, in truth, we must study the chapter, not as if we could find others to back up our statements, but as the discoverers we are. At the convention, when Steve proposed that I devote my full time to completing the work, you showed that you were, in fact, catching the excitement of the birth of our organization as we completed MARXISM AND FREEDOM. It is for this reason that I did not bother with such "details" as the peculiarity of such a motion. It was far more important to begin to grasp our uniqueness than "to give lectures on what was customary".

Now we must break down what this means in terms of organizational responsibilities of leadership in matters of philosophy. For, if there ever was a need, a crying need for philosophy, it is now as the New Left, including even the black revolt that had always played a vanguard role in American development, flounders in the belief that it discovered sex, and that this plus "making" the revolution equals a new society. Though a sexual revolution has always accompanied a social revolution, it discovered soon enough that, no matter what the individual exhilaration of "freedom in love", it takes a great deal more to transform society, to uproot the old, to create the new, to develop a new human dimension.

The same further need was either discovered in national revolutions--~~which were~~ or they were diverted to non-revolutionary channels. This bogging down and not achieving the transition to a new society was true both of the Irish Revolution which gave stimulus to the Russian Revolution and then "disappeared" and of the Russian Revolution, despite its high achievement in uprooting the old, once it slipped from the new human Subject as the defeated counter-revolution never rests but continues to reappear in ever newer forms. So that both a national revolution and even a proletarian one got mired into but a new stage of capitalism.

The decade of the new revolutions in our era--from Automation in the US and its simultaneous but totally different type of Chinese Revolution to the East German Revolt and, again, totally different African Revolutions, (built in part on "Négritude" so that "Black is Beautiful" isn't all that new)--failed to start on the foundations Lenin had laid for us and not only philosophy but, above all, proletarian revolutions never came fully alive. Some one must start somewhere to get hold of that missing link to proletarian revolution and since that historic task has fallen on us, it is up to you as new leaders to look at membership growth as philosophic development as well. This chapter should therefore become a test of your leadership, an arming of yourself as a projection, a human projection of the preparation for revolution which refuses to be short circuited by "making" revolutions instead of eliciting from the masses their concept of unifying theory and practice.

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To make explicit what is implicit in their movement demands that you begin, first with yourself, then with our own members, and, simultaneous, with those on the outside who are closest to us. I look forward to you having reached so high a stage in practicing dialectics this way that, by the time I make the Spring tour, we will have a full day session on the book, no matter what other public and organizational meetings are planned, and that this will enable us to return to the book for the final rewrite and preparation for the printer by the end of the year. But to ~~hurry~~ become collaborators a great deal of self-development must occur.

There are no blueprints for this. But self-creativity should be tested against what is in Hegel, in Marx, in the present. Take, for example, the difference between a Mao and a Castro. Though Mao is an original on guerrilla warfare, he was not so innocent of Marxian philosophy as was Castro and therefore had a feel for the need of it as preparation for revolution. To this day the 2 lectures he gave the Yenan Military Academy--On Contradiction, On Practice --- are the ones he keeps rewriting every time he visits an international as well as a national crisis. They may not have been much of a contribution to philosophy but they are symbolic of today's needs and therefore, if even only negatively, let us see what precisely he did and how he let/subject?/like over when he met with subjective obstacles from the proletariat and objective obstacles from state capitalism. In 1937 he faced, on the one hand, the imperialist war against Japan when he collaborated with Chiang Kai-Shek but did not wish his followers to be under the illusion that thereby Chiang Kai-Shek and he are fighting the same war in the same way. So the tens of thousands of new members that joined for patriotic reasons were to be trained into a little bit of Marxism, a little bit of contradictions in capitalism, a little bit of revolutionary practice not only on the battlefield but getting intellectuals to "educate" the masses. No doubt he considered himself a great success as 1949 brought victory, and contradictions "disappeared" both in China and with new Communist ally.

In 1957, on the other hand, he had to teach his people that there were contradictions also "among the people" which means they must be herded into Communes and among new Communist ally, i.e., Russia, and its elf so that they must bring the new society "all alone." He thought he could achieve it by providing that the Communist Party alone "represents" the proletariat and "philosophy of revolution." It didn't work this time because the "educated" proletariat had a mind of its own and did not wish its body subordinated to a primitive tool in place of an automated one as if the difference was in tools, instead of human beings. So by 1967 he decides to break up also the Party provided the youth can be molded to obey THE ONE (MAO), but revolution wasn't all that reducible and neither were the youth were clay. Now the point is to figure this out only politically and not philosophically means that we in turn would not fulfill our responsibilities as leaders who are out to unite theory and practice. If, on the other hand, we take the philosophic responsibilities seriously, the membership growth and our self-development would receive the spurt forward that would make us all into the discoverers we are. Now "all" you have to do is practice dialectics so that it acts as a beacon for the masses who will recognize their aspirations for freedom in your theory.

Yours,
Rays

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