

March 5, 1971

Dear Richard,

Hurray! So you did get an invitation from Paris; I'm sure it is the work of Champ Libre, but, of course, it wouldn't matter who secured the lecture. Also, the fact that Guégan said you were welcome is tremendous because he's a real little go-getter, and they are very anxious to become an important publisher. Therefore, everything must revolve around RD and M&F (even if it's called "liberty" instead of freedom. I'm sure you will now give priority to letters going to France; you actually have very little time to prepare. Olga is sending you the list of readers in Paris, and perhaps some in London, but I really believe you must stick to France and Lefebvre is very important. It appears to me that because, unfortunately, Stalinism is once again growing amongst the intellectuals in France, and Althusserian structuralism is likewise making headway against the dialecticians, Lefebvre may be interested in doing something to spread M&F, either by reviewing it or getting some invitations for you to speak on it. Be sure to take a couple of issues of the Talos number that has my articles on Lenin.

I have always taken, with a grain of salt, what the Stalinists have written on Mao. They do have more information than we; indeed, one of the old, old Chinese Stalinists is in exile there. But, it is not because Sheng-wu-lien is soft on Mao that they attack it, but because the tendency would have nothing whatever to do with Stalinism. Naturally, I will be glad to see what you have, but I would be very careful, when in France, to quote anything from the Stalinists against the Cultural Revolution. Absolutely nothing, in fact. We're not "taking sides" either with Liu or Mao or Russia. Perhaps you should also take with you the chapter on Mao in Philosophy and Revolution, but you must be very sure that that is not something that they will translate or use as if it is already a published work.

The article that you're to write on the Paris Commune certainly will give you a chance to stress the uniquely Marxist-Humanist analysis: First and foremost is Marx's analysis of the Communards "storming the heavens" from below and thereby establishing the epochal new "political form" which to work out the economic emancipation of the proletariat." Secondly, -- we're still in Marx's day -- it's the greatest achievement of the commune being "its own working existence" which was not really a state. (which is, of course, what Lenin built a whole State and Revolution on). Thirdly, and this applies especially to our era of WL, the masses that were aroused "to a man" meant "to a woman and child as well". I have always been surprised, though it was never new to me, as to how many thousands of women workers were organized into the Women's Committee for the Defense of Paris and the Care of the Wounded, the number of meetings they held, and the fact that one of the leaders was a Russian, Dialectica-Tomanovsky. Now the new that I believe you can stress in your article, the Commune Lives, is the generalization that, whereas up to 1914 and the return to Hegel, all Marxists, despite Marx's magnificent works on the Commune, clung to the French Revolution as the "model", after the collapse of the Second International, after the concretization of the dialectic as an "algebra of revolution", the Paris Commune became the pivot of working for a new society without bureaucracy.

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And with this new concept, it was not so much Jacobinism as "indignant hearts" that became the focal point. On the other hand, Mao's China began to abuse and transform into total opposite the whole question of Commune. First, Mao introduced it in his Great Leap Forward in 1958 when it meant absolutely endless hours of labor. Secondly, when he added "Cultural" to that "Revolution", it began to mean something purely super-structural and, of course, in its American form it is such degradation that even cultural would seem like a great revelation as against the so-called communes and new "life styles", but what is significant in all forms, even when it gets transformed into its total opposite is the hold it has on the masses. In turn, all sorts of great things come from below. Thus, Sheng-wu-lien took it in its pure communal form as it was in 1871, and as Lenin understood it and as they wanted it understood to include the masses to a man. One final word on this question is that Mao had absolutely no use for an technologically advanced country, Franco least of all, since the flirtation with DeGaulle led to nothing. To his surprise, May, 1968. Whereupon, he suddenly decided to pour in new monies, forget all about the other groupings that originally called themselves Maoists and start as if he had the Paris Commune, both of 1871 and 1968 in mind all of the time.

I am looking forward to getting the Maurer book. I believe there is some misunderstanding, so it is good that you're sending me the book as a whole. Here is what I mean by misunderstanding: only the encyclopaedia (not the smaller Logic, but the final third book, Philosophy of Mind, is paragraphed and numbered. The three concluding paragraphs are more than paragraphs but the numbers are consecutive --574-575-576-577. Maurer's book, however, seems to be on the Phenomenology which is nowhere numbered. However, there are three pages in it, pages 85 to 7 that seem to deal with the encyclopaedia. I will definitely get what I need translated long before the month is out and will return it to you. Thank you very much.

When is it that you're leaving exactly? When returning? All of the best.

Yours,
R. R.

P.S. I've just asked Olga to send you two extra issues of Spring, 1970 Talos.

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