

REB MINUTES OF DECEMBER 15, 1983

Present: All, with entire Detroit local by special invitation.
Agenda: I. Preview of Expanded REB on Jan. 1 -- Raya; II. Communications and
Ongoing Activities -- Mike; III. G&W

I. Raya said that the REB had invited the entire Detroit local for this preview of the Expanded REB to take place on Jan. 1, to which both Detroit and Chicago locals had been invited, because they are the two locals the most directly involved in the proposed move of the Center to Chicago, which will be the focus of that Expanded REB. The discussion by the Detroit local is especially crucial because Detroit is the home of the Archives of Marxist-Humanism and, though its character as local rather than Center would be quite different, it can become the most important sub-center of the organization. No motions were to be made at this meeting, and all were to speak freely. No-one would be asked to answer as to where and how the perspective would be worked out by each member tonight, or even by Jan. 1 necessarily, though we would have some general ideas by then. The main emphasis was that whatever each one of us would be doing, everything would be in the framework of the trilogy of revolution.

The Dec. 5 letter from Raya was read in full, with Raya adding that, although Jan. 1 will have only one report, she would interrupt herself during that report to have Mike fill in specific points on organizational developments, Eugene on M&L, and Alpa on finances. She then began with what she called an "upside down" way, with the new classes (with which point the Dec. 5 letter had ended), because, though we have all surely participated in dozens upon dozens of classes in M&L, this would be an entirely new type of classes, which would revolve around Marxism and Freedom -- but would take up the entire trilogy and News & Letters inseparable from it. Raya would present the first class in Detroit, taped for each local to then play as their first class, and she developed briefly the two key concepts around which it would focus: embryo and process. It is too easy to begin with the new book, she said, and emphasize what we "didn't have" in M&L -- which would be absolutely wrong if you do not grasp what was embryonic right there in M&L that could have enabled you to foresee, or want to develop, or to ask new questions.

She wanted, she said, to pose a direct question to our Women Liberationists: Has anyone in our WL Committees asked how and why the first chapter of the new book that was drafted and printed in M&L was on the Ethnological Notebooks? And then asked themselves what and how Chapter 12 turned out to be what it is? Why has the WLM contented itself with how new and great it is without ever trying to develop that newness?

(Raya developed the questions of embryo and process in more detail and then indicated the kind of preliminary outline she had made for what she conceived as eight lectures that would constitute the new classes, for which an experienced member would be responsible for the main presentation, but for which a newer member would be best to take up how M&L was tested against what Marxist-Humanism had developed.) She then turned to the question of when a transition point becomes important enough to become a turning point in your whole life. She reviewed the manner in which -- once we had decided to break with Trotskyism and therefore decided to abandon New York as center, not so much because it was too "intellectual" as because it was too dilettantish, and establish ourselves in a proletarian center -- the history of every industrial center in the country was studied. All know why we chose Detroit, where we had the concrete workers, J2 and CD. But it meant that we did not then set to develop all the great things that Chicago (our first preference) represented, and its 100 year history. It is necessary to look now at 1884-86 and at 1984-86. We want to transform 1984 from any connection with Orwell to 1984 as a new revolutionary stage. (Here Raya took us on a look at 1884-86 as everything from the publication of Origin of the Family following the death of Marx to the greatness of Eleanor Marx's activities in Chicago where her speech for the Haymarket

martyrs was not separated from her activities on WL and on Marxism. Indeed, Terry, who had been asked to do some research on this some time ago, has promised to bring some of that to our expanded PFR discussion on Jan. 1. Raya also took up what Chicago represented in the 1920s -- its significance as the home of the first Negro Labor Congress, and the many other roots we want now to return to.)

What deserves re-study at this point is our 25 Year History -- and especially the section on 1963 (page 11), which takes up the question of the "power of negativity." Just as, in 1963, the dialectic was the process by which a statement on the so-called Emancipation Proclamation was transformed into the whole true history of the U.S. in American Civilization on Trial -- so we want 1984 to become not the Orwellian nightmare, but a true leap ahead for Marxist-humanism. Each time we have moved, it has meant we have reached a new stage; and it is the new stage that requires looking back at the roots. The "power of negativity" for us in 1983 does not mean there can be any substitute for Denby, of course. What it does mean is that to transform 1984 to true growth requires us to take up most concretely how N&L can continue to present both Black and worker on page one, now that we do not have Denby who represented those dimensions in his very person. We will have to discuss on Jan. 1 how we can do that with two different columns (one which we could call "Workshop Talks" and the other "Black World") both beginning on page one and then jumping to inside pages. It means looking at the entire organization to see what the many projected moves will mean, which will involve not only who moves, but where. Kevin, for example, will have the new experience of being at the Center when he moves to Chicago; and the Black dimension will become a critical question for every local to consider, as will the question of Youth activities, and of Detroit, as that all-important home of our Archives.

The need, concluded Raya, is to see this age both as a birthtime of history and as the single dialectic -- and what that means concretely at each stage. She asked all to reread from our 25 Year History, not only p. 11 on the "power of negativity" but the penultimate paragraph of the entire History, on p. 26: "The critical question for today's "birthtime of history" is this: If there is a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and if there is a movement from theory that is itself a form of philosophy, it is necessary, rigorously and comprehensively to dig out the single dialectic that emerges from actuality as well as from thought."

RD's Draft Outline of Classes-to-be

(Though the class will be "on M&F" it will be on the entire ~~XXXXXX~~ trilogy. Presenting it in an "upside-down way" means that, instead of the focus being the relationship of the trilogy to the objective world, the focus will be on what we have developed in these 30 years. The proposal is for 8 ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ lectures, and the one who presents the lectures must be experienced. Each will include a "critique" of ourselves. Each lecture will include material from N&L and from our other pamphlets, which will be presented, not by the lecturer, but by someone else. The classes demand of ~~XXX~~ ourselves and of our audiences that we are conscious of our contributions and our developments in all the periods we will take up.)

Thus:

Lecture 1: M&F, Part I (From Practice to Theory: 1776 to 1848)

Chapter I, Sections 3 and 4

"The Philosophers and the Revolution: Freedom and the Hegelian Dialectic" and "Hegel's Absolutes and Our Age of Absolutes." (pp/ 33-36; 37-43)

Chapter III, Section 1

"Dialectical Materialism and the Class Struggle, or What Kind of Labor?" (pp. 54-58)

M&F, Part IV (The Great Divide in Marxism)

Chapter X

"The Collapse of the Second Int'l and the Break in Lenin's Thought" (pp. 167-176)

(This Lecture presents our new beginnings and what we stand for:
1) the Movement from Practice; 2) Theoretical development itself;
3) How Absolutes are made not just generalities but objective
really.)
(From N&L, first review of M&F by Saul will be our self-critique)

Lecture 2: M&F, Part II (Ch. IV) "Worker and Intellectual at a Turning Point in History"

M&F, Organizational Interlude (Ch. IX) "The Second Intern'l. 1889 to 1914" (especially Section 2 on "New Form of Workers' Organization, the Soviet")

P&R, Chapter 3 "Shock of Recognition and Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin."

(For this Lecture, material from N&L and other pamphlets could be on the Iranian Revolution re "Worker and Intellectual")

16142

Lecture 3: M&F, Part III (Marxism: The Unity of Theory and Practice)
Chapter 5 -- "Impact of Civil War in the U.S. on
the Structure of Capital"
Chapter 7, Section 3 -- "Accumulation of Capital and
New Forces and New Passions."
Chapter 8, Section 2 "Appearance and Reality" (on
Logic and Scope of Capital, Vols II and III)

RLWLKM, Introduction and Ch. III -- "Marx's and
Luxemburg's Theories of Accumulation of Capital, its
Crises and its Inevitable Downfall"

(For this Lecture, material from N&L could be on New Forces as
seen in N&L in the 60s -- Eugene's pamphlet on France, May 1968,
would be excellent.)

Lecture 4: M&F, Part IV (World War I and the Great Divide in Marxism)

Chapter XI "Forms of Organization: Rel. of Spontaneous
Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the 'Vanguard
Party'"

Chapter XII - "What Happens After"

Afro-Asian Revolutions Z Pamphlet

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P&R, Chapter 9 "New Passions and New Forces"

(For this Lecture, we could take up any of the Third World
pamphlets, and/or the new PPL on Grenada.)

Lecture 5: M&F, Part V (The Problem of Our Age: State Capitalism vs. USSR)
Ch XIII - C

"The Third Five Year Plan and a Summation of all
the Plans at the Outbreak of War"

Chapter XIV "Stalin"

RLWLKM, Chapter XII -- "The Last Writings of Marx Point
a Trail to the 1980s."

Lecture 6: M&F, Chapter XVI, (Automation and the New Humanism)
Sections 1, 2 "Workers Think Their Own Thought"

P&R, Chapter 2 "A New Continent of Thought" ---Marx

P&R, Chapter 7 " The African Revolutions and the World
Economy"

16143

Lectures 7 & 8:

M&F, Ch. 16, Section 3 "Toward a New Unity of Theory and Practice in the Abolitionist and Marxist Tradition"

P&R, Chapter 1 "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning"
(Heg 1)

Chapter 9 "New Passions and New Forces"

(NB. This is assigned earlier, in Lect. 4)

RLWLM, All of Part II ("The WLM as Revolutionary Force and Reason")

Chapter XI "The Philosophy of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Org'n."

(With Ch. 16 from M&F, chapter from IH on Montgomery Bus Boycott could be included.)
