

ABBREVIATED SUMMARY OF EXPANDED REB MEETING, JAN. 1, 1984

AGENDA: I - Report by Raya; II - Discussion; III-Motions; IV - G&V

Here is the title Raya gave to her report:

National Chairwoman's All-Organizational Report whose Philosophic Ground is Marx's Philosophy of "Revolution in Permanence" as Articulated this Marx Centenary Year, when we have completed the Body of Ideas named Marxist-Humanism as a Trilogy of Revolution -- M&F, P&R, and Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of "Revolution in Permanence."

Summation as New Perspectives, be it News & Letters, Center's move to Chicago, or totally new type of Classes, all in context of a Body of Ideas -- not only the "trilogy of revolution," but American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard, and 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.

And here is the Table of Contents:

- I. Classes-to-be as Preparation for New Stage
- II. The Power of Negativity: Two Thresholds -- Absolute Idea 1953, New and Letters Committees, 1955
- III. "Birth-time of History:" Single Dialectic in Subjective as well as Objective Developments

Raya opened the meeting by pointing out that the presentation she was about to give was not like that for a Convention. Here it is important to have the greatest open-endedness, since it is the first time we have discussed such an important subject as working out both moving the Center to Chicago and establishing Detroit as the crucial sub-center. Because everyone is conscious of the concentration on that one subject, there will be one report only -- Raya's--but sub-reports on the organization, on finances, and on N&L will appear within her report. Raya noted that the full discussion to follow was but the beginning, since no one was being asked to commit themselves to any decisions here. The emphasis that it will all-organizational comes now because, with EWLKM, we had worked out Marx's concept of revolution as ground for organization. In a word, the two are inseparable, even as 1980, which we had declared as the "year of the book" was followed by the Marx centenary year as "three books, not one," that is to say: M&F, P&R, RLJLKM, as the body of ideas that projects Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. and globally.

I. Classes-to-be as Preparation for a New Stage

The syllabus for the new "Classes in Marxist-Humanist Body of Ideas" was passed out (it is an integral part of these minutes) and Raya stressed the fact that each class has a title of its own to which attention should be paid. It is precisely because each class expresses a body of ideas that those titles could be written. And though the focus is our very first major theoretical work, M&F, the other two works are interwoven so that we get to know the body of ideas in embryo as well as see its process of development to the next work and in anticipation of the third.

Raya read the titles of each of the classes and stressed how they illuminated our uniqueness as an original, independent Marxian tendency. It results from the fact that we, at one and the same time, reconnected with Marx's Marxism, as he discovered a whole new continent of thought and revolution he called a "new Humanism," and singled out the new in our age--the movement from practice that was itself a new form of theory--which determined the whole structure of that body of ideas.

Lecture #1, so deeply rooted in dialectics, is needed to make sure that even the "trilogy of revolution" does not become either a pillow for intellectual sloth, or so very nearly disregarded by "jumping the gun," creating the new "out of the blue," that one acts as Hyndman did in relation to Marx--that Marx was but one of many who could be discarded when presenting socialism to pragmatic England. Hyndman claimed that if he presented Marx's views without ever naming Marx, it would be accepted. Once they separated, all could see that Hyndman had never intended to present anything resembling Marxism.

Concentrate on Lecture #1, on just two points: footnotes from Ch.1 of M&F and the difference, in RLVLKM, between the form of the first draft chapter on the EN as it appeared in N&L and as it was published in Ch. 12 of the new book. Look at footnote #5 of M&F, which takes up the Peasant War in Germany, and moves all the way to land and the peasant in the incomplete U.S. Civil War, when the Black ex-slaves didn't get "40 acres and a mule"; It is not developed there, because it is "out of the scope" of the book, but why didn't anyone work it out from that footnote until ACOF? It was left undeveloped even though the Black Dimension had been central to the JFT's history since the early 1940s. She continued to trace the footnotes from M&F, all the way to #21, from David Walker's Appeal, through the comments on Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, to the special footnote added on the galleys against Mao's latest proclamation.

Now jump to RLVLKM. - Have any of the members of WL-N&L asked themselves how it happens that the chapter on the EN written first came to be what appears in Ch. 12 of RLVLKM? The new in our age when WL became movement was weighted down by Rowbotham accepting Hal Draper as theorist against Marx, so that what was repeated was Engels on Women's Liberation, not Marx. But if all that Engels differed from Marx on was WL, it could be discussed as mere update (e.g. Leacock). But dialectics is not about one force of revolution alone. The structure of a work is its methodology, not as a mathematical question of "parts," but as the single dialectic of the ob-

jective and subjective situation that demands of the reader or critic or philosopher to become a participant, a co-author. Only when the determinant in dialectics is dialectics of revolution, i.e. forces of revolution as reason, not only in WL, but in peasantry, etc., does it become fleshed out as Third World, as Marx's analysis of human historic multilinear development. Thus, the four sections of Ch. 12 of RLWLKM as it appeared in print. (The challenge to work this out is especially urgent for WL-N&L. The task of presenting RLWLKM in published reviews is a task that still remains for 1984.)

II. The Power of Negativity: Two Thresholds--Absolute Idea 1953, News and Letters Committees, 1955.

It is time we all began studying the 25 Years history of Marxist-Humanism, and at this moment what helps us is p. 11 on the "power of negativity." In 1962 we were confronted with the Cuban missile crisis and the edge of nuclear holocaust. At the same time it is the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, though we don't think it should be a celebration. Our statement, through the process of proving historically that Black masses are the vanguard of American history, becomes transformed into ACOT. Just as we transformed 1963 into that great moment, so the power of negativity is what can move us from the Marx centenary year of 1983 to 1984, not as Orwellian nightmare, but as "birthtime of history."

Raya then traced "Chicago as transition point, Chicago as turning point," from Eleanor Marx's first years after KM dies, 1884-1886, through the Black and labor dimensions of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. --concentrating on the Black Dimension in 1925-1928, with the establishment of the Negro Labor Congress and the Negro Champion-- to 1953, when the JFT decided to leave NY and considered Chicago as "first choice" as the center of the new organization. (This will not be further reported here, as Raya is considering writing about the Black Dimension in the 1920s in a future T/P column, and Terry is at work on an essay on Eleanor Marx and Chicago.)

On 1953, it is crucial to recognize what happens when a threshold appears, as when we decided to move away from NY and all the sectarian debates, to a center that was Black and labor. But what one has to see at the same time is that 1953 was RD's letters on the Absolute Idea that made the split between tendencies in the JFT irrevocable. The whole history--from the WVa miners' strike of '49-50, through the arguments over the meaning of Stalin's death to those letters on AI--seems always to be illuminated anew. (Raya spoke of letters between RD and CLRJ in 1951 that foreshadow the split.) The point is that by 1953 we were thinking very different thoughts on what kind of paper, what kind of organization, what kind of center, correspondence would have. And though we moved to Detroit because that was where Denby and JZ were located, CD did not become editor when we moved. 1953-1955 turned out to be years "in limbo."

1955 meant the establishment of News & Letters--as newspaper and as organization on a completely different basis. Issue #1 showed its internationalism by coming out on the second anniversary of the E. German workers' uprising. In the first year we published

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Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, and with them, RD's Letters on the AI. There was no separation between theory and practice in the selection of Denby as worker-editor and the "assignment" to RD to write M&F.

III. "Birth-time of History": Single Dialectic in Subjective, as well as Objective Developments

At our Convention in Sept., the new Constitution actually began this new stage we are talking about. Though we had not yet projected the move, what was clear was that we were basing ourselves on the "trilogy of revolution" as a body of ideas which projected Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence as ground for organization. Thus, we could not, and would not want to, "overcome" the contradictory sound of moving the Center to Chicago at the same time as we take nothing away from Detroit as home of the Archives of global Marxist-Humanism. In a word, both those who will move and those who will stay bear equal responsibility for that universal, as indeed all of us, in whichever local we are working, do.

Detroit as the home of the Archives is not just a question of having a local here, since we actually first offered them to Wisconsin St. Historical Society. But it was Detroit, with CIO history, that had appreciation for what they represented. (Here RD reviewed our participation in Detroit's labor history, especially autoworkers' support for the 1949-50 miners' general strike.) The point is that the motion to move the Center to Chicago does not make Detroit just another local--it is a sub-center that is the home of the Archives of world Marxist-Humanism.

If we really wish to understand the birthtime of a different society pushing to be born, the best place to look is those last two paragraphs of the whole 25 Years history, on p. 26. (Raya read them.) The proof is to see how theory and practice can really be united, not in the head of a philosopher, but in the world. That is what we have posed in the Constitution of News and Letters Committees, and that is the ground of the concrete perspectives we are setting here.

The conclusions to be considered in the discussion are: 1) Eugene to appear in N&L box as "Managing Editor;" 2) Charles Denby to be listed in N&L each month as "Editor, 1955-1983;" 3) Because there is no one who can replace Denby, we propose to have two entirely new columns on p. 1--"Workshop Talks" by Felix Martin and John Marcotte, and "Black World" by Lou Turner; 4) each member of N&LC to consider fully, but not answer here, to which local they plan to go, their own perspectives for 1984.

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Finally, as integral part of those Perspectives, Raya read out what had been added to p. 195: "That which Hegel judged to be the synthesis of the Self-Thinking Idea and the 'Self-Bringing forth of Liberty,' Marxist-Humanism holds, is what Marx had called the new society. The many new paths to get there are not easy to work out." It is only after that conclusion that it became possible to see clearly why Engels differed so deeply with Marx that he could present the very first work he wrote after the death of Marx as an alledged bequest of Marx--the Origin of the Family.*

Raya then took back the floor for her SUMMATION of the day's discussions. She wished to take up the question of "moves," not as the present one we are considering, to Chicago, but as we have confronted the question ever since 1953. The decisive point of the 1953 move to Detroit was not philosophy, yet the new stage of cognition was to emerge soon after the move. CLRJ did not accept that new stage of cognition; and neither did he make a category of Denby as worker-editor. It was only when N&LC was established on the new philosophic ground that the category of Black-worker-editor was realized. For us, each "move" has been tied to the development of a new stage of cognition. West Virginia was our greatest activity. We knew it, even if CLRJ wanted to erase it from history as "small mass partyism." Yet what do you do when that historic strike has developed into a new world category with the publication of M&F? It was then that we asked Olga and Andy to move to Detroit. It wasn't easy, but it is a question of each one's individual responsibility for Marxist-Humanism.

By the 1960s, when there is a new generation of revolutionaries, the "move" meant

sending members from the Center to new cities to establish locals, as with John and Inez, and later, Anne, to NY. Raya then related what was involved in the process of writing P&R, in establishing the concreteness of its new stage of cognition at a time when all the activism of the '60s made it seem like the next picket line was what was concrete. It was in this period that we asked the Connecticut local to leave that state and come to NY. Each time the move was to work out a new relationship of philosophy to revolution, to organization. That is what our perspectives for 1984 are about.

January 1, 1984 -- DRAFT

CLASSES IN MARXIST-HUMANIST BODY OF IDEAS

articulated in the "trilogy of revolution"--
MARXISM AND FREEDOM ... from 1776 to Today;
PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION: From Hegel to Sartre
and from Marx to Mao; and ROSA LUXEMBURG,
WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF
REVOLUTION.

The focus will be on the first work -- a serious, new, historic beginning which contains, in embryo, what will be concretized as new objective situations demand it and new subjective forces "catch it" in the self-development of the idea. Whether or not one has caught it in embryo, once it appears in the next works, the process that led from the first work to the second to the third manifests that single dialectic which permeates both the objective and subjective developments. It is then up to the student to practice that methodology which would enable the reader to write both analyses of current events and work them out dialectically in a way leading to historic relations, so that one senses the future inherent in the present, as the present was in the past. Rather than just being a measure of checking the analysis against the actual movement, that practice is the goal of these totally new classes. We will cover three decades of development, with the emphasis this time not alone the objective/subjective relationship but HOW we worked this out as a self-development of the Idea where the first dialectic discovery of a movement from practice led to a new relationship to a movement from theory.

Eight lectures are proposed, with an experienced member responsible both for the lecture and what will follow, while new members are asked to supplement each lecture by references to NEWS & LETTERS and its pamphlets. Along with the three major theoretical works, the responsibility should also include two other works:

1) AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ON TRIAL, as that is the only full NEB Statement on Black dimension; and

2) 25 YEARS OF MARXIST-HUMANISM IN THE U.S, which is the first expression of our history as a totality. While the first lecture, which I will present, will include an overview of all the works, each lecture, though it focuses on Marxism and Freedom, will relate to all three major works.

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Lecture 1: DIALECTICS -- HEGELIAN, MARXIAN AND LENIN'S GREAT DIVIDE -- AND THE BLACK DIMENSION, as our original contribution to the theoretic preparation for revolution.

(Special attention to be given to M&F footnotes on question of "embryo" and pointing to the future, especially fn. 49 on David Walker's 1829 Appeal. Also, on question of critique, new Introduction to 1982 edition of P&R and new paragraphs added to RLW/LKM after publication. Also Chapter 1 of P&R on "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning.")

Marxism and Freedom:

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." Chapter III, Section 1 -- "Dialectical Materialism and the Class Struggle, or What Kind of Labor?")

Part IV, "The Great Divide in Marxism" (Chapter X, "The Break in Lenin's Thought".)

Also: as critique of ourselves, review of M&F in N&L, by Saul.

Lecture 2: WORKER AND INTELLECTUAL AT A TURNING POINT IN HISTORY -- in Marx's Time and as Iranian Revolutionaries looked at it, 1979-1980,

Marxism and Freedom:

Part II; Chapter IV -- "Worker, Intellectual, and the State" Organizational Interlude, Chapter IX, Sections 2 and 3 -- "New Form of Workers' Organization, the Soviet" and "New Stage of Capitalist Production and Stratification of the Proletariat."

Philosophy and Revolution:

Chapter 3 -- "The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin."

Also: Chapter 5 of Kevin's Thesis.

Lecture 3: HISTORY AND UNITY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Marxism and Freedom:

Part III, Chapter V -- "Impact of Civil War in the U.S. on the Structure of Capital". Chapter VII, Section 3 -- "Accumulation of Capital and New Forces and Passions." Chapter VIII Section 2 -- "Appearance and Reality" (on the Logic and Scope of Capital; Vols. II and III).

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution:

Introduction:

Chapter III -- "Marx's and Luxemburg's Theories of Accumulation"

Also: N&L during the mid-1960s and Eugene's pamphlet on "France, May, 1968".

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Lecture 4: THE GREAT DIVIDE AND WHAT HAPPENS AFTER, not only Lenin's Great Divide but the Political-Philosophic Letter on Grenada.

Marxism and Freedom:

Part IV, Chapter XI -- "Forms of Organization: The Relationship of the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the 'Vanguard Party.'" Chapter XII -- "What Happens After."

RL, WL, KM:

Chapter IV -- "From the 'National Question' and Imperialism to the Dialectics of Revolution; the Disputes with Lenin, 1904-1917."

Also: Afro-Asian Pamphlet and Raha's Introduction to the Farsi translation of this pamphlet.

(PPLs on the Middle-East are to be chosen, as well.)

Lecture 5: THE PROBLEMS OF OUR AGE: FREEDOM vs. STATE-CAPITALISM

Marxism and Freedom:

Chapter XIII, Section C -- "The Third Five Year Plan and a Summation of all the Plans at the Outbreak of War."
Section D -- "The War and the Assault on Marx's Capital."
Chapter XIV -- "Stalin." Chapter XV -- "The Beginning of the End of Russian Totalitarianism." -- Hungary 1956, Freedom Fighters.

RLWLKM:

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

Lecture 6: THE MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE

Marxism and Freedom:

Chapter XVI -- "Automation and the New Humanism" -- Workers and the Black Dimension.

Philosophy and Revolution:

Chapter 2 -- "A New Continent of Thought"
Chapter 7 -- "The African Revolutions and the World Economy."

Lectures 7 and 8: MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF "REVOLUTION IN PERMANENCE" AS GROUND FOR ORGANIZATION AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF EACH INDIVIDUAL AS UNIVERSAL FREEDOM

(NB: I have not divided Lectures 7 and 8 because I feel that by now the class can decide for itself what should be taken up in each as well as which issues of N&L and which pamphlets to include. Chapter 16 of Part II of Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal will definitely be included.)

Marxism and Freedom:

Chapter XVI, Section 3 -- "Toward a New Unity of Theory and Practice in the Abolitionist and Marxist Tradition" plus footnotes for first and last chapters.

Philosophy and Revolution:

Chapter 9 -- "New Passions and New Forces", concentrating this time on Women's Liberation plus "Marx's New Humanism and Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Times" in Praxis International (January, 1984).

RLWLKQ:

All of Part Two -- "The Women's Liberation Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason"
Chapter XI -- "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization".
Appendix: Rosa Luxemburg's Speech on the 1905 Revolution to the 1907 Congress.

Constitution of News and Letters Committees