

December 5, 1983

Dear Friends:

The approach of the end of the first quarter since our Convention presents us with a hard challenge. First, it is also the end of the Marx centenary, which opened such a vast outreach for Marxist-Humanism with the publication of the trilogy of revolution -- and it is imperative that we extend that despite the fact that we have no such great event as the centenary to create a platform for us. At the same time, the death of Denby has deprived us of our editor who, in his person, embodied both the worker and the Black dimension. What is therefore of the essence for us to remember is that the distinguishing feature from our very birth -- indeed it was the truth and the philosophic leap behind the breakup of the JFT -- was the totally new unity of theory and practice when practice is itself a form of theory.

That is our historic reason for being, and for the simultaneous announcement that we were establishing a workers' paper unseparated from the philosophy of revolution that elicits from the workers their Reason as well as their force, while we were spelling out theory in a fundamentally new, comprehensive work for our age -- Marxism and Freedom. At the same time, we did not separate from either theory or practice the question of organization in committee form. The Constitution of News and Letters Committees spelled out not only the uniqueness of the worker/intellectual combination but the four forces of revolution as Reason: Worker, Black, Youth, Women.

One important aspect of the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., which newer members may not know as well as do the founding members, is that in our final (rather than just the first) break from Trotskyism, Detroit was not our first choice in moving the Center from an intellectualistic center, New York, to an industrial, proletarian home. Chicago had been our first choice -- a city which had a glorious history of class struggles as well as of the battle of ideas between anarchists and Marxists since the days of Marx (and of Eleanor Marx on both labor and Women's Liberation); a city that, at the same time, was a cultural center as well. But truth, which is always concrete, showed that our principle of worker as editor pointed to Detroit, where that worker-editor, who had chosen Marxist-Humanism as his philosophy of liberation, lived and worked.

Naturally Denby was fully aware of all of this. Which was why he, like the entire REB-NEB, was so happy when, in 1976, Ron and Terry volunteered to try to found a local there that would grow to be a sub-center. It is why, from the start of that local, we considered the Center responsible to help its development, and would make trips to Chicago about three times a year so that "once a year" would not be the only time Chicago could meet with the Center. It is why, over the last period, we increased that relationship by having an REB representative stay for a month instead of just a week or a week-end. Here it is necessary to see how each stage of our development has been related both to what was new in theory as well as in practice. Thus, just as Marxism and Freedom meant the focus on Detroit which became center also for all of our Archives -- no small achievement when you consider that it parallels that new movement from

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practice that is itself a form of theory and that brought Marxist-Humanist consciousness to re-connect with what Marx, himself, first named his philosophy -- so, with the publication of Philosophy and Revolution in 1973, our original view of Chicago as center was re-awakened. In a word, although Chicago was not established as a local of Marxist-Humanism until 1976, we had begun making special trips to Chicago soon after the publication of P&R. The significance of Chicago, this time as sub-center, has now been expanding ever since the publication of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Philosophy of Revolution.

This unusual "Dear Friends Letter" is being written in advance not only of the usual sum-up of the first four months since Convention -- this time the special convention which amended our Constitution -- but even of the REB meeting which will first hear all this presented at the meeting on Dec. 15. It will still all be in an abbreviated form, because there can be no move as fundamental as choosing a new home for Marxist-Humanism until the convention as a whole has a chance to vote for or against it on Labor Day. The reason for this letter is that the Expanded REB this year will be a very different one, in the sense that the two most directly involved locals -- Detroit and Chicago -- will be invited to attend. The Detroit local will need to work out not who would move, but, above all, how they, as the smaller local they would become, can become the most important sub-center of the organization, as the home of the Marxist-Humanist Archives which is of world significance. And Chicago will discover that there are many tasks they have never faced before in order to prepare for the new stage they will reach as actual Center.

What then will we do at the Jan. 1 Expanded REB Meeting, which is different from all the other summations we have subjected ourselves to each year to measure what we set ourselves as our tasks each convention? First and foremost, is that the Summation as well as the Perspectives in the Report to be given there will be very nearly all organizational. While no decisions will be undertaken which are the prerogatives of the convention itself, the projected view presented on Jan. 1 will give each and every member very nearly a year to grapple with how it affects him/her in the context of that trilogy of revolution we achieved and what the new situation augers for News and Letters Committees. Because this needs so much concentration, and because, as different from a convention, we will have only a single day, January 1, the 1984 Expanded REB will hear only one Report, the Chairwoman's. That excludes even the Finance Report, although nothing is more important to us, as the need for our expansion comes at the very moment when we are in an economic shortfall. But then that is exactly what we faced when we first started this organization and decided to put Marx's Humanism on the historic scene at the very moment when, objectively, what ruled in this capitalist-imperialist-racist-sexist USA was McCarthyism.

Two other topics need to be held in mind. One is Women's Liberation. While Detroit has not been the most propitious place for growth in that dimension, I believe Chicago can be -- not because of historic past, but because of the present. I consider that the battle

of ideas that has begun on the WL page on philosophy unseparated from the concept of revolution is a good beginning.

Second, the question of our attitude, that we had to wait for the Political-Philosophic Letter on Grenada before we could analyze the events so philosophically as to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the Left, had me puzzled. You saw that from my last letter. But now that you have both the Lead and the PPL, you can see that we simply could not have included the whole of this PPL in the Lead.

The point is: each one of us, as a revolutionary, is also a philosopher of revolution. That is what must be exercised in our thinking. Take for example, one other point I wanted to include in the PPL but couldn't -- the question of so-called "one-man rule" vs. supposedly "collective leadership," which is what the murderous military chief, Austin, used against Bishop. That is exactly how Stalin started. Every dictator in a so-called revolutionary movement starts that way when he does not have a different philosophic-political perspective to justify his historic reason for being. Stalin claimed Trotsky was out for Lenin's mantle, attacking him as egoist who wanted to represent Bolshevism when he wasn't a Bolshevik as early as Stalin and most of the PC were. As against Trotsky's alleged "one-man rule" he offered the "collective leadership" as the only way to fill Lenin's shoes, which no single man could do. Trotsky, instead of fighting philosophically-politically, fought on the ground Stalin laid for him, arguing that the Youth were more democratic and if the New Course were started by them, etc. etc. By the time Stalin brought out "permanent revolution", again laying the ground for the debate, he had already so degraded it to mean adventurism that there was no way Trotsky could win, precisely because following the ground Stalin laid, Trotsky argued on 1905-07 and not on what was needed by 1928. OK. Because I didn't develop this in the PPL, does that mean that Marxist-Humanists would fall for "one-man vs. collective" instead of grounding ourselves in the philosophy of Marx's "revolution in permanence"?

Finally, I don't know whether I will have time to develop the new type of classes -- new in that, though a single work will be the main text, we will nevertheless take it up in the context of all three works of the trilogy --but those classes are what I hope will start out our new organizational year, unseparated from "revolution in permanence" as ground for it.

Yours,

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