

MINUTES OF REB MEETING, APRIL 29, 1985

Present: All but Olga on assignment; Jane as sitter-in

- Agenda: I. On Projecting what will be happening between now and July 1 -- the Plenum and the new book -- based on what has happened in the past 3 weeks in our organization and in the objective situation, especially Reagan's trip to Germany
- II. Deadlines and content of N&L between now and Plenum
- III. G&W

I. Raya said that the new mass activity of the youth on the whole front of South Africa disinvestment, and which is now covering much of the nation, is not the only thing that has arisen in these three weeks since last we met. The new youth activity is not only international, but nowadays Marxist-Humanism is getting a hearing whether in the mass audience that Raya had gotten both in Detroit where Labor Archives was the sponsor, or here in Chicago at UIC where Dave had to work without the help of academia, or in the case of Eugene and Franklin speaking on Marx's Revolutionary World View at Roosevelt U. The importance of UIC is not alone the attendance of 120, but the fact that Women's Studies for the first time brought its class. This brings us to the second new event of these three weeks, and that is the invitation that Neda received from Women's Studies International Forum to write up the Detroit Archives events as well as a review of RD's works, especially the new fourth book. It is a journal which is published in England and has outlets in Australia, Canada as well as the U.S. Third, we have also had the two-way road between the Center and the locals in Eugene's trip to New York, in Peter's writing of leads for N&L, and in the REB asking Kevin to work with the NY local which will become central once the new book is published. He will be in NY from July 20 to August 10. But what is quintessential on this two-way road now is Olga's trip to the West Coast and Utah. We will get her report at the next REB and we will then further discuss the whole question of the relationship of Center to local and local to Center between now and the issuance of Plenum Call July 1.

What has happened in the last three weeks, and what is of the essence for us as we prepare for the Plenum Call and the appearance of the 4th book, has to be put in the context of the objective situation, even as the reports of youth, WL, Chicago and the NY trips of Eugene and Kevin, cannot be considered outside of the direct relationship to the objective situation. Specifically that objective situation concerns Reagan's decision to visit the West German Bitburg cemetery where storm troopers are buried. (What Raya reported here is developed further in the Letter of the week.) Here what is important are the two new features we are projecting -- my decision to write the next T/P column on the 30th anniversary of the founding of N&L, and Eugene's volunteering to have a article on 10 years of Perspectives 1975-1985, including excerpts, ready by the time of the Plenum. In the case of my projected T/P column, I began studying, literally rereading, all the issues of N&L (I've gotten up to 1970) and what struck me from 10-64 N&L was my analysis of the nearly simultaneous

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occurrence of two world events -- China's first atomic explosion and the fall of Khrushchev. What none but myself brought out at that time was that though these events were certainly the pivot for a possible new world shift in global power, what was equally essential was the Khrushchev projected trip to West Germany arranged at a time when none were ready to "forget" the Nazis and WW II.

What we face today -- and this is why our Archives and the view of the development of 30 years of N&L is important -- is to know how to grasp our development of Absolute Method both for the objective and subjective situation. I want the various reports to have this framework in mind, and to think of the July 1 Call for the Convention. Take John's Archives which we spoke about at the last REB and which I am turning over to Terry to stencil for the other locals. It is not only that the Introductory Note aroused my special interest, but the fact that there is there is one great omission in my own Archives and that is the 1930s. Outside of my being with and then breaking with Trotsky, the 30s don't seem to exist. This is because we operated on the principle that we could not put in any of my activity for the exhibit unless we could document it. But in fact there were many mass worker strikes from Toledo AutoLite to the S.F. General strike that I was a participant in. The only thing is that I was just a rank-and-filer and therefore no records remain of what I was doing. Yet it is precisely the whole decade of the 1930s that is so present in John's Archives, as youth who ran away from home during the Depression, participant in CIO organizing, then as an SP member and with the outbreak of the Spanish Revolution choosing to break with the SP and entered Trotskyism. All of this is why I want the comrades to begin reading up on what happened in the period of the Depression when a new generation of revolutionaries developed, but ones who did not turn to theory as a total philosophy. It was only WW II that brought the GI home to develop the state-capitalist theory.

Among points that I found in reading N&L that I cannot go into now was a revelation even to me, though I am sure that I was instrumental in creating that category of women as force of revolution, and that is the fact that Angela Terrano became CD's Associate Editor once WBA was published with her dissent on automation. In those early years we singled out all the forces of revolution, from youth who expressed the whole in the objective situation whether in the first youth column by Robert Ellery, or that by Eugene Walker, or the women who didn't originally want to appear on the women's page -- Jerry Kegg and Angela Terrano -- but appeared on the labor page. The most exciting of all as more than remembrance of things past was Ethel Dunbar's column which was first entitled (think how much later Jessie Jackson said it) "We Are Somebody". One more thing I wish to add from my readings in N&L and that is the uniqueness of youth no matter which class they come from, so long as they themselves are not exploiters. The particular here is that the youth were the first in the 1960s to sense and report on women as a new

force confronting male opposition within the Left. Two young men writers were our reporters. Bernard, who was briefly a youth columnist (we had won him while he was in high school, though he was by this time a freshman in college) described a joint CP-Black Panther United Front meeting at which Herbert Aptheker spoke endlessly and at which he was booed by women who wanted their speaking time. At this point a Black Panther leader called them ultrafeminists and even pigs. Bernard wrote of this in the pages of N&L. A further development of the analysis on the Panthers and women was by Eugene who by then called the women's opposition a movement. (Even today the work Eugene did with the Marxist-Humanist at UCLA is bearing fruit with a youth Olga met in her Bay Area trip.) It was only after these two anticipations of WL as movement that we had Terry's report (she was not yet then a member) from Atlantic City demonstrations against the beauty pageant. Then came the appearance of Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices and Anne's writing leads for N&L.

In a word, we must never forget that the Absolute Method is the real challenge that everyone of us needs so that the individual reporters of an activity can concretize their reports by putting them in the context of our Marxist-Humanist Perspectives.

April 30, 1985

Dear Friends,

Reagan's decision to visit the Bitburg cemetery, disregarding the fact that some Nazi SS officers are buried there, is everything the opposition says against him -- from the remembrance of the Holocaust, to his disregard of American vets and everyone else who participated in WW II and the struggles against fascism. It is an idiotic gesture. But it is also very typical of nuclear big power policy fighting for world domination. All Reagan can see is the East-West relationship. All other matters be it Nazism, or El Salvador, or Nicaragua, are subsumed under it. It is true of course that the other behemoth, Russia, is also desiring world domination. It is not true that Russia is present everywhere, from South Africa to Nicaragua, where a genuine mass movement is fighting the specific dominant power.

Reagan's present trip to West Germany has its parallel in Khrushchev's 1964 projected trip to West Germany. It is this which helped bring about his downfall, which came nearly simultaneously with China's first A-bomb explosion. That possible shift in global power was seen by all. What none but Marxist-Humanism saw, was the fall's relation to Germany. (I am referring to my Oct. 1964 analysis in N&L) Rulers disregard the past in seeing only their present imperialist ambitions. Ordinary people's remembrance of things past is not only a memory of Nazi atrocities, but raises the question as to when the past becomes something very real. "When" in the case of Khrushchev's fall is because Russia still had revolutionaries who remembered a very, very different reason for Germany being the key to the international situation. Germany as the key arose with the successful 1917 Russian Revolution. It is then that Lenin called for the German Revolution and said that without it, backward Russia would be forced to return to capitalism instead of being the first of a series of revolutions leading to the world revolution. Rosa Luxemburg was precisely interested in that and aimed for it in the 1919 German Revolution. When she and the German revolution were beheaded by those predecessors of fascism -- the Freikorps -- the rulers, and that included the social democracy, no doubt thought that what they were creating was capitalist, "democratic" rule. What they really laid the ground for was fascism, Nazism.

Brezhnev was of course smart enough to take advantage of Khrushchev's proposed W. German trip to accuse him of hairbrained schemes, and use that personal designation as the reason for his downfall. If today Reagan thinks that he as the "great communicator" can create the feat of making counter-revolution sound like revolution, and that therefore most of the opposition to his German trip will evaporate, he not only has no conception of history, but of what living memory is, when it is Reason.

When is decisive because it is the specificity of historic time, and our historic time represents the maturity of an age where the forces of revolution as Reason have transformed every question, including culture. It is here when memory underlines the problem of your own day. It is this concept of reason, of making a choice for which side you will be on, which has a relation-

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to
ship to Marxist-Humanism's immediate tasks on what/do between now and the July 1 Call for the Plenum.

Let me put it another way. My decision to have my T/P next issue devoted to the 30-year existence of N&L had me reading N&L from its beginning. The Oct. 1964 analysis of Khrushchev's downfall showed me the importance of our analyses, especially our Perspectives over the years, as we responded to the objective situation that developed. This becomes alive and imperative for this year's concretization of Absolute Method because these Perspectives, are both the ground for our continuity with the past and a way of giving us a view of the future. Eugene has volunteered to excerpt Perspectives over a ten-year period (1975-85) and have them ready for the Plenum.

At the REB I presented the 30 years of N&L and the 10 years of Perspectives as the context for the individual reports that were to follow, reports that emerged out of the new stage begun both by the March 21 lecture and continued in the Chicago dialectics of revolution talk of April 18, and which now merge into the new activities on the part of youth in the divestment movement on the campus.

As you will see from those minutes, the whole question of how my Archives relate to those of John (the 1930s being missing from mine and very much present in John's) is an important one and it is for that reason that we are enclosing the Introductory Note of his archives along with this letter.

Finally, in reading the concrete reports on Youth, WL and campus follow-through in the minutes, the key point for all these reports as well as the new 4th book is the concept of Dialectics of Revolution. Though the 4th book concentrates on women, what is present in all parts of the book is dialectics of revolution, and by dialectics of revolution I mean philosophy of revolution as integral to the actual revolution. It is when you disregard revolution, as the present Women's Liberation Movement does, that there is this missing link. But even when you have revolution -- and Rosa Luxemburg was a revolutionary in every sense of the word -- but you miss that link of philosophy, then your dialectics is only half way. It is this which makes Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution relevant not only to women, but to youth, to Black, to labor. That is to say, the inclusion of four forces of revolution is not a quantitative measure, nor does it rest only on a qualitative distinction, but when those forces of revolution are together with dialectics of revolution, philosophy of revolution, then it is the actual solution to the great contradiction in any class society.

Please obey rigorously
the May 16 deadline for the June issue.

Raya

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