

November 19, 1985

Dear Friends,

This letter of the week will not be either just the completion of the only lecture tour I made an exception for--New York--or a report of what other locals and the Center did these ten days. Rather, the reason for making New York the exception--the publication of WIDR--which at one and the same time, emphasized the importance of New York as publication center and, above all, is related to our own sum-up at the end of the year, which is always the kind of Retrospective of the period after the plenum that becomes the ground for a Perspective for our work between the end of the year and Convention time. This means the focus for all of us is the concretization of the bi-weekly. So while you are getting the facts of the trip ahead of the REB, that pivotal aspect will need reporting next week after the REB has discussed the ramifications of the New York trip.

Take the new illumination that was cast on the framework* of follow-through--a subject we have often discussed but seldom carried out to our satisfaction. Once the fact that I was coming to New York at a time when every comrade already had in hand both WIDR and the Spanish RLWLKM was on the horizon, it meant, especially when backed-up also by Anne's and E... 's trip to Mexico that the visitations they made, as well as those made by the local as a collectivity, ended in the sales of no less than 13 Spanish editions of RLWLKM and literature sales in the immediate period before I came of close to \$100. Put differently, follow-through, whether it be of contacts not seen before, as well as all the work from leaflet distributions, as well as new attitudes in discussion with contacts -- all created what I would call the context as a Universal. This created a different attitude also to the literature tables at the lectures so that literature sold--no less than \$251.06, plus two subscriptions to N&L at the lectures themselves--was not only magnificent, but created a new type of dialogue, a new kind of periphery.

Now take the follow-through I could do right there, limited as I was, by following each lecture, especially our own, which was the most productive, by relating to the audience. Keep in mind that one of the fundamental reasons the meeting under our own sponsorship was the best, was the attendance itself--no less than 13 were Black and so international, from Africa to the Caribbean to U.S., and four of the 13 were African or Caribbean women, who not only brought books, but carried on a discussion that was very concrete for their country on the subject of women's liberation in the Black dimension. A Black professor from the Virgin Islands, who we had met before, became so interested in Marxist-Humanism, though he announced he was not one, that he wanted to come in again the following day from New Jersey to attend my next lecture if he could spend a half hour with me afterwards. We had a chance to do that.

The tour really embraced a new type of periphery which was by no means limited to Black and pointed to New York's importance as a cultural publication center, including a new relationship to some women's liberationists in the so-called professional field, but people who do not want to forget Marxism. It is that type of periphery that resulted, whether from our meeting, or the one at New School or at New York University, in the three lectures becoming six.

Take even when I was cut off to a short five minutes without knowing I would be -- the taped half-hour for a Caribbean radio program. Because I prepared for a Reaganite/Stalinist new Right concentration on the youth, I situated the answer to the very first *What a horrible mechanical materialist word for context which reaches toward the universal. The context in which Marxist-Humanists always discuss the immediate practical conclusions should really avoid the word, framework.

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question in a way that, though I was born in Russia and 1917 meant a great deal to me, my relationship to the Black dimension in America was very "indigenous" from the 1920s when there were three different tendencies in the Garvey Movement, which occurred simultaneously with the Palmer Raids against Reds, all the way to Martinique and the undeclared Civil War in South Africa -- all of which were shown as very necessary to fight Reaganism. (And I should not forget the Stokely Charmichael organization Black woman who came with a prepared speech, naturally attacking me... Indeed, I made that incident a focal point at our own sum-up.)

The question of follow-through on contacts which relates to the Retrospective that is Perspective is not only for the "far-distant" Dec. 29th sum-up, but is right here with us in the Los Angeles NEB minutes of Nov. 7. Peter in his report to the NEB took as our context the 30-Year Retrospective on N&L and that precisely because what faces us long before the Convention is the road to the bi-weekly which we are first now seriously turning to. We are sending a xerox of these minutes for all the locals, so that it is available for members for study and follow-through.

What I meant above, when I referred to the speech of the Black woman spokesperson of the Stokely Charmichael organization was this: 1) It was important to realize that she didn't just represent Stokely Charmichael but CLR James. He had written Stokely's speech "Dialectics" at a conference in London in the mid-1970s. 2) Whether the closeness between the two dates back to Stokely Charmichael's attack on Charles Denby in Lowndes County Ala., I do not know for sure. But the point is that presently the elegant double-tonguedness that CLR has expressed on Grenada is not by any means on that one subject. 3) On the contrary he is grafting this double-tonguedness onto the Black Dimension in the USA as well as Grenada (indeed all the way to Africa and the Caribbean's relationship to it).

Finally, though the Jamesite-Charmichael language can sound positively revolutionary, the extreme opportunism is a form of so-called independent-Stalinism/Reaganism, as is being shown in the "feminist network" and their rejection of Marxism which supposedly is "really not" women's liberation. That, they say, must be total women's liberation, cannot be married with Marxism. That was behind the reason why, in my sum-up to the New York local, I spent so much time on the Stokely Charmichael spokeswoman. It was the present objective situation and how that actually is related to James' 1954-55 break with the J-FT. As in 1955 when McCarthyism resulted in Johnsonism running away from Marxism, so today's counter-revolutionary situation, as we face the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, needs the type of answer we gave when in 1955 we began N&L and unfurled the banner of Marxist-Humanism.

You see, counter-revolution does not result in utter pessimism when genuine revolutionaries are confronted with it. Thus-defeat of the 1848-49 Revolutions was the stimulus for the new notion of "revolution in permanence" by Marx. The betrayal of the Social Democracy at the outbreak of WW I was the compulsion for Lenin to return to philosophy, Hegelian dialectics, and, he spelled it out so sharply as action, that it could relate to the mass action of 1917.

* I mean xerox and not stencil, i.e. not a bulletin. Once it becomes a bulletin it does not establish the attitude we need of concrete and immediate task for each one of us to do -- to discuss the concepts with an outside person. We need to start the dialogue with that person on the level of something going on in the organization which they not only can "learn from" but contribute to. In this way you have really proved that you mean new relations between outside and inside.

In a word, the urgency of N&L moving to a bi-weekly, the concretization and ramification of what sounds so simple -- follow-through, -- is a serious-practical form of the philosophic concept of dialectical sequence which is on our agenda now. If you think that my citing of Peter and the Los Angeles NEB, who of course are all Marxist-Humanists, as proof of the Retrospectives that are Perspectives, is only a further expression of Marxist-Humanism and not of the objective situation, just know of the letter to Lou Turner, direct from South Africa, and their desire to become actual South African correspondents for N&L. It is this kind of new beginning which is exactly what we mean by "Absolute Negativity as a New Beginning." This is spelled out not only in theoretical works, but in Marxism and Freedom or the latest book WLDR, but is practiced journalistically in N&L, determines the road to the bi-weekly, and our present organizational follow-throughs.

Yours,

Raya

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