

R E B D R A F T

perspectives

1974 — 1975

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REB DRAFT PERSPECTIVES, 1974-1975

Three major challenges amidst myriad crises compel facing reality inseparable from philosophy. One is the objective world situation which, on the surface, revolves around the Middle East to which Nixon went, allegedly, on a "journey of peace," but which was climaxed by giving both Egypt and Israel a nuclear reactor and nuclear fuel, which India had just proven could be transformed into A-bombs.

It puts a most ominous question mark over the whole journey. While it was patently done to save "the presidency," Nixon's, the fact that it ended by placing nuclear reactors in that volatile region means that no holds are barred in the striving for world power with the other global contender, Russia.

At the same time, the stopover in Austria hardly put the disarray in West Europe in the shadows. The stopover in the Azores to meet with General Spínola focuses on yet another NATO power in disarray, even if for the moment we would not point to Portugal's African colonies whose continuous revolt initiated the democratization in Portugal without, however, giving them independence. As if the trip to Russia won't, in itself, point to the global struggle for power, Nixon has announced that he'll be meeting with NATO in Brussels on the way to so-called detente with Russia, itself in deep crisis both at home and with China. The spotlight on the totality of the world crises is thus rounded out.

There is hardly a spot on the globe--be it the mini-cultural revolution in China or the undercurrent of revolt in Latin America; be it the economic-political crisis in Japan (whose "miracle," the futurologists predicted, would by now overtake Russia) or the endless Watergate crimes unfolding here daily amidst recession, galloping inflation, Black revolts and wildcats--that does not show up a corrupt, decaying capitalistic-imperialistic world going to pieces.

A different challenge, the decisive one, is that emanating from the subjective forces which must choose between the 50-year

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philosophic void neatly covered over by the elitist concept of a "party to lead"--or the working out of a new unity of philosophy and revolution if they are finally to succeed in uprooting the decrepit system and create truly human, totally new foundations for a classless society. The self-inflicted philosophic paralysis is a stark reminder of the truth that, just as Rome did not die in a day, neither will this nuclear world, the U.S. in particular. The greatest tragedy for the Movement would be to accommodate itself to the daily death as if that were a way of life.

The burning question is this: is civilization to retrogress slowly back to a new kind of Middle Ages when established Christianity could no more save the world than could its imperial, putrid Pax Romana? Or will it finally achieve the unfolding of a revolutionary banner that will be the type of unifying force of the Left which will rise to the challenge of working out a unity of theory and practice? For the unity of theory and practice to match the challenge from spontaneity of revolt, it will need all the rigor of the underlying and overriding integral philosophy of liberation. This, just this, is the proof, the projection, the practice of "the self-confidence of the Subject's actuality and the non-actuality of the world" that Hegel expressed abstractly and Lenin concretized as "the world does not satisfy man, and he decides to change it."

From this second subjective-historic challenge will flow the third: our own tasks, whose orbit--Philosophy and Revolution as Organization Builder--will be the freeing ourselves of the noose around the neck of the Movement (to which, by now, mindless activism has likewise succumbed)--the vanguardist, elitist "party to lead." An organizational form--be it Committee, Council, Commune--will prove itself when it will become the practice of philosophy and revolution, here and abroad. Just as Philosophy and Revolution as Organization Builder was our preoccupation this year, so the internationalization of Philosophy and Revolution, beginning with the Latin American edition, will be its projection of international and class solidarity.

Now then, let us observe all three challenges in process.

I. The Objective World Situation

(The June News & Letters lead, "Playing Politics With Nuclear Fuel--THE NIXON-KISSINGER JOURNEY TO SAVE 'THE PRESIDENCY,'" is an integral part of the Perspectives, 1974-5.)

Had Nixon gone to the Middle East before Watergate, we would have had to suffer through a description that would have presented his being in Jerusalem as if Nixon, along with Jesus, had born the cross of Calvary! As it is, while his trip was all too obviously undertaken to save his "presidency," there also is no doubt as to its global ambitions in the most fundamental of all struggles, that for single world power against the other nuclear titan, Russia, which is why even the foreign "successes" need covering up.

Take the most touted recent success--the Arab-Israeli "disengagement." As with the Vietnam "peace," it has been achieved by the ideology of turning eyes away from reality. First, of course, are the continuing Palestinian terrorist attacks and endless Israeli reprisals. Secondly, and more important, is that no approach at all was made to solve the "Palestine question." By this we do not mean only terrorist massacres and savage reprisals which are sure to continue, but the question that has never been answered by Israel or the Arab lands; by the U.S. or Russia; by the UN or so-called "Marxist" revolutionaries who have long since forgotten, if they ever knew, either class solidarity or internationalism.

Blinders will not make the 25-year old festering problem go away. Yet not only the superpowers--U.S. and Russia, plus China--but the indigenous powers--the Arab lands and Israel--and the existing Palestine guerrilla organizations, in their own contradictory, nationalistic, elitist and gold-laden banners--each and all are bent on seeing the festering continue until one and one alone is master. Philosophic void has never produced more disastrous results for humanity.

Nixon is burning his candle at both ends on this trip: in

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the Middle East with Arabs and Israelis, in West Europe with NATO, and that on the eve of the trip to Russia for "detente." Russia is doing the same, as is China, who has reversed her whole concept of Western European capitalism. Having suddenly christened it as "the second world" with whom the "Third World" (China) would be well to be allied with as against "Enemy No. 1," Russia, China uses the same "philosophy" for differentiating between the superpowers, and Mao's China clearly prefers the U.S.

One aspect of China's sudden concern with West Europe has special interest now that Helmut Schmidt replaced Willy Brandt in Germany, and Valery Giscard d'Estaing was elected in France. Though these moves are clearly to the right, this does not keep China from feeding their delusions to try to establish still another Bonn-Paris axis.

[Since China mouths Marxist phraseology as it speaks of Europe as "a main focus," it is necessary to take a historic look at Germany. 1917 is what gave Germany the opportunity to become "the key to the international situation." Lenin never thought that backward Russia could possibly hold out as a workers' state unless technologically advanced Germany likewise experienced a revolution. The pivot of world revolution hung there, first up to 1919 when Luxemburg and Leibknecht were beheaded; then in 1921, and again in 1923. When none of the European revolutions succeeded, world capitalism gained more than just a breathing space; it would, within a decade, retrogress to Nazism! Beginning with 1920, in fact, Lenin's concept of world revolution was undergoing a shift of emphasis to the East, with the famous phrase, "If not through Berlin, perhaps through Peking."

Trotsky held on to the concept of Germany as the key to the world revolution because, among other old concepts, he refused to recognize the new world stage of capitalism, beginning with Russia as state-capitalist. Insofar as the second postwar world is concerned, the division of the whole world into but two superpowers was in no fundamental way changed by Nixon's spectacular trip to China in 1972.

Suddenly Nixon included China as a global power, it is true, but he was flirting; not only with a triangular world, but a pentagonal one. The joker resided in the word, "potentially," not because China, by itself, can challenge either nuclear giant, but rather because each of the two superpowers contending for world power is threatening the other by a possible alignment with the most populous world power. China, for her part, is not excluding an alignment with U.S. imperialism. In any case, insofar as this year's Perspectives are concerned, Germany is not the key to the international situation. No Bonn-Paris axis will arise. If that were possible, far from being the main focus, it would be the greatest disaster that could befall Europe, West and East.

It is precisely because the whole decrepit world is going to pieces that the little mice are playing. It isn't only the old enemies in Europe--France, Germany--it is Oil. There is that sawdust Caesar, the Shah of Iran, dreaming of nothing short of a return of the splendors of old Persia when it was center of the world. And we must not forget King Faisal who thinks if he, instead of Israel, becomes the main outpost of U.S. imperialism, it could become a global power! Each to his own.

Here is what is involved in the new world economic crisis sparked by the energy crunch:

It is true that at the root of the 1973-74 economic crisis is the quadrupling of prices of oil. It is not true that that is where the crisis began or how it will end, whether capitalism is private, state, mixed, or in-between. The stonch of the whole moribund, capitalistic-imperialistic system of the post-war world comes from the fact that while it died, nothing new was born. Ever since World War II ended with but two powers standing, and only one of these an economic, military giant armed with the n-bomb, it has been clear that the war had not resolved a single fundamental crisis that resulted from the fact that the Depression had put an end to private capitalism. The war stopped because of the total exhaustion, not alone of the vanquished, but also of the victors. Markers were put up everywhere for the next war--

two Germanies, two Vietnams, two Koreas.

Once the U.S. had decided to save "the West," all the world became beholden to it monetarily. Not gold, but the dollar became the measure for the economy of the whole world. It is this which was canonized at Bretton Woods, and since the dollar is the sick one now, Helmut Schmidt of affluent Germany thinks he has the answer. The Schmidt-Giscard meeting so thrilled Le Monde that it declared that Schmidt-Giscard coming to power "profoundly modifies the internal equilibrium of the Western world" (5/26/74). The euphoria in the West European capitalist world that the election of two "pragmatists" produces is, however, neither due to their "pragmatism" which would, in fact, show them the opposing German and French interests. Nor is it their being economists, "realists," which is at the root of seeing matters alike, for they well know they will never be the strategic equal of the U.S. or the Soviet Union. No, their kinship rather lies in the understanding of class opposition to themselves within the respective countries. Just as Giscard carried on a campaign "against Communism" which led to the country splitting straight down the middle, so Schmidt has always been far to the right. Had the youth of 18 been allowed to vote in France, Giscard's slim majority would have vanished and revealed the true minority he is. And in Germany, Schmidt refers to the Jusos in his own party as "drivel."

In a word, what unites them is that the "enemy is at home." And because this is so, they forget German-French capitalistic antagonisms, keeping a low profile against the U.S., and they think that will also get Middle East potentates to unite with them since they will be defending the rights of "producers"--the oil barons to whom they have already capitulated--to keep the high prices and to side with them against "the emerging social forces." But on that, too, the U.S. and the USSR are the greater masters.

What makes them think otherwise is that they think by "quantitative measure" they will prove to be "the leaders" of Europe. If West Europe were an entity, they could indeed show themselves a mighty

power--containing; no less than 10% of the world's population and arms, 20% of world production, 30% of trade and money, and 40% reserves. But the naked truth is that they are not an entity. It took less than 24 hours of the Middle East war and the energy crisis accompanying it to reveal them stark naked, each one acting in primitive "dog eat dog" fashion. Far from hurting the U.S., their capitulation to the Middle East oil potentates showed them without principle, not only as against Israel and the U.S., but against each other. The 1973 oil crisis revealed also too clearly that they cannot maintain any, any at all, influence in the world if that continues for, singly, surely none is any key to any situation in Europe, much less globally. Can they now pick up the pieces simply because Italy is in a worse crisis? Can they, as they think, write Great Britain off? Can they--when they must face the consequences of their capitulation to the oil barons, and when they have to this day never faced the consequences of their self-destruction in World War II?

The rabbit that Helmut Schmidt is trying to pull out of the cocked Franco-German hat--that which he has designated as "a politically sound philosophy"--is his concept of "Struggle for World Product" (Foreign Affairs, 4/74). It is this: since the struggle over oil prices has "shaken the very foundations of the present world economic system," Schmidt proposes to bring "stability" by (1) having a different "distribution" of wealth, i.e., giving in to the oil barons what they have already taken; (2) assuring them that thereby the industrialized countries will not only help industrialize the technologically underdeveloped, but (3) jointly put the lid on "emerging social forces." To shift the question from world production to "world product," i.e., oil, he tells the superpowers that, after all, the Arabs were only interested in their fair share of world prices, not in the question of the Suez Canal or the West Bank of Jordan or Jerusalem.

If Helmut Schmidt deludes himself about "premature" globalism for Germany where Stalin, despite his victory and actual sharing of war powers, couldn't win when he tried "premature" globalism by trying to extend Russia into Iran--he is even more filled with il-

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lusions of grandeur than the Shah of Iran. All this could be laughable-- but the myriad crises, with every week presenting a new change in government, allows for no laughter when governments in crises are all vying for global politics.

Without credentials of a great economist, Kissinger understands well enough how pivotal in jockeying for global position is "access to raw materials." And because he not only understands that, but has global power, he has "won" the Arabs to the side of U.S. imperialism to tame not just Israel--but Russia. Detente is the key word presently. Just as Nixon also took time out for a stop in the Azores to make sure Portugal's "revolution" is a contained one, so now Nixon-Kissinger are off to Russia.

WHAT ALL THIS MEANS ACTUALLY IS THAT THE END OF THE POSTWAR WORLD HAS NOT BROUGHT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW EPOCH. Can the revolutionary forces? That is the question.

II. The Revolutionary Opposition Forces: Will They Become Reason As Well As Force?

The 1970s take another look at the 1960s:

From the Zengakuren who stopped Eisenhower from coming to Japan in 1960 but fell apart in the face of the Sino-Soviet conflict to Cohn-Bendit who led the youth revolt in 1968 and shook up De Gaulle's France without overthrowing De Gaulle; from the African Revolutions that so courageously overthrew colonialism that same decade without, however, establishing new economic foundations to the Black Revolution in the U.S. that inspired a whole new generation of revolutionaries, white as well as Black, and yet remained aborted; it has become clear, all too clear, that there is no way out either of the totality of world crises or the philosophic void without a unity of theory and practice, and philosophy and revolution.

For that matter, in Czechoslovakia they tried just democratization and the Russian imperialist tanks rolled in, while in China,

where the "cultural revolution" began from the top, that same revolutionary Mao unloosed the army against the youth who took him at his word, that it was "right to rebel." And so the 1960s ended with the "new Left" hardly a step beyond the old Left when they were youth at the time Lenin died and the revolutions resulting from World War I were defeated. It is true that there has been a vast accumulation of experience, and a new Third World has arisen. But which movement has seriously based itself on the totally new movement from practice that arose in East Europe as well as in the West, in Latin America as well as in Africa, in the U.S. as well as in Asia, particularly China?

The one thing that is different in China is that everything is expressed philosophically. That is no accident. No matter how crudely, no matter how much that has been done because, being poor, China could not have grounded its arguments on the "law of value," it is nevertheless also true that, despite the fact that it, too, is a state-capitalist society, that philosophic articulation reflects what has been new in the world in the past two decades--the establishment on the historic stage of the humanism of Marxism for our era.

In 1973, China suddenly published what it called "Momentous Struggle on the Question of the Identity Between Thinking and Being." This was published in a pamphlet entitled Three Major Struggles on China's Philosophical Front (1949-64). The 1973 edition, however, of these philosophic "struggles," as against the very same struggles in 1963 which were directed against Marx's humanism which he was supposed to have abandoned the moment he "discovered" the class struggle, favorably quoted Marx's humanist philosophy directly from the 1844 Manuscripts and further backed these up by quoting from Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic. All this led up to that most "momentous" and "famous" Mao's "Identity of Thinking and Being."

Heretofore, everybody, friend and foe alike, was led to believe that what was momentous about 1963 was Mao's challenge to Russia for leadership of the Communist world. If anybody knew anything else

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about Mao's "great philosophic contributions," it was the manner in which he repeated the overriding stress on practice in his thesis on rural work. Suddenly one paragraph is taken out of that thesis and a single sentence is lengthened out into a single essay by the Revolutionary Mass Criticism Writing Group of the Party School and that sentence is nothing short of the most bourgeois, idealistic notion of identity.

We are told, "Chairman Mao's great theory that 'matter can be transformed into consciousness and consciousness into matter' was a body blow to Liu Shao-chi and Yang Hsien-chen" (p.43, boldface in the official pamphlet from China). Needless to say, it was also a blow to Lin Piao. Not only that. It has been brought up to cover the very latest policy line of the sudden embrace of "many medium-sized and small countries to unite and oppose hegemony...Revolutionary dialectics is striking firm root in the hearts of the people, is being grasped by more and more Marxist-Leninist political parties and revolutionary people" (p.66).

It isn't revolutions the Chinese are "making," however. From the ongoing current mini-cultural revolution in China to the flirtations with West European rulers and the U.S., what China is engaged in is a counter-revolution against the same emerging revolutionary forces that all the other capitalist powers are engaged in trying to stifle--the masses within their own countries out to reorganize the mode of production wherein they are nothing but "matter" producing surplus value (unpaid hours of labor) for the "country," that is to say, its rulers. (Russia for her part is doing exactly the same thing, whether it rolls out the red carpet for Nixon or leads the demonstrations in Portugal against the strikers and the African revolutionaries who want self-determination NOW.)

That, and that alone, is why they've suddenly discovered what Mao said, which he wishes he hadn't--that "matter and consciousness can change places." It was Mao's usual voluntarism which, when last he was

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out for "leaps" in agricultural production in 1958, he had expressed in the slogan "one day equals 20 years." Since by the early 1960s, instead of bringing about miracles in production, that had brought China to near famine, the same voluntarism on the masses' backs was, in 1963, expressed as "matter and consciousness can change places." And since, when that was criticized, he was preoccupied with the Sino-Soviet conflict, he let it remain "unknown" as he prepared still another "revolution"--the Cultural Revolution--that made clear that "revisionism" was the main enemy even if that meant not helping the Vietnam Revolution. By 1973, however, having rolled out the red carpet for Nixon did not bring out a new world alignment. Nor did his giving up the concept of the socialist world as the Second World and accepting, instead, the idea that Western capitalism, so long as it is "medium-sized," is the Second World.

In a word, since no fundamental change in global reality has resulted overnight, Mao is back to relying only on one's country's forces and holding out for the masses the impossible "idealism" of "matter and consciousness can change places."

The single grain of truth that contains, though expressed in topsy-turvy fashion, is that it opens up the question of the philosophic need of the age. The concretization demands catching the historic link: What Hegel, in the age following the French Revolution, originated as the concept of "certainty of the Subject's actuality and non-actuality of the world," Lenin, on the eve of the Russian Revolution, translated as, "The world does not satisfy man and he decides to change it." The last thing needed now is Mao's reductionism of this creative concept of the Subject to sheer voluntarism imposed upon the Subject. Rather, the need is for the workers themselves to spell this out as totally new human relations--Reason as well as Force--both as against rulers and against their self-proclaimed "leaders."

Take the question of the Black movement in America that has always revealed the hollowness of American democracy and always been the actual forward movement to uproot the system. In 1974 they ex-

perienced the shock of some of their own leaders, like Charles Evers, proclaiming "for" Wallace, the very symbol of all that the Black movement was against in this new stage of revolution that began with the Montgomery bus boycott. It was good, of course, that Andrew Young literally broke down when confronted with this fantastic phenomenon on the home ground where he had been to too many funerals resulting from the struggle against Wallace. The more important point still was that the masses did not follow their "leaders." The new stage of revolt is thus developing, not only against "whitey," but against the leadership that would settle for an allegedly "lesser evil."

Above all, this new stage of development is not stopping only for spontaneity but wants to follow its own Reason. It is the same type of awakening which among Black women was expressed as the need to know what happens after the day of revolt, whether, as one Black woman stated it, "a broom will be shoved into my hands the day it comes to put the gun down."

Even among middle-class women, the new stage of opposition to Nixonism has shown itself in the latest convention of N.O.W., which for the first time passed a political resolution demanding the impeachment of Nixon.

Or look at the labor bureaucracy, which finally was likewise compelled to pass such a resolution of impeachment. Was it any accident that this motion for impeachment was in the same convention which, trying very hard to forget the wildcats of last year, had to stop all proceedings while Doug Fraser had to leave to deal with yet another wildcat? The whole attempt of the bureaucracy to forget last year's admission that there were, indeed, those "blue-collar blues," has now to face the question that, even when it "wins" in compelling the workers to return to the production line, the workers have their own caucuses, their own shop papers--and not one ounce of any belief in the labor bureaucracy as "leadership."

Among the underlying new passions and new forces everywhere

are these informal groups that are rooted in rejection of the actuality that is, not because they do not see the reality of the objective world, but because they recognize its non-viability. The deepest crisis produced by Watergate is what is least paid attention to. It is this: for the masses, the shock over the tapes released by Nixon was not just a matter of disgust with either Nixon's lies or profanity, or the recognition that the high and the mighty have indeed feet of clay, but that the high and the mighty are just nothing.

The students, too, though they're not carrying on the same mass activities they did in the 1960s, are, far from being "apathetic," at the new stage of trying to work out a relationship to philosophy, not merely as an "underlying" concept, but its integrality to revolution, without which it cannot be successful.

What this year's lecture tour on Philosophy and Revolution revealed was that this passion for philosophy came with a new recognition of the force of the proletariat. Literally thousands heard of Philosophy and Revolution in person, and tens of thousands on radio and TV. Not only that. A key question kept relating to an organizational form for projection of Marx's philosophy of liberation. It isn't that they accepted News & Letters Committees, nor completely rejected the vanguard party to lead. It is that this became the question.

That the internationalization of Philosophy and Revolution began with the Spanish edition in Latin America discloses an objective factor that, for the first time, we will be able to take up not just generally but very concretely, since that is where U.S. imperialism is at its worst and our class solidarity and internationalism will need to prove itself as both actuality and philosophy.

Finally, without proletarianization, Philosophy and Revolution as Organization Builder would not be the road to revolution. It is true that the recession made it extremely difficult to carry through our perspective of proletarianization last year. It is not true that it was impossible, as can be seen both from the fact that

we have achieved it in some cases and, above all, from the fact of the proletarians that came to us from the factory, both on the question of shop papers and some membership, as well as on the profound self-development of those we have. We cannot, therefore, allow the fact that the quantity was so few to negate the perspective. On the contrary, this year we must both deepen and extend the proletarianization. Objectively and subjectively, that is the road to Philosophy and Revolution as Organization Builder.

III. Our Tasks

Outside of 1956, when Marxism and Freedom was first published and thus completed the tasks we assigned ourselves from our birth--to put out a paper edited by a production worker and to re-establish the American roots and world concepts of Marx's humanism for our epoch--there has been no time in our 19-year existence that marked so crucial a turning point as is marked this year by the publication of Philosophy and Revolution. Last year the Constitution caught the spirit when it spelled out "born anew" in organizational terms, both in the Black Dimension and the Women's Liberation, now that each is not only a principle but in actuality. This year, the concretization must be in the fact that this resides not only in sales, but in challenges to all the Left tendencies to face the new reality, and internalization must not rest with "comprehension," but be a projection of what we understand, so that the "outside" is credited with as deep a passion for philosophy as we. Therefore:

(1) The internationalization of Philosophy and Revolution by no accident started in Latin America. Not only will that be the projection that will test all of us on class solidarity and anti-U.S. imperialism, but it will have immediate organizational ramifications by expanding our work among Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. From the Dominican Republic refugees to the field workers the UFW has organized, our activity must concentrate not alone in working with those Left

groups, but in the projection of Philosophy and Revolution as Organization Builder. Along with that, we should definitely have as perspective continuing trips to Latin America which would not only include a tour by the National Chairwoman at the time Philosophy and Revolution is published in Mexico, but by other members, so that the class solidarity does not remain on paper.

(2) The recession must not be allowed to kill the crucial proletarianization of the organization we projected last year, and we must expand this year. Each local is to take up most concretely what can be done, while the convention will vote on that which is to be done. (While this is not spelled out until the organization session and report, it is important to project it here so that no part of our convention is free of this overriding necessity of proletarianization.)

(3) The Black Dimension, which has always been central to us and both in life and in theory projected as the vanguard of the American revolution, has, this year, new developments in its fight against any part of the "talented tenth" that wishes to divert the movement into opportunist channels. The integrality of philosophy, therefore, becomes a crucial point of our projection of the Marxist-Humanist philosophy of liberation. In no section of the American people is the passion for philosophy deeper or more urgent. The very fact that there has, with Nixon's "black capitalism" and divisions within the Black movement, been a new realization of Black masses as vanguard compels concentrated work, philosophically as well as actually, on our part.

(4) The Women's Liberation movement this year has likewise shown a new philosophical-political awareness so that even middle-class women, N.O.W., have voted a resolution for impeachment of Nixon, And the Women In Poverty committee is looking for a new philosophy to get it out of the recession which rests so heavily on its back. The youth in Women's Liberation are seeking a more total outlook, now that they recognize that just fighting male chauvinism will not create a

foundation for totally new human relations. News & Letters Women's Liberation Committees must enter every field of Women's Liberation activities and there challenge the underlying philosophy.

(5) Both the youth and the form of News & Letters will undergo some changes which would reflect internationalization of Philosophy and Revolution and the proletarianization of the organization.

Finally, the truth of "the certainty of the Subject's actuality and the non-actuality of the world" will by no means exhaust itself with the Perspectives for 1974-75. On the contrary. It becomes central this year, but it does not become real until we have reached the actuality of the American revolution.

Resident Editorial Board
June 24, 1974

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