

PROPOSED SYLLABUS FOR NEW SIX-CLASS SERIES

ON

MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES AND THE DIALECTICS OF REVOLUTION

The new type of classes this year, which are concentrated on our Perspectives Theses rather than on our trilogy of revolution*, calls for all-round participation -- that is, active participation by every member of the classes, not just the presenters -- if we are to become practitioners of dialectic methodology. Dialectic methodology, though it is constantly moving, is such an Absolute that there are no loopholes through which to escape. Participation has nothing to do with being a "specialist" in any field; it has everything to do with internalizing methodology.

Consider why the first class includes such widely distant dates as 1956 and 1984 -- and such different subjects as the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.; the Afro-Asian Revolutions; and the vicissitudes of the theory of state-capitalism both at the outbreak of World War II and as it confronted the new Third World revolutions. By constantly checking ourselves with the Absolute Method (i.e., the unchained dialectic), we will see not only the relationship of all the constituents of the first class but the relevance for 1984 of a Marxist-Humanist theoretical work written as early as the 1950s. At the same time, we will see how the dialectics of the state-capitalist theory, once the theoretician held firmly to the live subjects of opposition to what is, paved the way for the development of the philosophy of revolution we call Marxist-Humanism.

Or take the second class, where we take up a different question -- war and peace. We will see that -- whether it is the question of a so-called "limited" war like that which was waged against the peoples of Vietnam, or whether it be the ever-more-threatening nuclear holocaust that will destroy civilization altogether -- it is the perspective of genuine social revolution that totally uproots the established old order which is the only possible ground for the anti-war forces to succeed.

War or revolution is also precisely the question involved in so new an arena as China, where subjectivity as attitude to objectivity was defined in relationship to those Communists who had led a successful national revolution but suddenly found themselves thrust into competition with Russia for leadership of the Communist world, armed with nuclear bombs.

The same multifaceted-ness holds for all the remaining classes, as preparation for the final class -- which will not only be a summation of the classes but will embrace the totality of the new book to appear on International Women's Day, 1985. Raya Dunayevskaya, the National Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees

*Marxism and Freedom -- from 1776 Until Today was first published in 1958; Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao in 1973; Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in 1982. All three were published as new editions for the Marx centenary by Humanities Press in 1982.

and the author of the new book, will project this new work on the Dialectics of Revolution in person in Chicago, and on tape in the other locals. The full title of this lecture -- "A Marxist-Humanist View of the Dialectics of Revolution and Women's Liberation" -- points to the future in the present.

Far from the dialectics of revolution being inhibited by a concentration on a single subject -- in this case, Women's Liberation as Reason and as revolutionary force-- we will see that the new book goes to the very root of what determines each and all forces of revolution as Reason. Indeed, it is precisely the totality involved in relating the dialectics of liberation to any one of all of the four forces of revolution today that demands that we all become "practitioners" of the Absolute Method -- not only as we look at past history, but as we practice it in our daily lives.

Finally, although the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives Thesis for 1984-85 is listed as reading material only for the first and the last lectures, it is this Thesis that is the ground from which we will be viewing all the Theses we will be taking up in the entire six-class series.

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PROPOSED SYLLABUS for
MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES AND THE DIALECTICS OF REVOLUTION

- I. HOW TO BEGIN ANEW? THE BIRTH OF MARXIST-HUMANISM and the Vicissitudes of the State-Capitalist Theory
- Readings:
- "Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Where to Begin" (Perspectives Report to the first National Convention of News and Letters Committees, July 1956. Reissued in 1969.)
- "The Movements from Theory as well as from Practice vs. the Great Artificer, Ronald Reagan" (Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1984-85)
- Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions (first edition 1959; new edition with new Introduction by author, Raya Dunayevskaya, 1984.)
- "New Passions and New Forces," Chapter 9 from Philosophy and Revolution (1973).
- *Marxist-Humanist Archives, Vol. I, pp. 69-217; Vol. II, pp. 1277 - 1437.

(Note: * will indicate suggested concentration for sub-reporters.)

II. WHAT IS NEW IN THE ANTI-WAR STRUGGLES? WHAT IS NEW IN THE SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT?

Readings:

"War and Peace" (Draft Perspectives Resolution, July 1960; and Report to Convention, Sept. 1960)

"War and Revolution" (Draft Perspectives Thesis, July 1971)

"In Place of a Conclusion: Two Kinds of Subjectivity"; and Ch.18, "Cultural Revolution or Maoist Reaction?" (pp. 326 - 436 from Marxism and Freedom, 1964 and 1971 editions)

*"Mass Opposition to Reaganomics and the Drive for Nuclear War" (Draft Perspectives, 1982-83 -- published in N&L, July 1982)

III. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE NEEDED AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Readings:

"Philosophy and Revolution in Today's Global Freedom Struggles" (Perspectives Report, 1976-77)

"The Needed American Revolution" (Perspectives Report, 1969-70)

American Civilization on Trial (first edition 1963; latest edition with new Introduction by Raya Dunayevskaya, 1983)

Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought (1978)

*Appendix to Perspectives Report to Special Constitutional Convention of News and Letters Committees: Letter of Aug. 26, 1983 from Raya Dunayevskaya on paragraphs added to Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution since publication.

IV. THE LONG MARCH OF REVOLT: THE LONG MARCH OF PHILOSOPHY

Readings:

"Today and Tomorrow" (Perspectives Report 1980-81)

Political Philosophic Letters on Lebanon: "The UN Resolution on Zionism -- and Ideological Obfuscation also on the Left" (Jan. 24, 1976); and "Lebanon: The Test not only of the FLO but of the Whole Left" (August 1976)

*Chapter XII, Sections 3 & 4 from Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution (1982); "The New Moments of the Revolutionary Philosophic-Historic Concepts Discovered by Marx in the Last Decade of his Life" and "A 1980s View"

*Political-Philosophic Letter on "The Latin American Unfinished Revolutions" (May 15, 1978)

V. THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISES AND THE MISSING PHILOSOPHIC LINK

Readings:

"Where Do We Go From Here?" (Draft Perspectives -- first one printed in N&L, August-September 1975)

"The Marx Centenary Discloses the Need for the Philosophy of 'Revolution in Permanence' for Uprooting Reaganism out to Shackle the People with 'Mind-Forged Manacles' of Unfreedom" (Perspectives, 1983-84)

*"The Missing Link" (Perspectives 1968)

VI. A MARXIST-HUMANIST VIEW OF "THE DIALECTICS OF REVOLUTION AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION"

Lecture presented by RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA as Summation of the classes and Projection of the new book scheduled for publication on International Women's Day, 1985.

This lecture to include a brief report by Franklin Dmitriev on Marx's Mathematical Notebooks.

Readings:

"Introduction and Overview" to Reaching for the Future: Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution (1985)

Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1984-85.

"The Fetish of High Tech", by Ron Brokmeyer

SUB-REPORT TO THE PERSPECTIVES
given to the Convention of
News and Letters Committees,
July 7, 1984, by Olga Romanski

ON TEN YEARS OF MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES

This morning we were taken on a journey over a two-way road between Marx's Humanism and Marxist-Humanism, between national and international, between objective and subjective, between theory and practice, and between philosophy and its politicalization. What this year's Perspectives proposes as a centerpoint of our activities over the next, critical year of our development is just such a journey over the whole last decade of our Perspectives Theses -- with one goal in mind: PROJECTION of our philosophy of Marxist-Humanism as we see it being tested by exactly what was happening in the objective world over those extraordinary-yet-"ordinary" ten years -- ordinary, that is, for degenerate state-capitalism being challenged by a new age striving to be born.

Just consider what those ten years -- 1974/75 to 1984/85 -- encompass. On the objective world scene it is the decade that has moved:

1) from Nixon's resignation to the clear and present danger of Reagan's "four more years." And how clear it is today that Nixon's resignation marked the defeat of Nixon but not of Nixonism -- and why in our 1974 Thesis, presented to us only a few short weeks after that resignation, only one line was given to the resignation, and that was to point out that, great as it was to get rid of Nixon, what was necessary to understand was that he was really only the "scapegoat" for the whole degenerate system, which the Perspectives then analyzed in toto.

2) It is the decade that saw the Portuguese Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, the Nicaraguan Revolution, the Grenadian Revolution -- and not only all the out and out counter-revolutions (whether in the form of the Rightist coup in Portugal or Khomeini's counter-revolution from within the revolution in Iran) but the internal dualities in each of those momentous events, and each one was very specific.

3) It is the decade that marked the actual structural changes in capitalism and the state-capitalist pattern of union-busting that was established by Reagan's breaking of PATCO as soon as he took office. But it was also marked by new stages of workers' revolt which encompassed everything from the 1978 miners' strike in the U.S. to Solidarnosc in Poland and the new kind of trade unions in South Africa.

4) It's the decade when the civil war in Lebanon was aborted and the Arab-Israeli conflict became Israel's blitzkrieg against Lebanon.

5) It's the decade that saw the unthinkable become thinkable; that saw U.S. imperialism defeated in Vietnam and ready to spell Vietnam out anew as El Salvador; that experienced Three Mile Island -- and that witnessed the birth of a new global anti-nuke, anti-draft, anti-war movement -- with all of its dualities.

On the subjective scene it is the decade that began after the publication of Philosophy and Revolution and moved through the publication of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. It's the decade in which we have been publishing our Perspectives Draft directly in the paper. (The first time we did that was 1975, and it broke totally new ground for the Marxist movement -- ground that, unfortunately, no other Left group to this day has chosen to tread with us.) It's the decade in which the concept of the Weekly Political Letter developed into Political-Philosophic Letters; in which News & Letters developed into a Theory/Practice 12-pager; in which the concept of "organizational consciousness" which we posed after P&R, moved to seeing Marxist-Humanism as a total body of ideas over a full 40 years, after RLWLKM. It's the decade in which the initiation of a new local in Chicago moved to the initiation of Chicago as center.

But what is so new about the classes that are proposed for this year is not merely all the historic turning points, objectively and subjectively, that they will encompass -- but that our Perspectives Theses are an absolutely unique form of political-organizational-philosophic projection of our Marxist-Humanism, in which the objective situation, the subjective situation and our own specific tasks for that immediate year are all tightly tied together in one completely integrated form. That kind of politicalization of philosophy is the kind of "popularization" that is not truncation, but that presents the totality of our "body of ideas" in the most concrete way.

Presenting the totality of our body of ideas has nothing to do with size. Yes, totality has been profoundly expressed in our "three books, not one" -- but it is in each one of the three. It is in a single article like the essay just reprinted by Praxis International. It can be seen in a single letter. It can be projected in a single ad. Because totality has nothing to do with quantity. For us, in these classes, it has everything to do with the principle of never analyzing world events without relating them to the stage of cognition; and of never making a critique without relating it to action.

Indeed, nothing will be more integral to these classes than our activities -- whether with workers on and off the picket lines, with the Black dimension, in Women's Liberation, in anti-war work, in solidarity committees -- and both in terms of what ideas we will bring to those activities and in terms of who we will bring from those activities with us to the classes.

That is what we have to be thinking about while we take up here just two of the Theses, and mention only one of the Political-Philosophic Letters, out of the 20 Theses and more than 20 PPLs from which we will have to choose when we work up our Syllabus. Because each year we have two very separate and distinct Theses -- one a Draft, and the second what is further developed out of the two months between that and our actual Convention.

In the short time we have today, let me take just two of them -- one from the 1970s and the other from the 1980s -- to see, first, how they related to two very different objective areas and, at the same

time, how each becomes a total projection of Marxist-Humanism in a most concrete analysis, which continues to illuminate the new events we will face tomorrow.

Let's start with the Thesis for 1982-83 -- which we heard on the very eve of the publication of RLWIKM, and on the threshold of the Marx centenary. The Thesis that September was called "What to Do -- Facing the Depth of Recession and the Myriad Global Political Crises as well as the Philosophic Void." It could almost be a "generic" title for our age of crises -- but this thesis concretely had to take up, first and foremost, Israel's genocidal invasion of Lebanon -- and the hideous new crisis in the Middle East it had wrought -- which will surely continue to be with us in the year ahead.

The first surprise is that, first and foremost, it didn't start with that objective event, but with the subjective need to articulate not just what you are against, but what you are for. Rather than beginning with any of the actual world events (other than mere mention to place us in time and space) the Thesis began with an Introduction that quoted a full page from the PPL written all the way back in August of 1976 on the Lebanon Civil War as the "Test not only of the PLC but of the whole Left." At the same time, the new politicalization of "transformation into opposite" was seen in how that philosophic category was manifested in a very new way in the difference between the Palestine/Israel of Exodus in 1947-48 and Begin's Israel of 1982-83. But the pivotal warning that was raised just before all the actual new objective events were taken up in detail was the urgent need to see how half-way houses can become death traps, everywhere a totally new freedom banner is not unfurled in a revolution striving to complete itself.

Thus, while the immediate question was what regime would be imposed on poor Lebanon, the question of the half-way houses the New Left was constantly settling for took the discussion from the Middle East not only to Latin America, but directly to the deep global economic crisis of our state-capitalist world, as well as imperialism's bloody outreach vs. all the freedom struggles from below -- a journey that included a trip even to Namibia and not only Namibia today, but Namibia in 1904 (where we got a whiff of the new book still on the presses), and not only in 1904 but in 1951 -- so that we were suddenly shown Namibia, too, as part of that global movement from practice that had upsurged in the 1950s and which, we now could see, included not only the Automation battles in the U.S. and the East European revolts against Russian totalitarianism but both the Bolivian Revolution and Africa, as well.

You will simply have to re-read this tremendous Thesis for yourself to see how every single one of our trilogy of revolution is taken up right in relation to a most concrete, objective event, which made us remember the so-called subjective works -- Marxism and Freedom in relation to Bolivia 1952; Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in relation to Namibia 1904; Philosophy and Revolution in relation to Mac. But it is not only that which you will see when you reread this Thesis today. Because in grappling with one of its climactic points -- that every production

crisis produces a crisis in theory, which the Thesis spells out as both the new questions raised by workers battling Automation and the Indian peasantry's "new rationality" -- you will surely be impelled to see the direct relationship of that to both our new pamphlet on the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike and our new Afro-Asian pamphlet. In short, we will find ourselves discussing in these classes every one of our three new pamphlets, as well.

Nor would we want to leave out of the study of this particular Thesis the Draft that preceded it -- especially insofar as it permits us to see how Part III of the Draft on "Methodology and Politicalization," which takes up our whole 30 year movement from practice and from theory, was developed (by the time the actual Thesis was delivered) into a whole section directly on the methodology of the Perspectives Thesis itself -- which is what I have just tried to encapsulate for you, and which is why I wanted to take up this Thesis first today.

Now let us take another year -- this time specifically related to the Black dimension, which will surely be one of our most important concentrations this year. We could easily take the 1980 Thesis -- where the "Road to the Black Ghetto" and to the little shorties of Miami was not separated, as opposition to the powers-that-be, from our view that "All Roads Lead to Gdansk, Poland" that year of Solidarity's birth.

Or we could take the 1979 Thesis, where the section on "Without a Philosophy of Revolution" took up specifically "Oil and the PLO Gaining a Foothold with Black Leaders" -- the year UN Ambassador Young resigned and the Black Caucus was pitched right into the Middle East debate. This year is surely a very different situation, PLO-wise, but the question of the relationship between anti-Semitism and the Black revolt that is swirling in the movement's waters again is one that is bound to make not only this Thesis but others from the 1960s right through the '70s most current again.

But the year most important to take up for the Black dimension today, I believe, is 1976-77 -- and this time I want to take up the Draft Thesis primarily. Not just because of the significance of its title: "National/International, Subjective/Objective, Crises are Testing Revolutionaries" -- or even because, four years before he found his way into the White House, the very first sentence of the Thesis scores "the blatant racism of Ronald Reagan" -- but because 1976 was the year that the events in South Africa were quickly taking center-stage -- and the just-erupted new Black revolt there saw the Thesis, at one and the same time, footnote back to our 1960 Lead, "South Africa, South USA" and point to the totally new character of the revolt today -- which became the fulcrum not only for digging into the dialectical relationship between the two actual revolutions that year -- Portugal and Angola -- but into the state-capitalist connections between the U.S. and South Africa, and the state-capitalist conflict between Russia and China.

The whole center section of this Draft -- the mediation, that is, to the full Marxist-Humanist analysis -- was precisely a new look at "State-Capitalism -- in Theory and in Practice." In short, it was

the concrete great new stage of revolt of Black South Africans that was forcing the Left (or at least it could have enabled them) to understand that it was the possible new shift in global power (which involved Russia and Cuba's role in Angola) and not the question of South Africa's apartheid that China was concerned about, and that was the absolute opposite of what the masses in motion were driving for -- whether in China, in Portugal, in Africa, or in the U.S.

Our concentration on the Black dimension that year is what dictated the decision to start working out a new pamphlet on what we were then calling Black Voices -- which, by 1978, turned out to be Frantz Fanon, Soweto, and American Black Thought. 1976-77 was also the year we established a new Chicago local, with special emphasis on that same Black dimension as well as on labor (manifested in the pamphlet on the 1877 First General Strike) and on Women's Liberation (which we had tried to capture in Working Women for Freedom). By the time all this was developed anew in the actual Convention thesis, two short months later, and long before the new stage of South African revolt became known worldwide as the Black Consciousness Movement, it was clearly projected in the very title of Part I as "New Stage of Black Revolutionary Consciousness; Precursor of Global Struggles to Uproot this Decadent, Crises-ridden, State-capitalist, Imperialist World"; and in Part IV, "Our Tasks" were clearly seen as "Creation of a Philosophic Nucleus that is not just an Organizational Task, but the Pressing Need for Ongoing Revolutions and Revolutions-to-be." Whether or not that could be accomplished depended -- and still does -- on whether we hold tightly together, as a unit, philosophy and revolution, national and international, objective and subjective.

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Exactly which Theses we will want to concentrate on out of these tremendous 20 so-called Drafts and Theses, and exactly what kind of Syllabus we will be able to suggest, we will be working out later this summer, so that, hopefully, the new classes can begin in all the locals early in October and end before Thanksgiving. Raya has suggested that the original four we were thinking about be expanded to six, and that every single one have a "What" in its title: What is Marxist-Humanism? What is Dialectics? What is News and Letters Committees? What is the uniqueness of N&L as it responds to the objective situation monthly, rooted in that methodology? And a whole lecture on the organizational expression of "revolution in permanence" and N&L as that unity of worker and intellectual that is able to practice theory as well as activity. Above all, each one will have, as well, a concrete relationship to the actual activities and forces of revolt we are working with.

Whether each lecture could have two presenters -- which worked out to well for the classes this past year; and whether all six would be without interruption or whether we could have two classes and then a week before the next two, to take up other discussions, can be worked out as each local sees best.

What will not have to wait -- indeed, cannot wait -- until the new classes actually begin, is grasping and projecting to others (beginning with the one we have just heard today) what our Perspectives

Theses are. They are not just a lot of facts and history, though there is plenty of that, too. They are the kind of politicalization that does not separate the immediate questions from the universal; the kind of analysis that will help the forward movement; the analysis of new objective events that is not out merely to prove what we already know, but to deepen and develop Marxist-humanism; the kind of analysis of the current period that will show us the method for analyzing the events of the future. Above all, they are an expression of the totality of our body of ideas.

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Finally, back to the beginning (in more ways than one). In the Perspectives we heard this morning we were shown the way the events in Cuba in 1961 impelled the creation of the Weekly Political Letter, which based our fundamental stand against the U.S. invasion in the Bay of Pigs on the grounds of our 1960 Resolution on "War and Peace" that had been written after the U-2 spy plane incident had put an end to the "grand illusion" that there would never be a nuclear war. But if you go back to the Archives and read that 1960 Report, you will find that what we quote there was really the very same anti-war position we had enunciated as early as 1957. We were proud, we said in 1960, that we didn't have to change a single word of it. A full 26 years later we still didn't, so fundamental was our stand. For it was exactly those same paragraphs Raya used in the conclusion of our Lead on the invasion of Grenada this year -- in the December 1983 N&L.

To requote that 26 years later -- without quotes -- does not mean that nothing has changed in the decades between. Rather, it is exactly the relationship between working out what is new in each situation at the same time that you are rooted in what you have established as your ground -- and the method to work it out -- that is what we will be projecting as Marxist-Humanism in the very new kind of classes, indeed, in our Perspectives and Political-Philosophic Letters this year.
