

September 13, 1978

Dear Friends,

Did you know that Marx, as far back as 1845, had a contract for his critique of the "National Political Economy," which was, 22 years later, to become CAPITAL?

Well, he not only had it, and thought he could do it "in 5 weeks," but had considerable pressure from his colleague, Engels, "to finish it." Marx resisted doing any such thing. He didn't use the words "re-organization of self" for what was needed before he could do it, but he did insist that first what was needed was philosophic ground, both to clear the decks of what he was and for what his thoughts would signal as a new continent of thought. And it is here, precisely, that we can see the sharp division between Marx and Engels.

Please keep in mind that Marx thought so highly of Engels that the first work of clearing their heads that issued from their pen, THE HOLY FAMILY, was not only signed by both, but Engels's name preceded Marx's. Engels's response, however, to Marx's putting aside the "Critique of National Economy" was to this effect: for heaven's sake, do finish that work. Your critique of national economy is so far superior to anything existing that you must stop being so self-critical and give the movement what it must have. Nor did Marx stop that self-criticism when he did work out his total philosophy.

It is that methodology, the dialectics of self-development that is inseparable from both the Universal and the concrete, the individual and the organizational, the collectivity, inside and outside, as against the petty-bourgeois narrow subjectivity, that is demanded of us. And this is so most of all this year because, precisely because, we are all starting anew with relations inside the organization tied to the projected work on Rosa Luxemburg as well as organizational growth, whether that means founder and leaders, leadership and ranks, totality and individualism that lets nothing interfere with its universalism, i.e., freedom. In all cases the key word is re-organization...

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The point in all these reorganizations, be it individual or collective, the key word, or perhaps I should say, key syllable, is RE-organization.

Let us therefore return to what seemed far away and what I touched on more in the letter to the REB-NEB, though it certainly came more prominently into focus here as I spoke on the difference between Marx and Engels when it was clear beyond the peradventure of a doubt that Marx's philosophy meant Marx himself. And once it meant Marx himself, it became inseparable from (1) critical activity, not only against the bourgeois order with which he had broken, not only from left Hegelians from whom he was separating, not only the new he and Engels would develop with the critique of THE HOLY FAMILY, but, above all, also self-criticism; (2) this critical praxis Marx called for was hyphenated with the word, revolutionary; and (3) between critical and revolutionary came practical, and that not only as proletarian, though it did all begin with those magnificent 1844 weavers who broke up the machines and burned up the deeds to them, but, again, also for himself as, by the mid-1860s, he tried a course in practical labor.

Put differently, when Marx broke with bourgeois society, he laid the "new Humanist" foundations for Historical Materialism, the critical-practical-revolutionary activity, that to this day governs revolutionary genuine Marxism. It compels a concreteness in self-RE-organization that stops "taking for granted" knowledge and experience and, instead, demands that the specificity of tasks and persons be measured by what has been spelled out as Perspectives for the year. Thus, what would seem a mere move from one locale to another--Tyran and Diane's moving to the Center in April--is, in fact, a realization that reorganization cannot gain its full development "in the field," as the Black Thought pamphlet as process indeed had proved.

Since I can no longer delay starting the work on the book, and thus do not have time also to address a letter to the members gained at the Convention, I do at least wish to remind the local organizers please to make a packet for each new member. In this way, he/she sees what had happened before joining and history becomes part of the present, with the Archives outline tying past and present in a way that the new members know that even what seems "archival" is in fact theoretic preparation for oncoming American Revolution.

I'll reappear on the scene at the end of the year and participate in the summing up of the first quarter.

Yours, Raya

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