

MINUTES OF REB MEETING OF SEPT. 16, 1983

Present: All but Denby ill; Suzanne excused. Diane present as sitter-in.

Agenda: I. Carrying Out Constitutional Convention Decisions; II. Ramifications;  
III. Ongoing Activities; IV G&W

I and II. Raya combined the first two points on the Agenda -- Carrying Out the Decisions of the Constitutional Convention and their Ramifications -- in her presentation, stressing that first to consider is the Constitution itself. What has been concretized there, now that we have a body of ideas called Marxist-Humanism, articulated in the trilogy of revolution, is what it meant that, as founders of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., we would have both a paper "created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard not separated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation" and a whole theoretical concretization of Marxism for our age -- Marxism and Freedom.

I went back to re-study the additions we just made to the Constitution and counted 20 new points we made there -- and yet they are not a break in any sense from M&F, but, rather, a development of what was articulated there through Philosophy and Revolution and Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. I tried to express the 20 new points I counted there in one sentence. Instead, I came up with the following paragraph, which expresses both what the Constitutional Convention was about and some of the ramifications that will follow from it:

In the Marx centenary year -- when, on the one hand, we have witnessed 30 years of the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and, on the other hand, the objective situation has reached such a totality of global crises in a nuclear world -- we discovered the trail to the 1980s in the "new moments" Marx experienced and articulated in his heretofore unknown writings. Those new moments, those new paths to revolution, his new return (in the Hegelian sense) to his original concept of Man/Woman relationships, as we now witness the emergence of a new Third World, help illuminate what Marx had seen from his very first discovery of a new continent of thought and revolution, world revolution -- what Marx called "revolution in permanence."

Totally new is this re-examination of the relationship of spontaneity to organization and the re-working of "revolution in permanence," both in relationship to a new unification of theory and practice and as ground of organization itself. Finally, the need for organizational growth and the projection of a new type of member compel the realization of what the Critique of the Gotha Programme projects regarding a new society which will end the division between mental and manual labor. Thus, and only thus, will there finally emerge a New Man, a New Woman, a New Society.

Raya then developed further the Hegelian concept of return, stressing that, where others admit that there were "new moments" in Marx's last decade, they see these new moments as a break with what Marx had developed up to then, Marxist-Humanism sees these new moments as the highest concretization of his whole 40 years. The concept of the 20 "news" that RD had counted in the amendments we had just added must be the ground for organizational growth and new members as we begin to spell out the ramifications of this very special convention.

The Perspectives Report together with the new paragraphs added to RLWLKM over the past year has already been sent out as Post-Convention Bulletin No. 1; the Reports on Organization, Paper, Constitution, and Denby's Statement are now being stencilled to send out as Bulletin No. 2; and Mike's Summation will be ready to mail out by the end of the first week in October. Dave, in N.Y., has been asked to typeset a sample page of the Constitution, and we will aim to have that printed as soon as possible.

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Raya said she had edited her letter on "Revolutions and Philosophies" and proposed that we republish it as thus expanded. She had also made notations for another new paragraph for RIWLKM, which might be included as a post-script to that letter. The paragraph would be for adding to p. 180 of RIWLKM, after paragraph 3, where RD had written: "It was no accident ... that Engels, who certainly agreed with Marx's analysis of the Asiatic mode of production, nevertheless skipped over the question of the Oriental commune in his analysis of primitive Communism in The Origin of the Family." She said she knew she had not "proved" it was "no accident" and it was that "proof" she had now worked out and wanted to include. The proof would consist of showing that Engels left Asiatic mode of production because he was no dialectician. From the beginning, even when he was helping Marx with the Tribune articles, he saw only "Oriental despotism" and not its dialectic opposite -- that is, what the commune had the potential to become. When Marx later was working on his EN and became excited about the Indian commune forms, he never separated it from what he had earlier done on the Asiatic mode of production. But because Engels continued to be unilinear in his view, he embraced Morgan as virtually a dialectical materialist, and it completely prevented him from grasping Marx's critique of the communal form.

The actual working out of this paragraph, however, as well as the re-issuance of an edited and expanded letter on "Revolutions and Philosophies" would have to wait until after the return from New York next week.

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← In the 1850s, for example, what inspired Marx to return to the study of pre-capitalist formations and gave him a new appreciation of ancient society and its craftsmen was the Taiping Revolution. It opened so many doors to "history and its process" that Marx now concluded that, historically-materialistically speaking, a new stage of production, far from being a mere change in property-form, be it "West" or "East," was such a change in production-relations that it disclosed, in embryo, the dialectics of actual revolution.

What Marx, in the Grundrisse, had defined as "the absolute movement of becoming" had matured in the last decade of his life as new moments -- a multilinear view of human development as well as a dialectic quality within each formation. From within each formation evolved both the end of the old and the beginning of the new. Whether Marx was studying the communal or the despotic form of property, it was the resistance of the Subject that revealed the direction of resolving the contradictions. Marx transformed what, to Hegel, was the synthesis of the "Self-Thinking Idea" and the "Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty" as the emergence of a new society. The many paths to get there were left open.

As against Marx's multilinear view which kept Marx from attempting any blueprint for future generations, Engels' unilinear view led him to mechanical positivism. By no accident whatever, such one-dimensionality kept him from seeing either the communal form under "Oriental despotism" or the duality in "primitive communism" in Morgan's Ancient Society. No wonder, although Engels had accepted Marx's view of the Asiatic mode of production as fundamental enough to constitute a fourth form of human development, he had left it out altogether from his analysis of primitive communism in the first book he wrote as a "Bequest" of Marx -- Origin of the Family. By then Engels had confined Marx's revolutionary dialectics and historical materialism to hardly more than Morgan's "materialism."

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to p. 119