

May 5, 1983

Dear Friends:

This being Marx's birthday, it is a great day for summing up the tour as the ground for the preparation for our Constitutional Convention. However, the REB yesterday was such a lengthy meeting -- from 7 PM to 10:30 PM -- and the discussion was so important, that it becomes impossible to sum up the tour as a totality here: the 46 speeches plus the 6 informal speeches and the 6 appearances in the mass media in N.Y., Philadelphia, Wisconsin, Seattle, Utah, plus a video tape made for an Afro-American Studies class on Marx and the Black World.

What I will therefore do is single out three "firsts" that have a direct effect on the organization, and leave all the rest of the presentation and discussion for Olga to record as the minutes you will receive next week.

The first and last meetings were singled out because they go to the very roots of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., the first, in West Virginia, because that's where everything began to change objectively and subjectively in 1950; the last, the joint meeting of the Bay Area and L.A. locals, because organizationally, not as of 1950 but as 1983, it will have the greatest impact on the work between now and Convention. I'm referring to the fact that this is the first time ever that a sum-up meeting, restricted more or less to members and not advertised, brought out more than 50 -- some coming all the way from San Diego and Santa Barbara (and Jan, from Chicago, also dropped in). The West Virginia meeting was reported on by Andy some time ago, but it is only when you see the process of what it resulted in by the time the tour ended, that you recognize its ramifications -- whether that is from my speech itself, which began with Marx regarding John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry a world-shaking event that would result in nothing less than the Civil War in the U.S. and the establishment of the First Workingmen's International; and then related what happened 90 years after, i.e. the origins of Marxist-Humanism in the General Miners' Strike -- or whether that is from the fact that actual participants in that Strike were in the audience itself in West Virginia.

The process continued on what seemed a very different level when, in New York, the Tamiment Library, which has the microfilm of all of our documents since 1941, asked for an interview with me in order to establish both my activity in that General Strike and what it meant in the actual labor struggles in the U.S. It is at this point that a new illumination was thrown both on the unrecorded labor struggle that led to Marxist-Humanism's new global category of the age as a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and on our subjective, historic contribution in that struggle. But the climax to it all occurred at the very last meeting in L.A. when the two who had participated with Andy in that Strike -- Raymond and Frank -- poured forth their remembrances, both as to the actual events and the totally different organizational attitudes between ourselves, the SWP, the WP and the emerging differences between myself and CLR James.

It is of the essence both as objective, crucial labor struggle in the U.S. and as subjective -- not as "personal" but as

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ideological, --, manifestation. Or as we have often expressed it, when a movement that is itself a form of theory is born historically, that is the challenge to the theoretician to develop to the point of philosophy. Let me put it another way. Whereas previously we have correctly, philosophically, established Marxist-Humanism's beginning not just when we organizationally became News and Letters Committees in 1955, but in the 1953 breakthrough on the Absolute Idea, six weeks before the outbreak of the East German Revolt -- IT NOW BECOMES CLEAR THAT THAT MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE WAS NOT ONLY IN PRACTICE BUT IN OUR THEORETICAL ATTITUDE TO IT AND THAT IS WHAT LED TO THE BREAKTHROUGH ON THE ABSOLUTE IDEA.

IT IS THEREFORE CRUCIAL TO HAVE A PAMPHLET ON THAT STRIKE AND SHOW ITS INSEPARABILITY FROM OUR OWN CONTRIBUTION. This was the first motion put to the REB, which voted for it unanimously.

The second "first" occurred in Chicago. On the one hand, this was the greatest of all the organization's results on "Have Thumb, Will Travel," and came about when Chicago reached out to get lectures in Iowa, Wisconsin and Urbana. On the other hand, the Chicago local, as a local, had no outsiders present at its sum-up. The one who did most to get the cut-of-town lectures was David Park. It is he who showed so great a sense of organization that not only were the lectures obtained, but the follow-through in each place began on the spot.* Furthermore, when I explained to him that our original aim to have Chicago become a true sub-center envisioned also contact with Denver, where, in the 1960s Mary Hamilton organized both a great meeting with Blacks and one on the university campus that was informal, he thought he could make such a trip sometime before the Convention.

The third "first" includes Black American intellectuals, the Black Consciousness Movement of Africa, Black West Indian intellectuals, and the new introduction to ACOT. For the first time in many years, we have an important Black dimension to our sympathizers (important that is, not as members but as sympathizers); indeed I spoke on four Afro-American platforms, one Black radio station, and it is clear that there are several Black intellectuals who consider a continuing dialogue with me important and may also review the book. In an important sense, this also gives a new illumination to my participation in the Third World Women's Conference and actual relations around Marxist-Humanism both with Iranian and Iraqi dissidents. All of this plus the letters awaiting me on my return from Lou, Diane, Tommie and Susie as contributions to the new Introduction I will write for ACOT, which will have, as focus, the latest paragraph on Black dimension I have added to RLWLKW, means that I will need at least a week before I can comment on them.

Finally, there is the importance of the international trips three of which are now ongoing, but on which we cannot draw any conclusions until the travelers return. What I did not report to the REB, because it cannot take effect until July, is the very new phenomenon of having a woman as co-author of the international column

"Our Life and Times." Peter Mallory has been anxious to cede his co-authorship, as he did his original membership in the REB, to a younger comrade. But until my trip to California I did not finalize Mary's agreement to accept the additional task of being that co-author.

You also need to congratulate Peter, who has made the most original contribution on the Ethnological Notebooks, and thus opened the entire question of our challenge to post-Marx Marxism to a new audience. As soon as his essay is printed in the outside journal that has accepted it, we will reprint it as a pamphlet of our own, so that this crucial challenge becomes the focal point for developing the discussion around Chapter 12 of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution.

You will receive the report of the last week of the tour -- that is, the lectures at Santa Barbara, San Diego, UCLA and Cal State -- directly from Peter.

Clearly, this exhaustive but also most challenging trip around the trilogy of revolution has so many new vantage points from which to jump off and develop the preparations for our Constitutional Convention, that it must be seen as the preparatory stage for our Perspectives, not only for the American revolution but for the global direction.

Yours,

RAYA

* This was also true in Salt Lake City, where, though we have only one member, Ted, the public meeting was so successful that, on the spot, we found there were five minimum who felt close enough to want to meet with us to plan for a study group -- and some of whom are thinking of an even closer organizational commitment. Indeed, both on the mass media exposure and the new type of sympathizers, extending from a musician to an important anthropologist (whose new book Mike will be reviewing), we have a very new type of foundation to build on. Indeed, we may even have live entertainment at our Convention party.

MINUTES OF REE MEETING, MAY 4, 1983

Present: All but Denby, ill: Diane as sitter-in

Agenda: I- Sum-Up of Tour as Ground for Constitutional Convention;
II- G&W

I- Raya said that although this was a one-point agenda, it was the second part of the title -- as ground for the coming Convention -- that compelled her to single out of the 46 formal speeches, 6 informal speeches, 6 appearances on mass media and one on video-tape, and all the rest of this tour, only the main points that are new and most important in terms of the impact on our own convention. The letter to the locals of May 5 presents the thrust of Raya's report to the REE, and is to be considered part of these minutes. All that needs to be recorded here are the proposals acted upon: Thus, singling out the very first and the very last of all the meetings as the two "best" was because the first, in West Virginia, enables us to see the process of what flowed from that "return" to our roots in American labor by the time the tour was over; and the last, the sum-up on May 1 on the West Coast, transcended the gap that has always confronted us between the successful campus lectures and our own organizational meetings. (Raya indicated what might be added to the Constitution if we do have a pamphlet, at the end of para.4, which would show the inseparability in a very concrete way of philosophy and organization.) To work out such a pamphlet was the first motion put to the REE -- and Raya will meet with Andy to discuss it in full.

She also discussed Urbana more fully, stressing the importance of the several platforms she had been given during this tour by Afro-American departments as well as this Third World Women's Conference. The hour presentation at Urbana is now being transcribed and will be included in their publication of all the papers from that meeting.

Raya also developed in more detail the several Black intellectuals from Ann Arbor to Washington, D.C. to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, who are interested in the whole development of RD's work on the Black dimension, including the differences with CLRJ -- which, indeed, was one of the questions explored in the video interview as well as the in-person discussions around attitudes to the Garvey movement. The interview for the Black radio stations is also an important breakthrough during this tour, and points up the variety and scope of the media coverage.

Indeed, it was felt that each local where interviews were taped should attempt to get a copy of those tapes for our own future use. And not all the interviewers were sympathetic to our views -- which served to sharpen them and heighten the interest. This sharpening of our differences with others is exactly what will both gain us new friends and members, and separate those who do not accept our very concrete challenge to all post-Marx Marxists.

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Raya said it was important to make clear that while she had indicated the new developments may lead to viewing Chicago as Center, that is not the concentration at this Convention. Seeing the possibility of developing Chicago as subcenter is the concentration we are concerned about, and what is involved in the concrete motions before us.

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