

CALL FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

June 1, 1983

To all Members of News and Letters Committees
and British Marxist-Humanists

Dear Friends:

The only thing flowing from the media-event of the Williamsburg summit meeting was that economics -- the depth, the length and the staggering unemployment that characterize the present deep recession -- gave way to imperialist politics to such a fantastic degree that what stood out naked and unabashed was the threat of nuclear war. No wonder that "socialist" France along with Tory England, and supposedly-unarmed Japan as well as the first country to have asked for Cruise Missiles to be stationed in West Europe, West Germany, not to mention the smaller countries, Italy and Canada -- all backed up that supreme reactionary and experienced con-man, President Reagan, in christening that genocidal weapon, the MX Missile, as the "peace missile." That is the rulers' type of internationalization.

Consider also the U.S. imperialist strangle-hold on Latin America, where Reagan is not only upholding the murderous gang of rulers who are destroying their own people in El Salvador, but extending that to an all-too-willing Honduras, as well as conducting a covert war in Nicaragua. Even this list of horrors does not complete the picture as Reagan busies himself in whitewashing apartheid South Africa. It becomes imperative for us to look at the absolute opposite -- both the masses in revolt and a total philosophy of freedom.

The activities we have been involved in this year must be considered in the context of the opposition to Reaganism -- whether that be the work in the anti-draft, anti-nuke, anti-war movement; or our work in the Women's Liberation Movement; or the fight against the labor bureaucracy's class-collaborationist sponsorship of endless labor concessions to capital, heaping the whole brunt of the crisis on the workers' backs, while they do nothing about unemployment. The labor bureaucracy's do-nothingness about the ever-growing unemployment extends to their doing nothing to participate in the persistent, consistent, militant, Black opposition to Reagan as he turns back the clock on a full decade of Black revolutionary struggles for freedom and for the end of discrimination in employment, in education, in health and safety.

This year our outreach, nationally and internationally, has been the greatest ever. Even where we could not be in person internationally -- as in Africa, where we were present in the early 1960s -- we did, in fact, relate to those revolutionaries not merely by writing "about" them but through the relationships this year with the Black Consciousness Movement, with the exiles from Iran as well as Iraq, with all Third World freedom fighters, which is what characterized the Third World Women's Conference in which we participated. Because this is the Marx centenary year, it was not only the international but even the national audiences which had a world aspect. Take, for example, the four Afro-American Studies departments which sponsored my lectures on the Marx centenary in which a challenge was issued to all post-Marx Marxists. What became clear was the broadening of the Black

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dimension's interest in "Marx and the Black World" to an interest in Marx on all philosophic questions -- from "revolution in permanence" to actual forces of revolution, especially that of Women's Liberation. Indeed, there was not one single lecture that focused on Black that didn't include Women's Liberation in its focus as well.

Or take the question of Latin America -- which means both the Latino dimension here and in Latin America itself. Mary's success in Mexico -- both in getting a Spanish edition of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and in being given a university platform for a course in Marxist-Humanism -- manifests the recognition of Marxist-Humanism as a voice of the Second America.

Our outreach this year involved the whole organization: first, in practicing the category of "Have Thumb, Will Travel" to assure that the National Lecture Tour would extend beyond the five areas where we have locals; and second, in discovering through those lectures that not only was there no separation between the question of objective and subjective developments this year, but that this is what has characterized our whole three decades.

Put differently, the objective movement in the 1950s, which we had characterized as a movement from practice to theory which was itself a form of theory, was, in fact, also our own development from the theory of state-capitalism to the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. It, too, had begun as early as 1950 when the Miners' General Strike resulted in our creating the two new vantage points -- U.S. labor, on the one hand, and Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks on Hegel, on the other hand -- which transformed the book-to-be, "Marxism and State-Capitalism", into the book that became Marxism and Freedom.

Just as the totality of the crises today objectively demanded that we stress both Marx's Marxism as a totality and Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution as a unity, so it is now necessary to see the distinctiveness of each of the three parts of the book, in order to see the uniqueness and today-ness of each. What this reveals is the way in which self-criticism has both expanded the book and related it to the objective situation -- which is why at the beginning of the year the Expanded REB had concluded that the "urgent nuclear moment when civilization itself is threatened with extinction while the idiocies of the capitalist ideologues are reflected in Time's choice of a robot as their annual 'Man of the Year'" made it necessary to transform the September 1983 Labor Day gathering into a Constitutional Convention.

Let us look at the three parts of the new book. By no accident, the book begins with Rosa Luxemburg. That is not only because of her unknown feminist dimension, which is so relevant to the movement today, but because, first, last and always, she was a revolutionary. She raised the most relevant questions for our day, whether that was her flash of genius on imperialism at the turn of the century, or the spontaneity of the masses who were the real force of revolution, or the relating of imperialism to the appearance of the deep opportunism within the Second International, while disclosing the Black dimension as the resisters to that imperialism. Even this

we do not do uncritically, for we show that, as great as she was as a revolutionary and as a theoretician, for her not to have gone to the logical conclusion that the new revolutionary force of Black was Subject proves that even so great a revolutionary as Luxemburg practiced only a "half-way dialectic" of liberation when it came to the National Question. And even a Lenin, who did practice the dialectic of liberation and led a successful revolution in November 1917, had failed to reorganize himself philosophically when it came to the question of the Party. The philosophic maturity of our age in refusing to separate philosophy of revolution from organization as well as from revolution itself will put an end to all those soured revolutions we are suffering from.

Let us now take a second look at Part II. It is no accident, again, that it is that new force of revolution -- the Women's Liberation Movement -- which has served to highlight the need to view Marx as a philosopher of "revolution in permanence." Put another way, the duality -- in, on the one hand, disclosing the male chauvinism within the Left but, on the other hand, seeing its vision of totally new human relations unrealized -- led the WLM to a passion for philosophy. It is that duality precisely which led us to dig into the great difference between Marx's views and those of post-Marx Marxists.

The uniqueness and openness of Part III -- "Karl Marx -- From Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of 'Revolution in Permanence'" -- is exactly what not only informed the whole of the book but illuminated our own past, its origin -- or perhaps more precisely put, the process by which Marx's "new Humanism" became so today-ish, whether that was a question of workers in the U.S. battling Automation or workers in East Europe battling Communist totalitarianism.

Whether you take 1950 and the Miners' General Strike, or 1953-56 when East Europe in revolt placed Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays on this age's historic stage, the point is that the inseparability of revolution from a philosophy of revolution reveals such completeness that out of their integrality emerges a new unifying principle. Or take what may seem like an unconnected matter -- the way in which our editor has suggested that the new paragraph for Part III, which sums up Marx on the Black dimension from the 1840s to 1882*, be the center-point of the new Preface to American Civilization on Trial on its 20th anniversary in this Marx centenary year -- and you see that the point here, too, is that the totality of the world crises, with 32 million unemployed in the industrialized West, not to mention the countless millions destitute in the Third World, demands the working out of new paths to revolution.

All these -- theory, practice, philosophy of organization and of revolution -- acquire such urgency because the challenge to post-Marx Marxists is actually an opening to new forces of revolution as Reason, not only as theoretical preparation for revolution but as new organizational forms which would answer the question "What to do?" both on the day before and the day after revolution. Once the problem of "the day after" is faced, the retrogression that sets in with the conquest of state-power can be combatted instead of being left to harden.

* See Charles Denby's Worker's Journal in the June 1983 N&L.

During the 28 years of our existence we have met annually en masse. Only three times, as we have reached new stages of cognition that flowed from new objective crises, were Constitutional Conventions needed. This year's Constitutional Convention comes at a time when we have in hand what we have called a trilogy of revolution -- Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution -- so that the summation of the three decades objectively and subjectively becomes a totality, creating new historic ground for our existence. In that way, those who become Marxist-Humanists first today have that whole trilogy as their foundation. It was only when we reached the new book that we could work out Marx's revolution in permanence as ground for organization. In a word, not only is the movement from practice to theory, and the movement from theory to practice, a matter of the unity of philosophy and revolution, but that theory and practice, that unity of philosophy and revolution, become inseparable from organization itself.

This Convention Call opens the 90-day pre-Convention discussion period. The National Chairwoman, Raya Dunayevskaya, has been asked to bring in a Draft Perspectives Thesis which will be printed in the July issue of N&L. By then, a tentative Agenda will be sent out -- listing both the special session on the proposed Constitutional Amendments and the reports to be given on organization, the paper, the new pamphlets, the international trips, youth and women, as well as finances.

A Plenary session will be held on Friday, Sept. 2 at 7 pm for the National Editorial Board. It will be preceded by meetings of both the Youth and the Women's Liberation Committees. The Convention opens officially on Saturday morning, Sept. 3, and continues through Sunday evening, Sept. 4. It will begin with the Perspectives Report by the National Chairwoman and end with her report on "Philosophy and Organization" to a final executive session of the membership only.

All sessions except this Executive Session are open to friends and sympathizers on the invitation of the locals in consultation with the Center. All invited have full voice.

The Detroit local has been asked to host a party to greet visitors and out-of-town members on Saturday night, as well as to host the entire Convention.

-- The RESIDENT EDITORIAL BOARD