

September 28, 1983

Dear Friends:

Naturally, the first point on the agenda, both of the REB and what we consider important in the whole N.Y. trip, since it related directly to carrying out Constitutional Convention decisions, was the question of printing the Constitution with our new amendments. As you will see in the REB minutes this week, it was unanimously approved that Dave W. do the typesetting, and return his work to the Center within two weeks of receiving the material from Olga.

In that organizational framework, Raya and Mike reported on the first extension of "Have Thumb, Will Travel" since the Convention. The only thing in common between the great public meeting the N.Y. local had organized to hear Raya on "Challenges, Challenges -- to Post-Marx Marxists and all Alternatives to Marx's Marxism" and the academic Conference Raya and Mike attended, which was not only non-Marxist, but predominately even anti-Marxist -- was the international character of both. Thus, despite the organized non-Marxism of the Conference, quite new openings for Marxist-Humanism came from both the Scandinavian countries and East Europeans, as well as a Nigerian and two Canadians. Indeed, there is a possibility in the case of Sweden that Prof. Joachim Israel -- who had already xeroxed my article on "Hegel's Absolute Idea as New Beginning" from Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy for his classes -- would be writing a special feature article on me. And Prof. Sven-Eric Liedman, who is the translator of the Humanist Essays into Swedish and is publishing a book on Engels, has promised to review RLWLKM. On the other hand, the American feminists at the Conference, Kathy Ferguson and Roslyn Bologh, were extremely hostile to Marxist-Humanism, full of arrogant superficialities on choosing alternatives to Marxism. We will no doubt meet them at other conferences and have to fight them.

The internationalism at our own public meeting, which attracted participants from 15 different countries -- from Korea to Africa, from Latin America to Japan, from Europe to the West Indies, had a strictly Marxist dimension. The many differences of view that the discussion brought out, primarily around the question of "vanguard party" was not, however, factional. Thus, once it became clear that far from being opposed to organization, we are projecting that revolution-in-permanence must be ground for that organization, the Latinos who were concerned with that question asked for a special meeting with them. Although two of the five who requested the meeting could not be at Anne's that Saturday for the meeting, so serious were they that they called to ask three questions for which they were anxious to have answers taped. (See REB minutes for more about the New York trip.)

The other important achievement of the N.Y. trip was the WBAI interview, which Anne will follow-through, having already asked for a copy of the tape and some publicity around it. Indeed, follow-through is the key for the N.Y. local's work on the ground laid there this week. There is no doubt that the success of the public meeting was in very great degree due to the new location, near Columbia University, where Kevin had organized lit tables right on the sidewalk for two solid weeks at the entrance to Columbia -- with \$100 in lit sales and new contacts as a result. It was

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in this intense work of preparation for the public meeting that the British comrades were important to its success.

Oh yes, I should also have reported that a reporter from the Guardian was present at the International academic conference and asked me whether I had with me my book which "deals with Marx's last decade and insists that Marx and Engels are not one." He had heard about it and wanted to read it. Mike immediately sold him a copy from his briefcase. There is no way of knowing whether he will actually review it, but there is no doubt whatever, whether it is the New School for Social Research or the Guardian or many other radical meetings, that it is precisely that final chapter of RLWLKM that is being discussed everywhere, despite the fact that the total silence in reviews still prevails.

Yours,

RAYA

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REB MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 27, 1983

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

Agenda: I. Carrying Out Constitutional Convention Decisions and their Ramifications -- second discussion; II. Ongoing Activities and N&L; III. G&W

I. Raya said that first of the ramifications of Constitutional Convention decisions this week was the report of the New York trip, and began the report with having Mike pass around the several samples that Dave Wolff had typeset for the new printing of the Constitution. (The REB picked two typefaces it felt would be excellent, and all were so pleased with the samples Dave had set that the motion to have Olga mark up the copy to be set and authorize Dave to set it in type and return it to the Center for offsetting, was passed unanimously. Dave had indicated he could have the typesetting completing within two weeks of receiving the material from us.)

Raya then described the many new features in the N.Y. public meeting that laid the ground for new opportunities for organizational growth in N.Y., one of the most important being the very location for this meeting. While she had long felt it important for N.Y. to move their meetings to a different neighborhood, it was accomplished this time by having the meeting in the area of Columbia U., which was in no small way responsible for the kind of turnout none had expected -- 70, fully international, young, and all so excited about our ideas that many didn't want to end the discussion. The British comrades, who had been called upon to help in the much-needed work of lit tables, posting leaflets, and other preparations, had immediately pitched in and made it a joint event. The contrast between how great was this meeting and how disappointing and elitist was the Conference RD and Mike had attended can be seen in the fact that RD had one fight before they even registered (when they discovered their nametags were decorated with the American flag), another on the agenda which left no time for discussion and less than an hour even for presentation, another when a non-Marxist tried to substitute for Markovic at his session (RD got her full hour and also wound up chairing Markovic's session). The other fights at the Conference during the week were too many to enumerate, and RD asked Mike to supplement from his vantage point later. The interview over WBAI which was supposed to be for 1/2 an hour went on for an hour and 20 minutes, and may have to be edited to an hour; Anne was so impressed with the possibilities for doing some special work around the tape when it is played that she suggested some special publicity around listing it when it is ready, and the interviewer was quick to agree. Finally, in addition to the sum-up meeting with the local, one of the immediate ramifications of the public meeting was the request of several of the Latinos present there to have a special meeting with RD specifically on Latin America before she had to leave N.Y. That was set for Saturday. (See letter to the locals for this week.)

Mike said he felt it was important to see all the intensive work that had gone into making the public meeting such a success, although there had been so little time for these preparations after the Convention. It truly involved the whole local and the British comrades. And almost all who came came from being contacted at the lit tables or the mailing or the contacting or the posting around Columbia. (In fact, while Mike was posting, one of his former professors tried to stop him, then got into a discussion and dispute over Marx and the peasant dimension, and wound up inviting Mike to talk to his graduate class -- and two of those students came

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to the public meeting. Mike told the story because it described so well, he felt, the kind of avenues that are open in an area like this one.) There was no doubt that the questions some might have had -- both about the location for the meeting and about the title RD had chosen ("Challenges, Challenges -- to Post-Marx Marxists and to all Alternatives to Marx's Marxism") were quickly dispelled by that turnout and by the excitement around the way RD had presented the challenges, in which she concentrated on only three of the final years -- 1880, 81, 82. Nobody wanted to leave. It was a total contrast to what was going on at New School, which showed exactly the kind of retrogression you get when you want to go "beyond Marx" and wind up thinking that revolution is impossible and there may be a marginal chance for survival only if a few brave intellectuals pose things out of their own heads. They wind up with Bakunin, Kropotkin, Adorno, Habermas, and Nietzsche. You can see that Rudi Bahro is not an aberration in this process of retrogression. This is the process RD was challenging every step of the way at that Conference, and her impact was unmistakable and fully appreciated by those who were independents there. Bad as the Conference was, therefore, we not only sold \$65 out of our briefcases since no lit tables were allowed, but made contact with all those independent scholars from Sweden and Yugoslavia (including a Marxist-Humanist feminist from Praxis), Nigeria and Canada. When RD and I split our "forces" on Thursday, I went to Eleanor Leacock's discussion, where she had each one introduce themselves, and I introduced myself in terms of someone there because I was interested in the Ethnological Notebooks -- and managed to both connect myself to the work of RD and separate myself from those who thought Marx and Engels were one. What was the surprise was that it was not Leacock (who said nothing else for an hour and a quarter) but Diamond who took the floor to defend Engels and fight our position. There is absolutely no question in my mind that we made a far greater impact than we know on that Conference and have many new openings as a result. Mike brought the discussion back to the question of the N.Y. local in terms of how the "follow-through" cannot be something we discuss "in general", but about which we must be very specific. It involves being willing to break out of old patterns, beginning with recognizing the importance of a whole new location for N.Y. meetings and including the importance of a very different type of periphery we have achieved in the Latino dimension.

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