

March 1, 1984

Dear Friends:

Finally, the 1949-50 pamphlet has reached the point where we can begin to discuss an actual publication date. The REB last night heard, for the first time, the form we now propose. You remember that we had not come to any conclusion before as to whether my section would be a Preface or an Appendix. The form we have now decided upon is stated in a very brief Preface by the NEB, which Olga has drafted and which is enclosed. This shows that the pamphlet will have "two parts, which are inseparable from one another." It continues: "Part I -- 'A Missing Page from American Labor History' is written by Andy Phillips and other direct participants in that historic strike. Part II - 'The Emergence of a New Movement from Practice that is Itself a Form of Theory' is written by Raya Dunayevskaya, chairwoman of News and Letters Committees, who was a philosopher-activist in those events."

Andy, as you know, had turned in his section early in November, but I have not worked out my part until now. Here is the way it begins: "The dialectic of the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike, as it was transformed from a Lewis-authorized strike that already had lasted some six months into a challenge to John L. Lewis himself, laid the ground for new ways of thinking." The point is, as the very next page shows, that it is not only dialectical philosophy that gives action a direction but philosophy itself also gains "a new dimension through what the miners are doing and thinking."

The question of methodology, concreteness, sequence of dates, discloses a Universal in the Concrete. Take the date, Feb. 14, 1950. It is the date the miners voted to establish a rank-and-file to rank-and-file relief committee, a motion which our comrades had introduced. It turns out, now that we have all the material before us, that the very next day, Feb. 15, was the date of the first meeting to discuss the book that became M&F to which a worker was invited -- concretizing the proposal I had made for two new vantage points: 1) the American worker, and 2) Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks. Even more exciting about sequences of dates is the date, March 14, 1950, when on the very same day I wrote two letters -- one to C.L.R. James and one to "Red", a miner and member of the Tendency. The letter to CLRJ stressed that "Marx is always on the spot...in the very latest mine strike. Among the additions in the 1872 edition of Capital was the transposition of a long footnote on miners into the text itself. You will find it on pp. 541-551." The importance of that expression "on the spot" is seen in what permeates the whole pamphlet and our continuing work, that is to day the todayness of Marx's Marxism.

The letter to "Red" stresses the fact I wanted to continue the correspondence with miners, though the strike was over. Both of these letters will be included in full and the letter to "Red" will show that the request for continued relationship to the miners is what helped set the structure for M&F itself.

A totally new element appears in the way a story that we have heard many times shows itself to be not just concrete but a universal and thus highlights methodology. I am referring to the fact that Charles Denby's attitude to the death of Stalin, and my attitude

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about an incubus having been lifted from my brain, which led to my expecting great explosions, were very much one and the same. Here is the way I put it in Part II: "Charles Denby called as soon as his shift ended, to tell me of the excitement in his factory as the radio blared the news of Stalin's death. Each worker was saying that he had just the person to take Stalin's place -- his foreman. I asked him to come over for a long discussion. It made it clear to me that, far from the American workers considering this a 'Russian Question,' they were relating it to their own working conditions in the shop and their relationship to their own bosses and union bureaucrats."

Both this and the letters on March 14, as well as the constant, concrete references back to Part I and the philosophic letters from 1948 to 1953 lead to the following two conclusions: 1) The whole period of 1948 to 1953 is one long letter on the dialectics of revolution; 2) The 1950 to 1953 period proves that the todayness of Marx's Marxism is not something just "in general" but the reason for M&F being dedicated to the workers and the students "who have participated so fully in the writing of this book. They are its co-authors."

You will note from the enclosed minutes that the pamphlet will also have a brief Appendix. It will include not only a descriptive chronology of the 35 letters written between Feb. 18, 1949 and Jan. 15, 1951 which are on deposit in our Archives at WSU -- but reproduce in full the letter I wrote to CLR James on June 16, 1951, which shows how detailed was my study of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks in relation both to the specific sections in Hegel that Lenin was commenting on and to the political repercussions of his study. It is because I have just rediscovered it that this letter is not yet included in the Archives and we want to reproduce it here. There are seven other footnotes that refer, by specific pages, to the Archives.

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From New York comes the exciting news about the WBAI program for International Women's Day that will run from 7AM to midnight, and feature the interview that Anne had arranged for Raya with WBAI when Raya was there on her tour last Spring. WBAI has sent out an impressive and beautiful brochure for this special day-long program which features Raya's photo taken by the interviewer (which we had never seen) and two quotes from RLWLKM plus a special paragraph drawing attention to the interview to be aired along with all the voices that will be heard that day. We trust New York will be sure to send a copy to each local. It certainly underlines what Mike reported to the REB last night under "Ongoing Activities" when he spoke of the way the new ads for RLWLKM -- from the NYRB, to the Nation, to the special IWD Guardian issue (which will also carry Anne's essay on Peruvian women) -- will be sure to initiate discussion, make the new book truly new again, and open many new doors with some creative work on our parts.

Please study carefully also Eugene's report on possible new office space and new printers in Chicago. That this is not a question for only Detroit and Chicago, although they are the two locals most directly involved, can be seen in the problem we must quickly answer concerning what address to include in the new printing of the Afro-Asian pamphlet as well as the 1949-50 pamphlet that we will want to have off the press before the Convention, which will be held July 7-8, with the usual Youth and WL national meeting as well as the Plenum scheduled for July 6.

Yours, RAYA

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REB MEETING of OCTOBER 18, 1983

Present: All, with Diane as sitter-in

Agenda: I. Preparations for Nov. 6 Memorial Meeting and Nov. Issue of N&L; II. Pamphlet on 49-50 Strike; III Ongoing Activities; IV. G&W

Raya then read two pages of questions she had posed to herself for working out the Appendix she will be writing for the pamphlet. The central point connected with the reason why she had decided not to transform her "Revolutions and Philosophies" letter. There would be at least four subheadings:

- I- The Strike Gives New Direction to Philosophy, -- which would take up not only how embarking on a serious study of philosophy had led RD to go into action in the actual strike so quickly once it erupted, but would include quoting the miner's speech at the meeting where Lewis' telegram was ignored, and significance of the two letters written the same day, March 14, 1950, one to that miner and the other to CLRJ.
- II- What Kind of Labor, Red-baiting, the SWP, including the letter to RD from Novak and the SWP's need to call a Tri-State Meeting.
- III- Different Attitudes on the Part of Marxists to the Spontaneous Strike; the half-way Dialectic.
- IV- The conclusion -- Self-Determination of Ideas and Self-Mobilization of the Masses. It is here RD said she had to decide whether to go to 1953 and the breakthrough on AI or to 1983, looking at '53 and '55, adding: "I definitely want to end with the Marx centenary which impels this look at 1949-50, and yet I don't want to go into the break with CLRJ in '55, even though the '55-56 Hungarian Revolution on one side and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, on the other, would be a great way to end."