

PRE - PRE - CONVENTION
BULLETIN

2776 Final 2 pp

Responses to the March 27
"Special Special Special"
and Raya's April 10
Letter to Colleagues

MAY 1, 1986

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News & Letters Committees, 59 E. Van Buren, Rm. 707 Chicago 60605

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April 28, 1986

To the REB-NEB

Dear Colleagues:

No member would deny organizational responsibility for the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism; indeed, the leadership may feel deeply insulted to have such ABC's cited. Yet isn't it as much ABC to practice self-critique concretely as objective crises arise and demand that they be related to such "internal" questions as preparing for a bi-weekly?

Was that really everyone's preoccupation at the time Ronald Reagan assaulted Libya from the Gulf of Sidra? It is true that everyone at once acted against Reagan. But was there a simultaneous projection of the uniqueness of the Marxist-Humanist analysis at the mass demonstrations? Was there a total grasp of the "Special-Special-Special," which had been written within 48 hours, as well as of the changes in the Lead and Editorial of the April N&L as it was on the presses?

Two of the letters I received after my April 10 letter made, I felt, that great projection and self-critique -- one from Kevin and one from Peter. I consider that they so impinge on the 1986-87 Perspectives that I propose they be issued right now, as a pre-Pre-Convention Discussion Bulletin.

Yours,

Raya

P.S. I had no sooner written this note than I received minutes of the LA-NEB Meeting where my April 10 letter was discussed. While the whole discussion was excellent, it is the commentary by our Labor Editor, Felix Martin, in particular that I wish to include here.

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April 16, 1986

Dear Raya:

Both your letter of April 10 and the contradictory responses of the movement here to Libya have brought out once again how counter-revolution, whether 1914 or 1939 or 1986, can be the dividing line inside the revolutionary movement. Just as Lenin in 1914 both issued a call for revolutionary defeatism and delved into Hegel, so your letter asks us to cease business as usual, either philosophically or in activity. Here catching the new must be grounded in the whole Marxist-Humanist archives, you argue. Newest of all to me in your letter was the view of Trotskyism's non-response to the Spanish revolution and Stalin's counter-revolution there as "really the beginning of the end of Trotskyism." This is in turn what led you to the seemingly fantastic conclusion that "much of philosophy was already present in the years prior to 1941, and in 1941 itself" albeit "not fully conscious then of dialectic as philosophy." Personally, I have always been very interested in that state capitalist period, as it was so important to me in the 1970s as a way of understanding Nixon's visit to China at the time I broke with the New Left and joined N&L. But there was always something very different about your state capitalism -- whether from the Frankfurt School's or Cliff's or even CLRJ's -- Humanism was already implicit, if not explicit. I mean the type of Humanism of Volume I of Capital where Marx spends those hundreds of pages tracing the specific dialectic of labor's life and question for freedom inside that horrible factory. One can see that in your analysis of what the Russian worker was eating, and what the specific conditions of labor were, even in the truncated version of RSC which they published in the NI.

How is the movement responding then to Libya? At Loyola, the professor I work with seemed to have more of a business as usual attitude, where apparently there is division among the Central America activists over how strongly to oppose Reagan in Libya, and so they will merely discuss it in their classes a bit. But not really take a stand.

At DeKalb, on the other hand, the antiwar youth wanted to do something immediately, but not separated from a full discussion. Thus, Alan, a Left social democrat in my class on revolution and an activist, had gone all over campus putting up signs inviting people to a "mass meeting on Libya" at the usual time and place where the antiwar group meets. Fully 40 youth and a few professors showed up, all but four or five very shocked by and opposed to Reagan's attack. And wanting to do something about it. We had a wide-ranging discussion for 90 minutes, which sometimes became quite heated, as various types of answers were posed to Reaganism. I tried very hard to show that it was not a Libya or even a Middle-East question, but one of Reaganism on a global scale, and needing to be challenged on that basis. Two things emerged from that meeting: 1) 35 voted to have a picket line or rally today on campus, including an open mike to discuss the issue, plus to issue a leaflet opposing Reagan. I cannot attend, since it is for today. 2) Many students who know I am a Marxist-Humanist saw us in a very new light, as having a concrete revolutionary analysis of an ongoing event. Several came up afterwards to ask me more about Marxist-Humanism, what is it, how is it different from Marxist-Leninism, etc. The 40 have already seen the paper before in many cases, so this will be an ongoing relationship, not only now but for September.

Yours, Kevin

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April 20, 1986

Dear Raya,

For the past few days I have been trying to grapple with your April 10 letter as well as re-studying the "Special, Special, Special" Letter of March 27, especially in order to see how they can help us grapple with the problem of dialectics of leadership.

What I found most helpful in the April 10 letter was your emphasis on analyzing world events unseparated from providing concrete organizational direction that helps move us closer to the bi-weekly. When you say that inseparability was not present in our discussions, I believe it was because the point you developed on Spain 1937 was not caught. You have been continuously stressing that the response to the crisis of Spain 1937 launched the philosophic revolution of Marxist-Humanism, but what has been slow on our part is to catch that this is a retrospective with a 1986 view. If I understand you correctly, your singling out Spain 1937 is a way of telling us that we cannot adequately respond to today's crises unless our response is permeated with the 50 year development of that philosophic revolution. When the retrospective/perspective on Marxist-Humanism is kept in a separate compartment from the response to ongoing events, the mediation is lost for drawing an organizational conclusion. The persistence of that "attitude to objectivity" is what stands in the way of a bi-weekly.

So I guess I am saying that what made it so "easy" to overlook the Special-Special-Special is that it addressed our Achilles' heel. I am sure you need no confirmation of the fact that the letter was not dug into seriously here on the West Coast, even though the L.A. Local held an informal meeting on it at a comrades' house the weekend it arrived. For it certainly didn't permeate us as was shown this week in our "response" to the second attack on Libya: at first, there was the tendency either to go on with "business as usual" or to want to rush into producing some instant statement. In the end, we did neither and ended up selling an unprecedented amount of literature shouting out the headline of the April editorial at lit tables, but the gaps in our own understanding of what constitutes leadership clearly showed.

Even more telling was the question of the workshop/classes. Even before the Special-Special-Special arrived, we knew we were in trouble with them, because the classes were not developing as actual workshops, where the reading material inspired the creation of new copy. Yet, even when we got your March 27 letter -- in time for our class on Latin America -- and despite the fact that I thought I was rooting my talk in a view of Spain 1937, I didn't do so in a way that developed the discussion on the March 27 "Special", showing that I had also missed the point.

The question that concerns me now is how your critique can help us overcome such attitudes. The point you make, about how those three attitudes to objectivity are always pulling at us, is very telling. How, then, does one not get pulled off the road to the bi-weekly by the lure of these attitudes? How objective Hegel must have been to say, after the Science of Logic, that there are only

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three attitudes: he must have been saying to himself, the fact that the philosophy of the age has expressed itself does not automatically mean it gains adherents. The pull of the three attitudes is very powerful, and takes in more than Jacobi. Is this what drove him to add those three final paragraphs to Philosophy of Mind at the very end of his life? Was he saying that a summation of the philosophy is needed so that the followers could grasp with new eyes the totality of its development in order for them to concretize it anew?

Marx also knew about attitudes to objectivity, which is why he has critique in the title of almost every book. By the time we reach Critique of the Gotha Program he saw its pull on his own followers, and also made a summation that would direct them back to a view of the whole with new eyes -- there is a lot more involved in his sending along a copy of his 1850 Address on Permanent Revolution with that Critique than many of us grasp. But that summation as new beginning didn't become the ground for the next generation of Marxists who followed, and therefore they failed to meet the test of the crisis of 1914 -- except Lenin, by returning to philosophy.

Now the critique of attitudes to objectivity is something you have made very central to Marxist-Humanism, and that critique becomes sharpest in facing world crisis points. The fact that claiming adherence to these ideas does not free you from the pull of those three attitudes to objectivity is something you have been developing especially since 1983 in works like Not by Practice Alone and the 12/30/84 thesis -- taken together, ~~I sometimes look at them as our Critique of the Gotha Program.~~ But what is different with you is that you have explicitly connected this critique with a retrospective/perspective of Marxist-Humanism, especially over the last year, which produced a new volume of the Archives and with it a new title and a view of 1937, not 1941, as the point of departure. Wasn't it that return on the level of the objectively and subjectively new of 1986 that enabled you to see the todayness of Spain 1937 in a way that revealed the depth of today's drive to war? And wasn't it that which enabled you to decide, on a moment's notice, to re-write the April Editorial and thereby show us what "on the road to the bi-weekly" really means? What I am trying to say is that analyses of world events can "prove" you are not caught in those attitudes to objectivity WHEN they are inseparable from critique and from taking organizational responsibility for the retrospective/perspective of Marxist-Humanism.

On the other hand, the fact that it has proved so easy for us to separate the retrospective/perspective from such daily organizational tasks as responding to the world situation proves how persistent the three attitudes to objectivity really are. One would have thought the "coincidence" of the new volume of the Archives coming out just as the crisis over Libya was looming would have produced a different reaction. But it is the work you have recently done on the question of the new title to the Archives that I think can help us most in surmounting such tendencies. I was particularly struck by the postscript you added to the new volume of the Archives and which appears in the April 15 In Lieu of REB Minutes: in calling attention to the fact that "the 1930's is ... the focal point now" and in singling out the new title, "Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of World Development," you are providing not just a view of "origins" but new eyes

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with which to re-discover the totality of the archives. IF that becomes a daily exercise and not just a question of "subjectivity" but the kind of subjectivity taken in hand as we meet the daily organizational tasks, then there is a chance we won't get pulled down by those attitudes to objectivity. Isn't that what we mean by "leadership"?

That also takes me back to Lenin, because he was so very great on dialectics, and yet didn't make it on the question of dialectics of leadership. Wasn't that because he never singled out the need for a retrospective/perspective on his philosophy as you have been doing? That reminds me of something you posed a year or so back, when you called attention to Lenin's 16 point definition of dialectics in the Philosophic Notebooks. At point 14, Lenin calls attention to "the apparent return to the old (the negation of the negation)", but instead of making that the new beginning in points 15 and 16, he returns to end on the question of "transition." Isn't that "conclusion" what prevented Lenin from seeing the need to publish his PN? Whether the key is the fact that he stopped short of the final paragraph of the Science of Logic -- where Hegel hits out against "transition" and calls attention to the "new sphere" of the "science of spirit" as the "self-comprehending pure Notion" -- I frankly do not know. But the damage that has done to the very concept of leadership is something we are suffering from still.

I am aware, of course, that even reaching such a "conclusion" on our part does not free us from the pulls of those attitudes to objectivity. After all, how often have I fallen into the trap of getting enamored of the "new" while skipping over the content of the development of the body of ideas which it illuminates, or, emphasizing the body of development as some sort of quantitative designation that doesn't really become a point of departure. As you say, there is no way "out" except through the constant testing and taking of greater organizational responsibility.

That the times hunger for this there is no doubt, as seen in the recent lit sales here -- \$25 or more at every demo or picket line -- and in the meeting of new persons, such as stewardess we met from a picket line whom Cyrus spoke with at length yesterday, to high school students met on distributions, to Anne, a women's liberationist who has come to many meetings and shows potential. That we will get a greater organizational response in this period is clear -- whether we will meet up to the challenge to leadership you have posed will determine the follow-through. As for myself, whatever results are forthcoming, I look forward to in terms of my arrival in the Center on May 2.

Yours,

Peter

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FROM LOS ANGELES NEB MEETING, April 20, 1986

FELIX MARTIN: With all the sales we've been having, it should generate a lot of discussion, and especially subs. Reagan's attack got my mind. I keep remembering Pearl Harbor. There's no difference in what Reagan did. The Spanish Revolution led up to World War II. There was a real labor movement here, and in the world, in the 1930s. That brought on revolution in Spain, and it was leading to revolution in this country before it was bought off. What is different during today's drive for war is that there isn't the labor movement there was in the '30s, but there are freedom movements in the Third World, and the Horn of Africa. There is going to be another demonstration against plant closings at Van Nuys, but the workers are saying: Is this just another demonstration to tell us to write to our Congressman? Objective pulls are such a tremendous thing to overcome. As a labor writer, this is what I have to deal with in talking with the laboring class. If I do this, then I'll be fulfilling what Raya said in her "Special-Special-Special" and her letter of April 10.

Raya's response to the Gulf of Sidra attack illuminated what the "road to the bi-weekly" meant. When we responded to her response our sales jumped. Follow-through and response go together; response begins right there. We should be seeing both sales and subs climbing.

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March 27, 1986

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"A Preliminary Marxist-Humanist Statement on the Last 48 Hours"

Suddenly-- and not out of the clear blue, which was not the truth of the objective situation-- but out of the clear blue at midday (not exactly at prime-time or when working people would be listening to the TV) came the shocking announcement that shooting had been raging for hours. U.S. missiles knocked out Libyan "missile sites" that supposedly had fired the first shot at them. Two patrol boats in the Gulf of Sidra were also destroyed with all aboard lost.

I was the one to witness the midday press conference when this was ongoing simply because I had fallen, broken my leg, and was hospitalized. I had at once called the office of the Center and told them to turn to the press conference on TV. Within a half hour I called again to say that even though I know it is time for the paste-up of N&L to go to the print shop, some dramatic changes have to be introduced into both the Lead and the Editorial as if it were a daily paper. Such challenges are the proof that philosophy is action and action is Marxist-Humanist organization as it responds to the objective situation as well as the immediate subjective re-organization needed. Mike and Eugene came down at once to the hospital to go over the galley proofs of the Lead and Editorial and suggest re-organization.

The decisions were:

1) To create a single headline over both the Lead and the Editorial as if each was inseparable from the other, with both starting in parallel columns on page one. This is what you will read in the first sentence of each: "Yesterday, March 24, out of the clear blue, the Reagan administration announced that the U.S. had sunk Libyan patrol boats hours before." (Editorial); "The unfolding dialectic of revolt in Haiti has put the question of social revolution on the agenda." (Lead)

2) To show what is involved in the practice of Marxist-Humanist Perspectives in this letter. Clearly, the extraordinary counter-revolutionary Ronald Reagan, proudly designating himself as such, and obsessed with the idea of practicing being Commander-in-Chief of an actual war, doesn't care to which country the imperialist troops are sent. He is playing with, or actually preparing for, a full-scale war. As obvious as has been his ambition to invade Nicaragua-- whether he was in Grenada or Libya-- is this really his ultimate?

I want to tell you what dialectic method and Marx's Marxism achieve for genuine Marxists at all turning points in history. The Spanish Revolution was the most dramatic revolutionary act since the Russian Revolution of 1917. And we as Trotskyists were active in all aspects, from being part of the Dabs Brigade to, at the same time, offering critical estimates of the scene.

Yet, frankly, some of us thought that the actions of the Stalinists were not only those of murderous bureaucrats "factionally" getting rid of the Trotskyists in Spain as well as in Russia. What

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else did its ramifications show? (Though those murderous acts themselves were nothing short of paving the way for Counter-revolution.) What dissident Trotskyists were whispering was: couldn't this involve more than just Spanish fascism? Couldn't both Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany be testing their weapons for World War?

Now it is true that nothing comparable to the counter-revolutionary situation that followed the defeat of the Spanish Revolution-- the outbreak of World War II-- exists today. Nevertheless, the objectively reactionary situation in the U.S., whether it be over Libya or Latin America, or in the deterioration of thinking, shows us that the dialectic method is as urgent now as it has ever been, whether we are preparing for the decision on the bi-weekly at our Convention, or participating in the present on-going Workshop/Classes (and I will give the last lecture to all the locals on videotape), or studying and projecting the Retrospective/Perspective on 30 Years of N&L.

What is involved is the whole concept of Archives. It is that which demonstrates our historic right to exist. It is not just a question of being an independent Marxist tendency. Marxist-Humanism is epochal in that it sums up the three decades of a movement from practice to theory which is itself a form of theory, and is inseparable from the full-blown philosophy of revolution.

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There is other news to report in this "letter of the week", and it will be reported on next week, so that this statement is seriously discussed right now as the revolutionary journalistic analyses of this week, analyses we couldn't have anticipated when we assigned the Lead and Editorial at the REB.

Yours,

Raya

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April 10, 1986

To the REB-NEB, and REI-NEB only:

Dear Colleagues:

I would like to discuss with you, long before the Convention, what has been disturbing me ever since it appeared to me that the uniqueness of the Marxist-Humanist analysis in my "Special, Special, Special" seemed to have escaped some of us.

Though the bottomless state of degenerate Reagan retrogression with the U.S. imperial attacks on Libya was recognized by all of us, I do not feel that all recognized how distinct was our "Special" from all others who consider themselves Marxists.

First, the dialectical analysis was not exhausted with our attacks on Reagan's extensions of his imperialist tentacles over Libya, or even when we called it a preparation for an outright invasion of Nicaragua.

Second, it pointed out that it may have been an exercise toward the final holocaust confrontation on the part of either nuclear giant.

Third, the "Special" related the 1986 U.S. assault in the Gulf of Sidra to the historic roots of global counter-revolution as they were seen in what had happened in 1936-37 during the Spanish Civil War when the so-called Workers' state, Russia -- which was supposed to be for the Spanish Revolution -- was testing its weapons just as was Nazi Germany. It led to Franco's counter-revolution crushing the Spanish Revolution.

It was then that tensions began to appear in the Trotskyist movement. It is true that the beginning of the end of Trotskyism did not burst forth openly until the Hitler-Stalin Pact failed to deter Trotsky from continuing to consider Russia "a workers' state though degenerate" and to call for its defense. Nevertheless, the tensions began in the mid-1930s before the actual split in 1940. Some of us dissented when we saw the Spanish Revolution crushed and asked, "My heavens, if Stalin's murder of Trotskyists is not merely 'factional', doesn't it mean that Stalin is actually preparing to participate in a full imperialist war in a global context?" That was really the beginning of the end of Trotskyism.

It led me to pose the alien, class nature of the Russian economy when, even at the first Founding Conference of the Fourth International, and even though his fundamental study of Russia was titled "The Revolution Betrayed," Trotsky still would not give up the defense of Russia. It was the beginning of my returning to Marxist Marxism, though I did not then use that term. What I did do in my finished study of Russia, in the section that was refused -- "Labor and Society" -- was to center it on an article I found in the Russian Archives of Marx. (It was not until much later that it became clear that this was part of what we came to call Marx's Humanist Essays.)

To grasp all those points imbedded in the "Special" written from a hospital bed -- a letter that, in responding to a concrete new situation, was not was not just an analysis of the new facts, but demanded that the tasks for Marxist-Humanists be spelled out

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as deeds to be done in relationship to the concrete perspective of the bi-weekly -- to grasp all this, one couldn't possibly just read it "on the fly." In a word, what has been disturbing me is that, though I did not separate that sudden objective new event from Marxist-Humanism's tasks as revolutionary socialists on the road to this bi-weekly -- and although this inseparability was being practiced within two hours in the changes made in the previously-assigned Lead and Editorial, which was already pasted-up -- it became separated in the discussion.

Let me put it another way. Philosophically, Hegel's three attitudes to objectivity, even if that appears as a diversion from what I am striving for here as conclusion -- that is, organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism -- are of the essence to bring in now. Here is what I mean: After Hegel had already completed his two major philosophic works -- Phenomenology and Science of Logic, which traced the history and dialectic of 2,500 years of thought -- he introduced something entirely new to what was supposed to be just a shortened version of the Logic (i.e., the "Smaller Logic"), which summarized those 2,500 years of thought in just three attitudes to objectivity. He wasn't shortchanging those 2,500 years. On the contrary, he was concluding that, irrespective of the range of years, irrespective of the greatness of thought in each historic epoch, the absolute truth was that it was all a variation of just those three attitudes.

The attitudes involved in discussions on the "Special," by not making inseparable the events and our concrete tasks -- from distributions of the April N&L, through finances for the bi-weekly, to practicing organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism, for N&L, as if it were part of one's daily life -- simply don't measure up to the uniqueness of Marxist-Humanism, which considers the Universal and concrete as one.

Frankly, I felt that if that had been my attitude when "out of the blue" I had heard on the car radio of the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, I would have proceeded to wherever I was going, (since it was also a political task) instead of turning right around and creating a "Weekly Political Letter," which continued for years and eventually became the "Political-Philosophic Letters." That type of attitude to different objective events at a very different historic period today makes it organizationally imperative to develop journalistic "expression" as if N&L were a daily. This is exactly what I had in mind as I listened to Weinberger on TV explaining why the Reagan Administration was finally telling the public what had happened hours before in the Gulf of Sidra. In my mind, this signalled an organizational task for us -- the beginning of preparation, journalistically as well as philosophically, now for our Convention -- the central point of which will revolve about the bi-weekly.

The "Absolute," the dialectic principle that became the ground for the analysis of a sudden, new, objective event that no one could have known would happen in April, 1986, surfaced as easily as it did because that dialectic principle has been preoccupying me ever since March 21, 1985. What I thought was a "nuisance" -- Dr. Mason's insistence that I say something personal instead of "just"

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the self-determination of the idea -- is what led me, in fact, to see how much of philosophy was already present in the years prior to 1941, and in 1941 itself, where "personal," historic and dialectic were all already there in my questions, in my writings. I was not fully conscious then of dialectic as philosophy; all good politicians were using the word, dialectic, as mere synonym for dynamic.

When the Marxist-Humanist, ^{Archivist} Mike, actually discovered proof of that "personal" in the concrete objective situations in the various periods, I began disliking the fact that my archives singled out the year 1941. It is true that 1941 was the year when I worked out the theory of state-capitalism, and that that was a dialectical, historic happening. Indeed, had I fully known dialectics before I was conscious of that word in a philosophic way, I would have seen that my 1941 analyses showed that I was already reaching for precisely that in the economic studies. So, whether the question is 1953 when I broke through on the Absolute, or 1941 when I was only reaching for it, the truth is that the Absolute determines all perspectives.

All this boils down to organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism. You can see from the cover for the new Guide to the expanded Raya Dunayevskaya Collection that the very title has now been changed to read: "Marxist-Humanism: A half-century of its world development." This shows how the perspective determined the retrospective, both in its comprehensiveness and in its today-ness. Marxist-Humanism cannot become a cliché. What is demanded is that each and every one of us, especially the leadership, practice and project Marxist-Humanism which is inseparable from self-discipline.

Yours,

Raya

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