

REB Minutes of Feb. 13, 1986

Present: All, plus Jane as sitter-in, and by special invitation, Cyrus

- Agenda: I The 30 Years Retrospective/Perspective in the context of the Workshops/Classes as well as the Bi-Weekly-- Raya  
II The paper-- focusing on the new Lead in the context of what happened in last two weeks, re: workshops and looking toward the future on the relation of journalism to philosophy-- Eugene  
III New edition of FFSABT and Black activities in the period ahead-- Lou; IV Ongoing Activities and correspondence-- Olga  
V G&W

I Raya began her report on Part II -- the 1980s-- by informing the REB that her dissatisfaction with the 1970s section had led her to reconstruct it, looking ahead to the time when the whole 30 Years becomes a pamphlet. It is important to know why the reconstruction is necessary, even if it ends up to be only a matter of transposition of paragraphs, because the "why" will tell us what is new in this final part III. It is that I felt that N&L as paper was there all right, but both the PPLs and the organization had the appearance of "afterthought". The truth, however, is that both the philosophy and the Perspectives not only preceded the paper, but have been our ground ever since.

To get now to the 1980s, let me read you the final paragraph of p. 1 of the 30 Years, in which it becomes clear that long before the Ethnological Notebooks were published and we saw Marx's new moments, we created a continuity between Marx's Marxism and ourselves as a new tendency. Furthermore, as p. 2 will show you, N&L made everything public, including what the old radicals used to call "Internal Bulletins". At the same time, having the process of coming to conclusions as seen as important as the conclusions themselves, involved seeing the PPLs before they were called "PPLs". The very first letter, -- then called "Weekly Political Letters"-- was written against the U.S. imperialist invasion of Cuba in 1961. The whole point is that the dialectics of revolution and the dialectics of organization and the dialectics of thought were so inseparable in M-Hism, that by now I do not like the name of the new book-to-come. I had been calling it Dialectics of the Party; but now I prefer to call it Dialectics of Organization, because even though we are opposed to the Party, and even though our Constitution says we are not a party, the old title would give the impression that we were one more faction commenting on the question of the party.

Just as the part on the 1980s will concentrate more on the question of organization, so the writing of it carried through the question of the dialectics of revolution in a still newer way. I am referring to the fact that the draft chapter on "Two Turning Points in Luxemburg's Life" was published in N&L in 1980. It should be re-read on the question of dialectics of revolution. I begin the re-telling at the end of p.3, and I want to emphasize here that as much as I had said on that 1907 Congress, it had not really covered the dialectics of revolution as each of the leaders of the different tendencies represented there saw them in 1905. By not really covering, I mean it sounds like a quantitative commentary-- in other words, Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky, Plekhanov, etc. spoke. A re-reading will in fact make you see both the dialectics of organization (which in the case of the 1907 Congress didn't put the 1905 revolution on the agenda), and the dialectics of revolution as Luxemburg related spontaneity to fighting bureaucracy, while Lenin was so good on revolution, but in fact never did move away from vanguardism.

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The Retrospective/Perspective ties the Black Dimension

of the early 1980s, with Miami, to 1983 and the new doors then opened to M-Hism for two reasons. First, it was important to establish that the analysis of the EN by us came in the 1970s, and not with RLWLKM. Second, the 1981 Draft Perspectives, which had made central the category of "Organizational Responsibility for M-Hism", made that integral to the question of the need to transform reality. Indeed, the new discoveries on Marx's Marxism made that all the more important. The fact that Engels had not published the many changes Marx had added to the French edition of Capital, specifically the one which related the general crisis of capitalism to the expansion of foreign trade at the point when "the world market successfully annexed extensive areas of the New World, Asia and Australia..." This is a rather early date for sensing imperialism, isn't it?

Since the whole section on the 1980s will be in this issue of N&L, I will here focus on only two additional points. The most important is that no matter what we speak on, write on, think on, between now and the Convention, it all has to be in the context of the Workshop/Classes and the preparation for the bi-weekly. That is to say, the elicitation from ourselves and the audience in general, so that they become participants in the relation of revolutionary journalism to philosophy and to think of journalism as the commentary on the objective situation just as soon as an event becomes a headline-- or should have become a headline, if it didn't-- is the key.

The second point is that the latter half of the Retrospect. 1980s section-- the part beginning with Charles Denby's life and continuing on all the national revolutions, the peasant question, and all the developments from M&F through P&R to RLWLKM and WLDR (including also FPSABT, advertised in this issue)-- attempts at a totality that explains why, even though the essay stops with 1984 issues of N&L, it extends into 1985 to take up the March 21 Archives event. That event underlined for us the way M-Hism really extends back before 1941 in the sense of a continuity with Marx's Marxism and forward to the newest moments of our development.