

March 13, 1967

To the Detroit News & Letters Committee:
Dear friends:

Instead of waiting for the regular meeting night and talking with you collectively, I want to address you by mail, individually, in order to discuss with you the very unusual nature of the theoretical conference we are planning for Sunday, March 19 at 2 PM, which would last through to about 7 PM, with a break for sandwiches which we will serve right there.

Everyone who is a Marxist-Humanist knows that we consider working people not only to be the motive force of history, but also the source of all theory.

The new is that News & Letters considers that the "source" must become the "subject", that is to say, the actual shaper of theory.

Before 1960 and the African Revolutions, the Negro Revolution in the United States, the youth revolts in Japan as well as in Berkeley, the Humanist trends in Eastern Europe, this goal of uniting theory and practice was just a goal. I am saying this with full awareness of the fact that we certainly didn't act as if it were only goal, instead of the actual practice. The whole method by which we wrote Marxism and Freedom is proof that we did consider not only our members, but also our sympathizers, as MSF itself phrases it, "co-authors of the book".

Nevertheless, the theory was so MSF overwhelmingly concerned with workers in production that the so-called strictly philosophic parts in relationship to Hegel were a very small portion of it. This is entirely reversed with the new book, and especially so in the part called "Why Hegel, Why Now?" which is the subject for discussion at our conference.

If, therefore, we are to establish something so new that was impossible (because of the difference in the nature of the objective epoch in which Marx and Lenin lived) for the founder of the Humanism of Marxism to carry through, then, in turn, we must show our seriousness and actual action by our approach to this conference. What I'm trying to say is that it is necessary to be prepared for it both by reading as much as possible before we meet, and by making sure as to our ability to participate fully in the actual working out of our philosophy by not being tired that day.

So, if you're going to have a very hot time the Saturday before, make sure you get enough sleep Sunday morning before you come to the conference. Also if you bring any friends with you, they must know that it isn't just an ordinary meeting -- and if they are serious about ideas, the ideas of freedom that will make all the difference in the struggle for freedom, then they also must be willing to break with the capitalistic managerial type of mind (if mind you can call it) that thinks only the educated do the thinking and the reading, and the allegedly uneducated do the listening. If we are truly to shape history this attitude must be done away with and the sympathizers should know that this is one of our goals.

I will have an opportunity to see you, now that I'm back, at the mailing this Thursday night, and we can then talk informally about any of the problems that arise in your mind, both in relationship to the conference and in relationship to the book as a whole.

There will also be, as you no doubt know, a public meeting on China on the last day before I leave for my tour -- Thursday, March 30. For those you have in mind to invite to that meeting you should discuss the conference that will precede it as well as the Thursday, March 23 meeting, which we are again proposing be one jointly with the REB. Looking forward to seeing you all,

Your Sam 13956