

May 30, 1976

To the REB-NEB
Dear Colleagues:

The "upside down" way of starting discussions with you so that what had always been last topic--leadership and philosophy--not only became first, but also was presented, first not to the REB, or, as at other times on West Coast, but on East Coast, must now, at our June 6th RMP be both deepened and concretized. I doubt the NEB can quite that fast present their views, but I wish with this to say that they must before, long before actual opening of Conv. sessions, be heard from. One thing that further emphasized this to me was the May 24th W. Coast Report by Eugene. It was not meant, I assume, for this discussion, but rather the regular regional report. In that respect it is good, and the emphasis on Bess, saying that she "doesn't know philosophy", but actually producing most in such discussions individually is likewise what will be required at Conv. discussions.. BUT IT IS NO SUBSTITUTE AT THIS POINT; indeed, it might be an escapism since what is required in this "upside down" way of discussion is, not ~~MEM~~ relationship to anyone locally, NEB or rank and file, but for NEB to me, and, above all, to Ch. 1 of P&R, "purely" philosophically. For it is no small criticism for to have said Ch. 1 is yet to be understood & before any sort of "popularization", it ~~NE~~ must first be internalized, AND NOT ON BASIS OF COMPETITION WITH MEMBERSHIP FOR WHO IS MOST ACTIVE, BUT ON BASIS OF INDIVIDUAL'S HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY as well as a grasp of OUR M-H ORIGINALITY TO ABSOLUTE IDEA AS NEW BEGINNING.

For example, while the creation of philosophic nucleus naturally relates to the organization as a whole, the specific (April 18th) presentation to NEB was for nucleus of philosophic leadership. With it came politicalization, not on fatal vanguardist level, but as concretization of philosophy. Somewhere Lenin said "philosophy is political struggle by other means". Now, had he said it after his own philosophic reorganization in 1915, it would sound like what we are calling for at this convention as an imperative. Unfortunately, I believe it was said at his worst vulgar materialistic level in 1908 when the reactionary days in Russia after the final defeat of 1905 had sent many Bolsheviks to everything from empirio-criticism to God-seeking, and not excluding suicide. Lenin had been waiting to attack Mensheviks politically for he knew his ground there and was sure of his victory whereas his philosophic neutrality in those didn't gain him adherents, not even Bogdanov. So, when he finally decided to tackle them with Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, he thought: Finally, I can win; those intellectuals really have gone off the track in these dark days, etc. etc. Under those circumstances, the sentence about philosophy equals politics by other means could only mean: since I have the revolutionary politics, I can win even if I do not get along swimmingly with Hegel. How very wrong he was he discovered in 1914 when he did go to Hegel and did throw overboard that vulgar materialistic baggage. And so today, with us, we cannot escape strictly philosophic demands by going either to class struggle or organizational growth, or allowing one "to do one's own thing."

No, we are not for "whatever turns you on, baby"! And that not only for the simple and sufficient reason that one's very joining N&L Committees meant Marxist-Humanism "turns you on", but for the deep down reason that it is our responsibility to

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see that self-development spells out, most specifically, "Individualism which lets nothing interfere with its Universalism". And since the only discipline we have is self-discipline nothing short of practicing $I = U$, or, more precisely put, $U = I$, we cannot, in the creation of a philosophic nucleus, allow for it to be reduced to the small coin of concrete questions, not only as LF meant it, taking up something tangible or reformist or "socialism in one country" in place of "permanent revolution" which was likewise an abstraction even where it was not the underestimation of the revolutionary force of the peasantry. No, I mean any escapism from philosophy in the form of "acceptance in the ultimate", but for the present, well, labor strategy, or whatever, takes precedence.

Let's stop for another ~~and~~ moment on this "Labor Strategy" the IS is so interested in. Whatever reason they broke with IS--like whatever reason IS broke with Trotskyism, even when it went as far as State-capitalism--the underlying and overreaching sameness is, precisely, THE ADMINISTRATIVE MENTALITY. Remember, when Lenin said to Trotsky in the trade union debate: your strongest point is revolutionary propaganda, so why do you go into who will lead--trade unions "or Party"--in an administrative way? Give up this mistake and don't go making a Universal out of it, because then you will really be lost. O.K., that's what everyone from Tony Cliff who is under the delusions he could really become a mass party to challenge Labor Party to those who break with IS but still think: philosophy is for the birds. (Incidentally, Eugene, why should we invite Trotskyists for them? Aren't they intellectuals who can read for themselves, and aren't we responsible for M-H, not for Other?) Believe me, popularization will not help them. What will is concretization, persistence and indivisibility of revolution from philosophy and v.v.

Back to politicalization in the way we mean it as concretization of philosophy. Those Pol-Phil Letters are it. Headlines as they reflect exactly what is happening in objective ~~must~~ be tackled philosophically, not just in general, but never too far away from Ch. 1. I'll give you one "example", and then hope it stimulates genuine philosophic dialogue. Take those Absolutes as New Beginnings. In the PHENOMENOLOGY the Absolute is Knowledge, i.e., the unity of history and science as summation of the varied stages of consciousness for 2,500 yrs! This, which was intended by Hegel as "Introduction" to Logic, but rather escaped him, is, in a very important sense, "introduction." That is to say, having viewed, objectively and subjectively, stages of consciousness as Knowledge, he has created ground for "strict" science, that is total philosophic knowledge as categories. The Absolute in SCIENCE OF LOGIC is Idea, unity to theory and practice within that sphere of "abstractions" so the compulsion is to go back to both Nature and Mind. O.K. the Encyclopaedia of Science then ends with Mind? No! That is the genius of those 3 last syllogisms. The Absolute which is Mind, in Syllogisms, becomes mediation and second, rather than last and since last would have returned us to Logic, Hegel doesn't categorize the third at all; he simply says: since it is the whole and the whole is both U and I, then it is really SELF-THINKING IDEA; the Self-Bringing Forth of Freedom couldn't possibly be the narrow EGO. This, this alone, is what made it us say Absolute Idea as New Beginning, Absolute Negativity, Revolution inseparable from philosophy of freedom; new passions and new forces are Reason WHEN SUBJECTIVITY IS NOT ONLY LIVING SUBJECT BUT ALSO THOUGHT, THE ACCEPTANCE OF HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESTATEMENT OF MARXISM FOR OUR AGE.

Yours,
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