

REB Meeting of November 4, 1981

Present: All, plus John by special invitation; Diane as sitter-in
Agenda: I- The Book; II- Lead and Editorial for December N&L;
III- Classes, from now to Dec. 13; and from Dec. 13 to Jan. 2
IV- Ongoing Activities; V- G&W

I- Raya said, in her report, that while she had some disturbing news to report on the publisher, the importance of this report does not relate to that aspect, which is purely informational, but concerns first, the new additions to the book, and secondly, how it is necessary to project this in the classes and in all one-to-one contacting, in such a manner that our unique contributions become the foundation for a very new type of organizational growth. It is to this end, therefore, that she wanted to list those contributions, beginning with the end. To further stress the new additions at the end, she referred to the background of how it all came to be -- out of a discussion with Mike and Mary on the Index. Two new aspects were revealed: one was the concentration on each of the three parts, RL, WL, and Marx, which had left out seeing Hegel "in and for himself"; second and more important was that the Marxist-Humanist point of view naturally permeated the whole, but nevertheless the specificity of our unique contribution of Absolute Idea as New Beginning was limited to the last few paragraphs of the book.

Therefore, page 305 will have a new subheading at the top: "A 1980s Point of View". Instead of continuing with p. 306, there will now be about three new pages, which are summarized here:

The re-discovery of Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays in our age, as against their first discovery by Ryazanov in the 1920s, had ramifications undreamed of by any of the post-Marx Marxists. That was so because the rediscovery followed, at one and the same time, a mid-1950s movement from practice, that was itself a form of theory, and a challenge to the movement from theory for a totally new relationship of theory and practice. That is to say, once the slogan, "Bread and Freedom," issued from the very first (June 17, 1953) revolt from under totalitarian state-capitalist tyranny calling itself Communism in East Germany, what Marx had called "vulgar Communism" couldn't remain something limited only to the past. Because the East European revolts that began in the 1950s in East Europe and are continuing to this day left not an iota of doubt that both in theory and in fact they are rebelling against existing Communism, what became imperative was to work out a totally new relationship of practice to theory. When Marx designated his philosophy as "a new Humanism," its distinction from "vulgar Communism" was not just rhetoric. Either Marx's "new Humanism" meant totally new human relations in life and in philosophy, or it meant nothing.

Marx's Humanism was indeed something great, something historic and creative, nothing short of a whole new continent of thought -- of philosophy, of revolution, of life before and after overthrow of the old regime. Which is why, after the defeat of the European revolutions of 1848-49, Marx had called for "revolution in Permanence" ...

What our age was making us see anew was that the movement from practice had disclosed a break in the Absolute Idea -- i.e. in the unity of theory and practice. The 1970s showed that any new unity of theory and practice would be but a beginning -- and "Absolute Idea as New Beginning" was disclosing new forces of revolution as

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Reason, so that we also saw in self-determination of nations what Hegel had called "self-determination in which alone the Idea is, is to hear itself speak."

(At this point, the mss. will continue with p. 306, the final page.)

Raya said she was beginning with this addition so that all the others, which actually come earlier in the mss., will be seen in this context. Thus, on p. 172, after Lenin's quotations on Flehancov, two paragraphs will be added to stress Lenin's continuation with the dialectic after conquest of power, so that his calling attention to the fact of the Absolute Method being central to Hegel is precisely what makes it possible to have a clear break with the Marxism of the Second International.

The addition to p. 188 comes just before the ultimate paragraph on that page. It is a new reference to Lifshitz's The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx, which happens to be one of the very, very few works that analyzed seriously the 1841 Doctoral Thesis as something Marx never renounced and which Lifshitz points out holds true all the way to Capital, itself.

On p. 231, the additions are, (Rubel) really startling because Kevin had found (in the French collection of in Vol. II, a paragraph Engels had left out, in which Marx, as late as 1870, as he was working on Vol. II, wrote the following: "My relationship with Hegel is very simple. I am a disciple of Hegel, and the presumptuous chattering of the epigones who think they have buried this great thinker appear frankly ridiculous to me. Nevertheless, I have taken the liberty of adopting towards my master a critical attitude, disencumbering his dialectic of its mysticism and thus putting it through a profound change, etc., etc." In re-establishing this paragraph, it offered me an opportunity to add two more paragraphs on Vol. II of Capital, thusly: Consider the empty methodology of Roman Rosdolsky, who concluded, after his forced identification of the Grundrisse and Capital, that one need "no longer bite into the sour apple and study the whole of Hegel's Logic, to understand Marx's Capital" This would indeed make a mockery of the laborious work of a whole decade by the mature Marx at the height of his creativity transforming the 1857-58 Grundrisse to the 1867-75 Capital, which, among other things, had that magnificent section on "fetishism of commodities" which is completely absent from the Grundrisse.

Raya said that when the mss. resumes with the paragraph on the fetishism of commodities as it appears in Vol. III of Capital it indeed prepares us for Chapter 11 on "Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates Ground for Organization". And this is exactly why she was presenting the material in the way/did, because she wanted the whole discussion on the classes and the book to be strictly tied to the basis for our organizational growth. We simply cannot achieve growth in this age of Reaganomics if we do not know how to present that we alone of all the post-Marx Marxists, including the greatest of the revolutionaries, have presented Marx's Humanism as a totality, which at the same time opened the trail to the 1980s. It is 100 years since Marx died. It is high time that post-Marx Marxists face the challenge of the age and the recreation of Marxism in the same manner as Marx himself, who refused any division between philosophy, revolution, and organization.

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