

MINUTES OF REB MEETING OF JANUARY 29, 1985

Present: All, including Jane as sitter-in

Agenda: I. Practicing Philosophy OR What Flows from the Dec. 30, 1984 and Jan. 27, 1985 Meetings for Ongoing Activities and Projection of Future Activity; II. N&L, Immediate and Projected Issues; III. G&W

I. Raya: I think that practicing philosophy is so crucial for all our work that I will not even separate points I and II of the agenda, but speak of them as a single topic, even as the activities that have been going on (and I'm asking for 6 reports -- from Mike, Lou, Neda, Kevin, Terry and Dave) should likewise be presented as illustrative of "practicing philosophy". Again, as usual, I will begin with the critique of ourselves, which to me proves we have not been practicing philosophy. I'm referring to the fact that Lou had such a successful meeting in the Black community, resulting in sales of \$30 of literature and 35 mainly Black present at the talk where a class in ACOT was adopted, and yet not a single one was present at my Jan. 27 public meeting. The one Black woman who did come was from UIC, whom Dave had brought to hear Lou's talk there. In a single word, our weakest point remains FOLLOW-UP.

My point has been that, in a certain sense, ever since the third section of our Convention Perspectives, "Not by Practice Alone," our concentration point was supposed to have been that practicing philosophy means not only when we make a speech on philosophy, but every time we get an article from a worker, or any non-Marxist-Humanist. Our responsibility is to make that new contact aware of the philosophic structure of N&L in which the article will appear and that he gains from it as much as we do. To put it differently, Theory/Practice is not just the name of my column but the characteristic of the entire paper.

It wasn't only the Convention that focused on "Not by Practice Alone". It was the whole Expanded REB, which met 6 months after the Convention and was undertaking the Big Move to Chicago, which, again, was an objective/subjective practicing of philosophy. And finally, here we were, on Jan. 27, 1985, at my first public meeting in the Center's new home of Chicago, and I reviewed our whole Body of Ideas, not alone what we are now that we have that whole Body of Ideas, but what a whiff of seeing the Archives as well as seeing the new book through the Introduction/Overview show -- and yet I still feel we are not practicing philosophy daily. I mean all of us. That has to be proved, first of all, in follow-up.

We now have seven weeks before the activity in which the whole organization will participate -- all, not just Detroit, where it will occur -- the March 21 lecture which the Archives Library is co-sponsoring at WSU. Let me show you some concrete ways, beginning with the preparation before it, and the follow-up after it, in which the Director was urging me to include my individual stories, and not accepting my view that it is Ideas that count, not a personal biography. He thinks I consented to his view. What he doesn't realize is that my "consent" meant that the various turning points I will single out in my life will all be exactly when objectively something great was happening and I merely illustrated it, whether that was at the age of 13 when I wrote new words to the "Pledge of Allegiance", or 1941 when I developed the theory of State-Capitalism, which meant a break with Trotsky and made the highpoint not the work with Trotsky but the break

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with him. In the first case it was the ramifications of 1917 on a child in Russia that she never forgot; in the second case it was the Hitler-Stalin Pact in World War II.

The reason I liked so much Olga's comments at the Jan. 27 discussion was her emphasis on the fact that even though the dialectic was certainly present throughout M&F, beginning with the very first chapter which ends on nothing short of bringing the AI down to the Absolute of our nuclear age, we still had not made a category of dialectics. Instead of the three goals I pointed to on Jan 27 for M&F -- American roots of Marxism; international Humanist concept; and recreation of the Hegelian dialectic -- we had only talked of the first two. In a word, dialectics was not made the category to which we had made great contributions -- that did not come until P&R which specified Absolute Idea as New Beginning. Instead, it was just taken for granted. The conclusion we must draw from it is that until you consciously make a category of your new contribution, you neither disclose all the new nor open new gates for those who have not accepted the Hegelian dialectic.

This becomes extraordinarily important and gives very heavy new responsibilities to those who have accepted responsibility for Marxist-Humanism. I'm referring to the fact that the founder of Humanities Press has died and we do not know the ramifications of what that will mean for our 4th book, WL and the Dialectics of Revolution, which will no doubt not come out March 8. The ramifications are so unclear we may even have to send someone there. What is clear is that we set our own ground. It is more urgent than ever to project the new work as a finished mss. Our responsibilities for Marxist-Humanism underlined everything since the Convention -- including our relationship to the British group we discussed on Oct. 22. (Olga will answer the latest letter from Dick.)

News & Letters will be the organ, monthly in so far as publication is concerned, but daily insofar as activity is concerned, that will be proof of whether we really are practicing philosophy -- dialectic philosophy. I have felt that the change in our Logo to Theory/Practice started out beautifully as characterizing that not only do we not believe in the separation of theory from practice, but that the theory should be exactly where the activity is recorded, being conscious of the fact that whatever the intellectuals will try to summarize (or rather unite in theory and practice to arrive at philosophy) the workers know that they themselves can theorize on their experience, and in all cases gain from the fact that the significance of their activities gains from appearing in a paper that has a philosophic structure to it.

What I felt was lacking in N&L was that we have not followed through with the Essays we started with. I want to propose also that Black not be left only for Blacks to write about. I propose that Mike prepare for the April issue a very critical analysis of the Grenada Papers, and especially so, even if it would only figure as a footnote, because it will have a fn. on CLRJ's so-called analysis of Grenada. Why doesn't Eugene volunteer to write a serious analysis of all he has done on Latin America? Let me illustrate it in another way. I would like to draw Peter into this kind of serious writing as if he were at the Center, first by assigning him two Leads at once: 1) on the Middle East for the next issue (March); 2) what requires a lot more research and digging, and could be in Lead-Article form, on India about which he no doubt has material from all he did for his Third World pamphlet. (Raya will write to him in

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more detail about both topics.)

I want to return to the importance of making a category for being able to practice philosophy, because it is so important to grasp that it is the making of a category that enables you to practice it fully; otherwise you can only call what you have done, which is quite correct, no more than "instinct." The question I want to ask is why does it require a crisis each time. Take the way Grace wound up with "Contradiction" -- until an actual break with CLRJ we couldn't get beyond that. Or take how close Hegel and Schelling were, and yet it was not until Hegel broke with Schelling that we had the birth of a whole new category. That is what we have to keep before us no matter what the concrete task we are tackling -- whether that be the article on the new book I want Terry to prepare for M&L which can say she had the opportunity to read the Introduction, which is really a summation, and then show that what is great about the 4th book is not that it is about WL but that, because it is focused on WL we can see the dialectics of revolution for all four forces as Reason; or whether it be the essay Dave is working on; or the interview Neda will be doing with me for the Chicago Literary Review; or any of the essays or activities we are working out.

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