

REB Meeting of March 26, 1985

Agenda: I. March 21 -- Detroit SU-Sponsored Meeting on the Archives, including press conference before and reception after, as well as the way it will be reported in N&L and the distribution of that April issue.  
II. Discussion; III. Correspondence and Ongoing Activities; IV. G&W

I. Raya stressed that March 21 is not a "past event" but will be the point of our discussion and our activity from now until Plenum discussion opens. When we have the new book in hand, that, of course, will be on the same level. What was important for us to take up here, outside of the actual speech itself, was the methodology that transformed the "personal" stories Dr. Mason was interested in into a challenge to include them and yet not betray our principle that the only biography worth bothering about is the "biography of an Idea." That challenge meant choosing those incidents that crossed with historic, objective events.

Because one learns the significance of those events philosophically in a way that the events themselves, even to the participant, assume the form of a category, let us see what I actually did. Thus, in taking up my participation in a strike when I was 13 years old, I related it both to the objective event then of what I called a "pogrom" atmosphere in the U.S. -- the Palmer Raids were ongoing then -- and to the impact of the Russian Revolution of 1917 as most important of all. This in turn allowed me to focus on a very different historic period by a very different person, which also showed the perceptions of a child when alive at a historic turning point. I refer to Alfred Rosmer, the French Syndicalist, who was born in the U.S., specifically on Staten Island, after his parents, who had been Paris Communards, escaped and wound up there after the Commune's defeat. In this case, it was not that he was alive during the Paris Commune but that his parents' stories determined a great deal of his life. And finally, on the "personal" events, I took up my hearing Debs' final speech in 1925 at Ashland Auditorium in Chicago, which revealed that he was proud of knowing Wendell Phillips who had crossed from Abolitionism to Socialism. It was Phillips who had said: "Scratch a New Yorker and you will find a Communist." This led me, when I was already the author of N&L to use all these incidents to illuminate the Second America. It is why we claim, and can prove, the American roots as well as the world Humanist concepts of Marxist-Humanism.

While I shortened for N&L some parts of my lecture, I made sure to include the essence of my thank-you to Dr. Mason, which revealed the whole question of the attitude one must have to Archives. The whole question of attitude to "personal" stories is seen even in the difference between Parts I and II of Indignant Heart. How could an event like the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike, in which Denby was active in the support caravans, not be recorded in Part I?

in N&L,  
Although the lecture had to be somewhat abbreviated for Parts I, II and III, the excerpts are substantial, and Part IV nearly complete. Along with the lecture will be Eugene's description of the meeting and the exhibit, as well as the reception afterwards. What I want to mention are two experiences, one at the reception and the other at the press conference.

Neither was planned.

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It was at the reception, when I asked their photographer to be sure to photograph Effie with me because she was not only the widow of Denby who demonstrated that Denby was very much still with us, but also because she herself wrote 2 chapters of Indignant Heart about Black women at the point of production and their struggles, that Effie spoke up beautifully. She stated, first, that her name in the book was not Effie, but Christine. It is important for all of us to stress that in our ongoing sales of that book, as well as any classes where we use it.

Also at the reception, where Terry handed me the bound volume of the uncorrected page-proofs of the new book, I immediately took advantage of that not only to have it photographed, but to read out loud what I inscribed -- that Terry Moon, a Marxist-Humanist who does not separate art from philosophy or from revolution had hand-crafted this binding especially for these Archives. Thus, both her name and Marxist-Humanism's conception of art as being part of the philosophy of liberation, are recorded.

Finally, at the press conference Andy threw a question I certainly did not expect, which brought the whole question of Archives to the present day on a world scene, in what Marxist-Humanism had to say on world events. He openly admitted that he was most familiar with all of my works, and therefore would like to ask, not about the Archives, but about my views on the new Russian leader, Gorbachev. Here is what I said, when I caught my breath. Those who may know my views on Andropov may think that what I analyzed then, about it being the beginning of the end of state-capitalism, does not hold because he died so soon. They think Gorbachev is a new generation and a new development for Russia. What I was referring to on Andropov, however, was that even Stalin did not incorporate into his totalitarianism (though there was no mistaking that it was he, Stalin, who set the line) what Andropov did, by absorbing all the posts into his own position, specifically the GPU and "ideology". This became especially prominent when it was Suslov who made the last trip of his life to go to Poland where the ceaseless revolts continue to this day. The very first thing that Andropov did was to see that Suslov's job as top theoretician was not given to any one except himself. Andropov knew he was dying and had chosen two younger men to train -- Gorbachev and Romanov -- in those two fields (secret police work and ideology) that he was experienced in. The fact that Gorbachev is younger and has a long life to look forward to does not in any way change this degenerate stage of capitalism. It is shown in Gorbachev's first statement when, instead of calling upon Stalin's name, he suddenly likened the current "retreats" to international competition to Lenin's introduction of the NEP, conveniently forgetting that Lenin never tried to say that was Socialism, but rather that the retreat to capitalism was temporary -- which the NEP was.

March 27, 1985

Dear Friends:

That the WSU Archives sponsorship of the March 21 events -- the special lecture and the exhibit that will continue for several months -- has truly initiated a new stage for Marxist-Humanism's organizational growth, was seen both in the 200 who attended the lecture and the multidimensional character of that audience; from Black workers, men and women, to Women's Liberationists, white as well as Black, as well as students and professors. We, ourselves, learned a lot from the audience, which allowed us to extend the exhibit itself in the reception. Thus, I asked the photographer to take a picture of me and Effie, introducing her as not only the widow of Denby but as author of two chapters of Indignant Heart. Thus, Terry Moon was also introduced and photographed as she handed me her hand-crafted bound copy of the page proofs of the new book -- and that copy is now part of our Archives. Thus, Detroit, which worked hardest in preparation for this meeting, sold no less than \$105 in lit as well as distributing the pre-publication order blanks for the new book. Their direct follow-through with lit tables near the display case will continue throughout the next period. Finally, the exhibit itself will be expanded by WSU's consent to include a picture of Harry McShane and his Introduction to the 1970 British edition of M&F, with this caption: "Harry McShane, known throughout Britain as the 'last of the Red Clydesiders,' was a leader in Scottish workers' movements since World War I. In the early 1950s he broke with the Communist Party and founded the Scottish Marxist-Humanist Group, helping to bring Dunayevskaya to Britain in 1959. Today, at age 93, he still views his 1971 Preface to the British edition of Marxism and Freedom as his most important work."

The April issue of N&L now going to press will include both my speech and a full description of the Exhibit and the events of March 21 by Eugene, as well as pictures, RVs, and ads around this. Indeed, the special ad for the new book will open the way for our follow-through in the May issue.

What may seem a totally different subject -- the assignment for Lou to write the Lead for the May N&L on South Africa, which is in the process of an actual civil war -- is, in truth, an indication of the unification of objective and subjective in Marxist-Humanism, as seen in the two-way road between Africa and the U.S.

For that matter, a truly new event has occurred, which takes the form of the letter I have just received from Roy in the Bay Area. At first glance, it appeared as if he was in a different period because the subject of his letter was Philosophy and Revolution which was issued in 1973. In truth, it was all within the context of what we have focused on ever since the last Convention, in the section of our Perspectives called "Not by Practice Alone," which was singled out again and further concretized on Dec. 30, and Jan. 27. All was brought to a climax in the March 21 meeting. A xerox of Roy's letter and my answer to him (which I will write in a few days) will be sent out to each local. Indeed, I think I will propose the creation of a new bulletin on the ramifications and preparations for March 21, which will include, in addition to this exchange, Jim's presentation to the Detroit local on the Dec. 30 Expanded REB.

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So many events happened directly before March 21 and directly after that that I can only mention briefly what was reported to the REB last night as "Communications and Ongoing Activities" :

1. First, what you may already know -- Neda's interview with me, published in the Chicago Literary Review, which we can use widely.

2. Lou's review of "We Are Bosses Ourselves" in the Black Scholar, which we will use with Humanities Press itself, to show how widely our audience is and how we help them.

3. The trips now planned are Eugene's to New York April 6; Raya to Illinois Circle April 18; after that, Olga's trip to Utah and the West Coast.

4. Franklin's letter to Science for the People appears in their March/April issue. Franklin made sure to mention there both the pamphlet on the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike and to give the full address of News & Letters. It represents a breakthrough to the scientific press.

5. Michelle and Terry will go to Seattle in June for a Women's Studies Conference, where they will focus on the new book.

6. The addition for 1981 through today of our Index for Raya's Theory/Practice Columns, prepared by Michelle is ready to send out to all and copies are enclosed.

7. Copies of the additional pages for our Archives Guide, which introduce and list the new Volume XI, just donated to the WSU Archives -- "1981-1985, Dialectics of Revolution; American Roots and World Humanist Concepts" -- have been sent out.

Finally -- Mike reported on the "Introductory Note to the John Dwyer Collection" which John wrote accompany the new donation he has just made to the WSU Archives Library. We have put it on the agenda for the next REB.

Yours,

Raya

Today is the day the Detroit local was to be able to pick up copies of the video-tape of March 21, which we will be sending around for all to share.

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DIALECTICS OF REVOLUTION: AMERICAN ROOTS AND MARX'S WORLD  
HUMANIST CONCEPTS

by Raya Dunayevskaya

- I. Introduction: Archives and Archivists pp. 1-3
- II. The Excitement of Becoming Trotsky's Secretary -- and the Break with Trotskyism pp. 3-6
- III. The Marxist-Humanist Newspaper, News & Letters, its worker-editor, Charles Denby, his autobiography Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, and the pamphlets Workers Battle Automation and American Civilization on Trial pp. 7-10
- IV. The Trilogy of Revolution -- Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. The Unchaining of the Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and Marx's World Humanist Concepts pp. 11-23

Talk to be give March 21 to Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs. Detroit, Michigan

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