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May 6, 1985

Dear Dick:

I was glad to hear of your organizational-philosophic work." It is that inseparability that was the very foundation of News & Letters as paper, as organization, as theory -- which is why our first major theoretical work, Marxism and Freedom, in 1957, was structured on what we held was the characteristic of the objective situation in the post-World War II world -- "the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory."

This was heard loud and clear in the Miners' General Strike of 1949-50, when what had started as a union-authorized strike became a wildcat against Automation and raised questions far beyond wages. That became, for us, the impulse for the philosophic breakthrough on the Absolute Idea in 1953. That breakthrough concerned not only the U.S. but the whole world as a new stage of production. In East Europe the fight against "work norms" was a political movement for freedom that raised the philosophic question of Humanism, in the first revolt ever against Russian totalitarianism. It made clear that our designation, since 1941, of the new stage of world capitalism as State-Capitalism was not sufficient to unite all who were opposed to both sides of the Iron Curtain -- even though we tried very hard (and some of us did come together in an International Conference in Italy) to show that DeGaulle's coming to power would not end the period of the 1950s.

Unfortunately, just as Tony Cliff way back in 1947 had refused to associate with our State-Capitalist Tendency because we did not stop at that point but were raising the philosophic question of the dialectics of revolution, so, at the 1959 Conference, Manis's attack on Marx's Humanism, ~~which we had unbridled~~ after the break-up of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, was even more unbridled. Even more unfortunately, I had not recognized that Johnson's position on State-Capitalism and my own were different right within the JFT. The germ was present, long before the actual 1954 break, in the attitudes to the Miners' General Strike that erupted simultaneously with my translation of and commentary on Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks.

The Introduction to Marxism and Freedom stated our aims: "This book aims to re-establish Marxism in its original form, which Marx called 'a thoroughgoing Naturalism, or Humanism.' ... The impulse for writing this book came from two sources: 1) the American workers, and 2) the East German workers...."

* I have hyphenated the word, organizational-philosophic, because to us the two words have always been inseparable. That is so at no time more than since March 21, and the event which the WSU Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs co-sponsored with News & Letters Committees. That event started a new chapter in our development. The fact that the Archives' focus and the book now on-the-press followed the Center's move to Chicago signals a new stage where the old, the new, and the about-to-be members simultaneously face a new objective international situation where the two nuclear behemoths are girding for war. It demands that all of us work out Perspectives as the Dialectics of the needed social revolution.

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This is the basis for membership, whether it is for the U.S., or Britain, or Czechoslovakia, or China, or South Africa -- membership in a world Marxist-Humanist movement -- in which each works out the specific native roots, but in which there is no change in the world Humanist concept. That philosophy is not only philosophy but practice; and that practice is not only practice in philosophy but practice both as organizational responsibility for that world Humanist concept, as well as in relations between countries.

News & Letters Committees have two excellent Organizational Secretaries, Olga and Mike, who handle not only national but international correspondence. No one is born a Marxist-Humanist, and we certainly know each undergoes a great development within the movement, but being within it means accepting the principle and practicing the principle.

This is what Harry McShane did from the very beginning of our association with him in the 1950s, when I made the international trip that began in Britain. Our correspondence had begun when he broke with the CP and after he had tried to start something independent of it both in Glasgow and in London. When I began the correspondence with him he made the decision to accept State-Capitalist theory, inseparable from the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. He had with him in the beginning six or seven other workers who had been expelled with him. Although the others did not follow him into the historic new stage of Marxist-Humanism, he so fully accepted it that he immediately began practicing it totally:

1) He accepted N&L as his organ, although he always also issued his own bulletin which he called the Scottish Marxist-Humanism, contributing Leads and other articles to N&L, including reports from Ireland and England as well as from Scotland.

2) He wrote a special Preface to the British edition of M&F.

3) He arranged for a tour by myself, with meetings which he chaired, during which I addressed both his trade union and his contacts at Glasgow University, as well as in Edinburgh both at the university and to an African group.

4) He reproduced not only many of our pamphlets but created some out of our material that we did not, such as one on Racialism and another on the meeting of the 81 CPs in Moscow.

5) He couldn't get a passport, but did get to Canada and met there with Denby and the whole Detroit local.

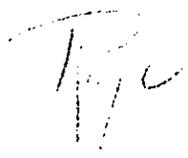
In a word, he was British Marxist-Humanism for the entire 35 years since we were founded. I hope that this type of close relationship, theoretical and practical will become the foundation of what group arises there now.

What was expressed at the last Convention, to which you were present, and which is undergoing constant development since the Convention, is not only what has always been our practice of what we have voted for, but what we are preparing as the new stage, now

that we have had a chance both to sum up the whole half-century of the Archives along with the current Volume XI for 1981-1985, and what will be our preoccupation -- the new book that follows our trilogy of revolution, Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future. It is this old-new-future ground for all our theory, practice, development, and acceptance of new members on the same level as those who were there from the beginning, which keeps me from answering on the level of your fantastic use of the word, "betrayal."

The March 21 summation -- "Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and World Humanist Concepts" -- is the basis for all and is geared toward the official Call for the next Plenum, which will go out July 1 and set the ground for the discussion nationally and internationally. The Plenum, as usual, will be held over Labor Day weekend. I am enclosing the minutes of our last REB Meeting and will continue to do so through the pre-Plenum Discussion period.

Yours,

A handwritten signature, possibly 'T. J. C.', is written in dark ink below the typed name 'Yours,'.