

IN LIEU OF REB MINUTES OF AUGUST 3, 1985

August 6, 1985

Dear Friends:

Normally this letter would begin and end with the report of the REB meeting of Aug. 3. But this morning we received the greatest news -- a xerox copy of the cover of Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution. The cover, which will be printed in Blue, Brown and Red, has across the top "Raya Dunayevskaya". Under it is the title: "Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution", and below that, on a diagonal, "Reaching for the Future". Across the bottom of the front cover it reads: "A 35 Year Collection of Essays-- Historic, Philosophic, Global". The back cover has a large picture of Raya with the publisher's name across the bottom. Inside the front cover is a four paragraph summation of the book, and inside the back cover is a section called "About the Author", which stresses the WSU Archives and includes the March 21 lecture and exhibit. The greatest news of all is actually in the accompanying letter, which promises that "the printer and the binder say that the paperback edition of the book will be off the press by the first week of September".

That is surely the "proper context" in which to appreciate the importance of the special REB meeting held this weekend in Chicago to hear Raya's draft of the report she will make to the Executive Session of the Plenum. Mary and Anne were able to come from New York, as were Andy, Jim and Tommie from Detroit, and the report they gathered to hear was entitled: "Dialectics of Marxist-Humanism as Leadership at Turning Points in the History of Our Organization".

Although this letter will sharply abbreviate Raya's report, the "table of contents" of the parts illuminates its essence. Here is how Raya spelled it out:

A. From our independent birth in the Great Divide called the State-Capitalist Tendency, as related to Marx's philosophy he called a "new Humanism", 1844.

B. Marx's Marxism as Marxist-Humanism for our age-- as Marx's Archives of the 1880s became a Trail to the 1980s. Hegel's Absolutes as they get spelled out in Universals in different historic periods-- Marx's, Lenin's, Marxist-Humanism's.

C. Tasks of Leadership as we embark on Perspectives for the Plenum and prepare for the projected Bi-weekly for 1986-87.

Nor did that end the "title", which occupied a full page and traced "turning points in the history of our organization" as they appeared in 1955-57; in 1957-59; in 1969, when the transition point made necessary by objective retrogression, meant also 1969 moving forward subjectively with the Black-Red Conference where P&R was presented, and with the creation of the Marxist-Humanist Archives; and with the publication of Marx's EN, where it became our task not just to record Marx's "new moments", but to work out Marxist-Humanism as Marx's Humanism for our age.

Leadership for the projection of that philosophy-- projection, not just articulation-- means becoming practicing dialectic-

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ticians, and for that, everything depends on grasping the newness of what you are projecting. And knowing that the "new" is not just something that happened today rather than yesterday, but is the new that signalled the birth of a historic epoch that has changed everything. Raya then considered the different historic epochs which projected the 1844 Essays, beginning with Lukacs' 1919 anticipation of their discovery and his creation of a new category, totality. Even today tomes are written about that single word, as with Martin Jay's latest book. But it was only with Marxist-Humanism's declaration of totality, of Absolute, as new beginning, that a new epoch was opened. Whether one traces the discussion of the essays by Ryazanov, or the post-WWII writings of Merleau-Ponty, or even the best-- Marcuse's 1932 work-- Marx's Humanism was missed. Marcuse saw dialectics of revolution but not the Man/Woman concept. And it wasn't a concept of Woman; Marx created a concept of the Man/Woman relationship. Marx in 1844 wasn't just instinct, and wasn't any one force, but a whole new continent of thought and of revolution also in the battle of ideas with other tendencies, which gave birth to his total philosophy that he called a "new Humanism". And it was that 1844 concept that reappeared in the 1880s that proved the newness philosophically, historically, in the trail to the 1980s. With it came not just the "Woman Question", but nothing short of revolution coming first in the "East" rather than the technologically developed lands.

With it came nothing short of saying that his Universal for Western Europe, accumulation of capital, was after all, not a Universal, but a Particular. How many new doors should have been opened then? Why has only M-Hism seen them? The new Third World showing new paths to revolution meant that another generation of revolutionaries after Marx's death could grasp the Absolute not as given, but as Absolute Methodology. Raya then had us listen to Hegel in the Science of Logic: "Consequently, it may well be said that every beginning must be made from the Absolute..." (p. 471), and "The negativity which has just been considered constitutes the turning point of the movement of the Notion..." (p. 477).

From that vantage point Raya urged us to take a second look at the central categories of the Doctrine of the Notion -- Universal, Particular, Individual. Tracing it from Marx's last decade to Lenin's encounter in the Philosophic Notebooks, Raya pointed to Marx's ending of Capital with "new passions and new forces" and Lenin's singling out of "Life" in the Logic. The point is not to reduce the Universal to a Particular, or elevate the Particular as if that were the Universal. The only way to do it is to throw out all private enclaves, all deviations from what is truly new and unique in what you are projecting. Revolution and counter-revolution, deviation or so-called loyalty, is not the new beginning. The new beginning is comprehending what is new in a philosophy that tries to give a direction to revolution in its epoch. The whole WLM has been made into such an enclave, whether it's as Maureen Reagan at Nairobi or the Left who want to separate revolution from thought, be it in the form of Rowbotham's "organizing idea" or as independence from Chap. 12 of RLWLKM. That enclave is not the road and cannot create sellers of WLDR who see themselves as founders.

The whole question, Raya said, of what is new in this year's Perspectives, is summarized in the concrete conclusions, as they spell out: 1) Preparation for a bi-weekly N&L (though we will take no vote on it until 1986), which involves developing each of us as practicing dialecticians; and 2) selling the fourth book as founders, which requires a deeper look into that magnificent Marx Centenary Year when RLWLKM was supplemented by additional paragraphs which were written by Raya during the experience of the National Tour, and with the assistance of Denby's last letters.

Indeed, Raya felt that the fact that the "1980s view" was developed at the very end of the work on RLWLKM was not only relevant, but imperative for presenting the fourth book, and in showing how Absolute Method proved that Marxist-Humanism is Marx's Humanism for our age. Thus we have to ask who else developed the category of "post-Marx Marxists" as a pejorative-- and whether anyone else began it with Engels, Marx's closest collaborator and the one he chose. So crucial is that Ch. 12 of RLWLKM for today's tasks that RD read us the addition to p. 195 of it that was first presented to the 1983 Convention, and urged us to study it anew.

Those 1985-86 tasks include the projection of four new trips to spread Marxist-Humanism. The very first will send Anne and Marcotte to Mexico, where the Spanish edition of RLWLKM has just appeared, making that continent the first to have all three works of the trilogy of revolution. At the same time, Gary will be going to Kentucky to do preliminary work for a most unusual trip there next spring by Olga as National Organizer, Felix Martin as Labor editor and from Appalachia, and Gary as youth from that same region. Internationalism also demands two other trips in 1986. Mary will be going to Spain to open up new doors there with the Spanish edition, and may be able to benefit from the help of a friend in India who will be in Spain at that time. Meanwhile, we are also planning a trip to India itself by Kevin and Neda to take place at the time of the World Sociology conference, and which would involve our new subscribers and friends there.

Raya concluded by speaking of the proposal for new classes next year, classes that will be more like workshops in practicing dialectics, in how to write Marxist-Humanist analyses "on the spot". In relating those analyses to Perspectives, and in referring to the way she had written the Bitburg letter and in telling the story of how she uncovered the history of Black populists in ACOT, Raya insisted that the sharpest expression of theory is found in methodology. And nowhere more so than in the battle of ideas with other methodologies and tendencies. We will be having plenty of experience with them in the months to come.

Yours,
Mike

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