

PRE-CONVENTION BULLETIN NO.1
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Letters from Raya

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ON WORKING OUT OUR PERSPECTIVES: PRACTICING DIALECTICS

To the REB (copy to NEB)

May 24, 1966

Dear Colleagues:

This is my last letter from Algonac. Next week I return to Detroit and from then until the convention even the preliminary discussions we will be having at the REB will have so formal an air that I thought it best to take advantage of this day to write informally of some of the theoretical and organizational questions that we will have to think about in working out our perspectives.

These are times of great stress and it is as well, for the time being, that they remain only in the background. I note, for example, that "Resurrection City" has been rained out today, the eve of Ray F.'s departure for D.C. But, of course, all eyes are on France. With the mass media trying to convey the impression that the Communists are behind the upheaval there, their counter-revolutionary role is well hidden. Yet it is the Communists who made it their business to see that the workers did not accept the student offer to act jointly. It is the Communists who saw to it that the workers accepted a "dialogue" (De Gaulle is really some one to have a dialogue with!) about their grievances. And, no doubt, they will bring in sufficient divisions so that the anti-Degaulle unity will now be broken up between those who want to "Vote No" rather than act No. Nothing scares the Communists more than spontaneous revolutionary actions and power in the streets. And nothing pleases De Gaulle more than the role of "savior". (What, pray, was he saving France from "30 years ago" unless it was that he was trying to overthrow the Popular Front Government and the workers' occupations of the factories then by the abortive fascist coup to which he was very close indeed? Or has he, by fiat, moved up by a year the outbreak of World War II?) And now he will have every one wait for June when he will offer such illusory gains as "profit sharing" and "common interests" in university administration to "protect France from the adventures and usurpations of the most hateful nature and most ruinous." The situation is fluid enough still and what will happen there next month will change not only France but the world, including the three critical events in this country: the black revolt, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the student rebellion. In order to better understand this and work out all the ramifications, I propose to get away from them all, and talk, instead, of seemingly abstract questions.

In our philosophy classes this year we did try practicing dialectics, but, unfortunately, it was only "theoretically" whereas what is crucial is to practice dialectics politically and organizationally. Thus, some have talked too much from the top of their heads when it came to activities, and others haven't talked at all. Since actions always set off reactions and further ramifications, no doubt talking off the top of your head is a great deal more harmful than keeping silent, nevertheless, silence can't help the organization grow. Of the essence, therefore, for our pre-convention period is reasoned discussion rooted in objectivity.

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Ego-centrism, it needs to be understood, is not, philosophically speaking, a question of conceit of an individual. As an individual, Kant was not an egotist. Writing on the eve of the French Revolution, he fought the good fight against the British empiricists; he was the first to bring back to modern life the ancient dialectic; in many ways he anticipated the French Revolution and hailed it when it came. Nevertheless, because, philosophically the Ego was the judge, it was impossible to make any further forward steps. Hegel, who was not the liberal Kant was, nor the moralist who relied on men of good will ("the general will") to resolve contradictions; Hegel who, instead, judged by objective, historic developments and self-movement of ideas as well as of history, and therefore released the dialectic from external restrictions, and followed its movement through to its logical conclusion, elicited such new facets of the dialectic in labor as well, that his dialectic became in fact the "algebra of revolution" because it incorporated in it, or expressed, as you wish, the Enragés of the French Revolution in place of the Enlightenment, which is what Kant had transformed into method. I should also add that ego-centrism wasn't only a bourgeois trait. Marx's main opponent when he first began working out historical materialism was the philosopher for anarchism (Stirner) and throughout the life of the First International this strain, whether in Proudhon, Bakunin, etc., was the biggest obstacle to the building of a revolutionary proletarian movement. If there is anything we learned from the crimes of Stalinism, is that the counter-revolution within the revolution is by far the most dangerous since it remains after you have already finished with the class enemy. Petty-bourgeois egotism is the bane of existence of the movement when it is young, small in number, isolated from the mass movement which is the only thing that can discipline petty-bourgeois revolutionaries. If there is anything harder for such a revolutionary than the proverbial camel through a needle's eye, it is self-discipline.

"Every beginning must be made from the Absolute," wrote Hegel. And if ever anything sounded fantastic, abstract, nonsensical, incorrect and most certainly inapplicable to Marxist analysis, this surely sounded like the sentence that would win the prize, until -- World War I broke out and almost all the Marxist leaders lined up behind the Kaiser. It wasn't only self-movement that Lenin discovered in Hegel's philosophy, it was also the plunge into freedom that a generalization gives you. Keeping in mind the example I gave the class of a generalization that achieves just that -- that is to say, the realization by a worker that it isn't just his foreman or his buddy's supervisor or the boss named Joe but that it was a capitalist class characteristic -- reread the quotation from Lenin that appears on p. 15 of the Lecture Notes of my philosophy outline about the formation of abstract notions.

Now it isn't only for the study of Hegel or even Marx and Lenin that "beginning from the Absolute" instead of the immediate situation before you is a necessity. It is for our everyday activities. Somewhere Jean-Paul Sartre has a quite brilliant and correct expression about revolution being "a daily practice illuminated by theory." Practice that a while. Think of Marx reading galley proofs of Capital and suddenly deciding (sparked by a question by Dr. Kugelman, no doubt a stupid petty-bourgeois question at that) there is no point to letting

that chapter on Commodities stand so concretely as it stands; better make a "little addition", like a whole big fat absolute, a notion, THE FETISHISM OF COMMODITIES, right there, in the very first chapter, on that simple most everyday thing, a commodity. And what happens from 1867 when it was written, to 1915 when Lenin reads the Science of Logic? Why, every Marxist brings it down to size -- his narrow, simple "class struggle" size -- rather than the FREELY ASSOCIATED LABOR as only ones capable of ripping the fetish away from that little product of labor. Lordy, how many times must we retrace our steps, and make generalization about that which is already past and therefore everyone agrees with it, only in order, at the very first crisis the individual experiences, to have the whole dialectic, not to mention simple human relations between comrades, go by the board and the egotist is off, rambling like an idiot!

O.K. let's try again. Let's try it closer to home; though it may not be within your individual experience, it is near enough to test yourself. The year is 1953, which, as against the formally correct date of 1955, is the real (in the Hegelian-Marxian sense of rational and quint-essential) breaking point of the state-capitalist tendency. I don't know how many have reread those May 12 and May 20, 1953 letters on the Absolute Idea that I asked you all to read for the philosophy lectures. But in any case some of you experienced that break we made from Johnson. Heretofore we have stressed that the great philosophic breakthrough was my "translating" Hegel's analysis of Absolute Mind as containing a movement from practice. This, of course, remains historically true, and it remains true in practice since both NEWS & LETTERS and MARXISM AND FREEDOM were founded on that principle.

Now, however, I wish to show how those letters on that abstract, abstruse Absolute anticipated the future of both big events and the establishment of Correspondence. Or, more precisely put, aidn't influence the establishment of an attempted workers' paper and thus led to break-up. As you know, 1953 was a very eventful year which became historic, first, on March 5th, when Stalin died. Between that day and the next historic turning point, June 17, the East German revolt, I wrote two letters, on May 12 and May 20, 1953. I was quite unconscious of separating myself theoretically from Johnson, and when I pointed to a difference between one interpretation of Hegel and another, attributed it to a difference in dates. J. had written his notes on Dialectic in 1948, I mine in 1953. Mind you 1953 was then a very silent year; the death of Stalin had not produced a new situation at once and therefore the bourgeois press kept up its prattle about the impossibility of any actions within a totalitarian land; on the other hand, in 1948 we were still expecting revolution at least in Western Europe. Yet in May 1953 I wrote that J's 1948 Dialectics MSS "meant only the general development of socialism through overcoming Stalinism, whereas now we can be more concrete." (p.5) And I proceeded to concretize by saying there will be totally new types of revolts because "our age proves it has abolished the distinction between theory and practice and that which is the pre-occupation of the theorists, freedom out of one-party totalitarianism, is the preoccupation of the great masses.." A month later the East German Revolt broke out.

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When it came to further concretize this two weeks later (the convention for voting to begin Correspondence was July 4th) I thought it meant that theory would no longer be restricted to "theoretical organs" but be written directly in the paper, the workers-paper-to-be. As you all know, it didn't work out that way; a new paper, NEWS & LETTERS, was needed before we could practice both theory and self-activity of workers. One final word on the question of theory and those 1953 letters and that is the fact that, just as the movement from practice was said to be not only to theory but to a new society, so the movement from theory was not only to practice but as "the mediating agent" of a new society.

What has all this to do with us today? Outside of talking about how to practice method not only theoretically but in political and organizational matters, I hope we will all now actually do so on at least three issues to face us at the convention: (1) the working out of Perspective and the lively discussions that will follow the draft; (2) confronting the question about how to set the events at Columbia University and the general student revolt in America in an international context; we surely are not in the pre-revolutionary situation the French students and workers are trying to develop into an actual revolution, but there is no situation anywhere that doesn't have its international repercussions, and we will have to work these out both theoretically and concretely; (3) the black revolt as it is at the moment in "Resurrection City" and as it will be this summer, on the one hand, and a new edition of Black Mass Revolt, on the other hand. The only reason I do not list the anti-Vietnam war movement is that I take for granted that will be central to working out political perspectives. By the time we meet, the Democratic and Republican conventions will have been held and we will see whether the horrible "choice" will once again narrow down to Nixon-Humphrey and the horrors of that in relationship to Vietnam -- there surely will be Vietnams if that is the "choice"! Instead, let's settle down to some "seriousness, labor, patience, suffering of the negative" which is the only way to produce some very positive revolutionary results.

Yours,

Raya

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ON RELATING THE BOOK TO THE ORGANIZATION

May 28, 1968

To the NEB (Copy to FEE; may be read to locals if organizer wishes)

Dear Colleagues:

This is as good a time as any to throw out some ideas relating the book to the organization. This is all the more necessary because you are not going to get copies of the second draft, although the philosophy classes have, no doubt, prepared you to understand the strictly philosophic chapters better than when you read the first draft. I should state at once that, only in part, is your not getting copies of the second draft due to lack of money and personnel needed to make those copies. Above all, it is due to the fact that the classes had been undertaken not so much (or not mainly) to have you "understand" dialectics as to have you practice it. This practicing of it, at pre-convention times, is all directed to organizational matters, and it is this which preoccupies me now.

You may remember the tape I made for NY when they seemed a bit overwhelmed that they themselves must be the teachers. I then pointed out that they underestimated both their own abilities and just how much the organization had already taught them philosophy for there was not a single Perspective report ever since we were founded that did not contain a great deal of dialectics. Naturally the daily practice is much richer at the center than "in the field," and, although on different levels, isolation from ideas — the daily practice of dialectics — is every bit as stifling as isolation from the masses. Nevertheless, just as we try hard to surmount the latter, so we must the former. So, here goes:

A decade has passed since the publication of MARKISM AND FREEDOM. Though not only the solid but the unique theoretical foundations it laid for the formation of News & Letters Committees remain with us and will continue to serve us, the dual impulses — from the objective situation and from the theoretical void in the Marxist movement — that have emanated these past 10 years make imperative not a mere "updating" but now development that could rightly be called now discoveries. There may be some who are so bereft of a sense of history, or so involved in what Hegel called "a giddy whirl of self-perpetuating disorder" (that is to say, a world that revolves around Ego rather than around Subjectivity as mass and as theory), that they fail to see that Philosophy and Revolution is the most concrete of all the tasks facing the Chairman, not as "author", but as leader of a revolutionary organization. Let me explain one of the theoretical differences between Lenin and Bukharin that has the greatest applicability for our own development now. It is neither the state-capitalist debate, nor that on Subject — both of which I believe the organization has in the very marrow of its bones. No. It is self-determination of nations as a dialectic of revolution vs. Bukharin's conception that it was a veritable reactionary step away from the "world revolution."

You must understand that Bukharin was not only not a betrayer of the proletariat, but also not a Trotskyist which tendency Lenin considered a lot of bombast. Bukharin was a Bolshevik and a co-leader with Lenin. Moreover he was considered "the greater theoretician." (Which all goes to show how much of a bourgeois ideology creeps into the Marxist movement when theory can be equated to "pure theoretical questions" as against

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one, like Lenin, who always has a specific political or organizational question in mind when he deals with philosophic questions.) They had just finished collaborating on a book on economics, Imperialism and World Economy. Neither the economic analysis nor the common solidarity of the specific Bolshevik tendency as the organization for revolutionary Marxists could, however, unite their view on self-determination of nations. Again, this wasn't just a "general question", for the Bolsheviks were all "for" the right of self-determination of nations. Rather, the question was: are you for it merely as a "right" or do you consider it integral to the very dialectic of proletarian revolution. Lenin said, Yes. Bukharin said, No, the "new" situation of imperialist war, the "new" situation that the proletariat, along with the bureaucratic leaders of the Second International, were participating in this imperialist war, the "new" situation that nationalism, more than ever before, was backward as against internationalism, all mean we must be "uncompromising", must take nothing short of proletarian revolution as the revolution. Lenin retorted that the imperialist war must have "suppressed" his reasoning for him to fail to see the development through contradiction, the dialectics of the many varied forces that participate in a mass outburst, etc., etc.,.

Now, I'm not interested in the debate as such not only because most of us know it, but also because the point that concerns us at this period in our development is not the theory, but the attitude to the theoretician. You must understand that Lenin and Bukharin were both theoreticians, and, though Lenin was known as the founder of the Bolshevik organization, he was not known -- that is to say, history had not yet proven him to be the founder of a unique theoretical tendency, which, in fact, would become the Marxism of the age of monopoly-capitalistic imperialism. They had just authored a book on that very new stage of capitalist development and there seemed to be no differences between them. There were therefore those who were even feeling that, since Bukharin was the "pure" theoretician, Lenin was revealing "opportunism" (sic!) by being for a national "development" when even capitalism was thoroughly "international" but, of course, from the wrong class point of view.

Let me get away from Russia for a while, come over to the US as the referent. We all recognize Abolitionism as the freedom movement that had the greatest affinity to Marxism, although it was religious and limited to wanting the abolition of slavery, and not a socialist society. It would therefore be natural for us to "prefer" Wendell Phillips, who is the only one of the Abolitionists who came over to the labor movement, to William Lloyd Garrison who did not. And yet history records that Garrison, not Phillips, was the founder of Abolitionism. You might ask: why care about who first founded the movement, when obviously the more "advanced" was Phillips? The question, however, is not one of "advanced" or any other adjective like "best". The question is that historically (and this Historic should have been with a capital H because before over History gets around to "proving", the historical movement would be 10 feet underground if some who had a sensitivity on the question weren't there to become adherents without "proof" and thereby help create the movement that would become the "proof"); to repeat, the question is that historically the importance of being the founder is that he creates the atmosphere for all others to grow in and develop to be more "advanced", or "best". Without him, there

would be no room for others; it would just be one most lost moment in history -- and they are a great deal more tragic than "lost weekends."

So you see that the historic and American and international demands on the Marxist-Humanist tendency to be born are not accidental, nor are they what Hegel would have called "the arbitrary caprice of prophetic utterance." It isn't "prophecy"; it is the "labor, patience, seriousness, suffering of the negative" that are the prime requisites on the leadership, on ranks, and, if they would try the patience of Job, impatience is no more capable of creating "shortcuts to revolution" than are guerrilla tactics. Moreover, none but self can create the discipline needed for the task of working out Philosophy and Revolution. (Marcuse used to tell me that I was "too close" to the proletariat and, by remaining in a "so-called" ivory tower, he had the advantage of both objectivity and "tension" needed for development of original theory. One-Dimensional Man showed, however, that, unfortunately, all it resulted in was a one-dimensional theory.) You can not afford, as collaborators, not to create free time for me to complete the work.

And yet, of course, there was no way for me not to engage in these organizational problems that are directly (and not so directly) related to the work. Thus: (1) It's more than a year since I've achieved contact with East Europe. On the one hand, the chapter the Marxist-Humanist there submitted, though far above anything the American comrades could do, showed a lack of philosophy. On the other hand, it seemed to bespeak organizational developments that I felt would reach a certain climax long before changes that are now catching the headlines. Thus, I felt it imperative to establish in-person contact. Hence, Eugene's trip, but hence, also, the fact that the very first week of allegedly "being away" I had to take time out to make a not unimportant tapo for that meeting.

(2) As part of the inseparability of Philosophy and Revolution and the organization I had decided last winter to take time out to work up the Outline of Lectures. It wasn't just a question of gaining some new members -- though both Detroit and NY did so -- but of internalizing a methodology both for analyzing events and participating in them as well as relating ourselves to other organizations in a new way. It is the latter I'm not sure the leadership in NY internalized. To make sure, however, that the first reaction of self-defense or apportioning blame doesn't beat down the second negativity before it ever has a chance to emerge; and, above all, because it will become of essence to any pamphlet that may result and therefore is first to be tested later, I will give an example, not from NY or even W&L Committees anywhere, but from a far off place. The place is France, the subject is the relationship of methodology, not only for analyzing events but for being act-ors of change, for those who would be revolutionaries. And the person involved is Jean-Paul Sartre, a petty bourgeois intellectual of such "high" stature as to have created a philosophy other than Marxism: Existentialism. After a full decade's existence -- actually it had begun in the late 1930's in France but didn't become a challenge to Marxism till the end of World War II -- Jean-Paul Sartre felt totally impotent to create act-ors. By the time of the 1956 Revolution when a Polish magazine revealed an interest in Existentialism, Sartre suddenly decided to declare himself a Marxist after all! But still his task was not "to join" but "to search for

a methodology" for revolution. It is there that he declared that Marxism will remain the philosophy of our time, and that Existentialists merely "tended the garden" because "today's Marxists" had stifled Marxism's self-growth. He called Existentialists "ideologues." You must understand it was not a compliment. It is a word used by Sartre like we use "popularizers" plus the way Marx uses the word "ideology" as false consciousness. (With Sartre it's always a hybrid; that's so easy for the brilliant writer for whom words are toys, "dialectical" toys.)

Put differently, this means that it is impossible to create an organization without a Marxist methodology; in turn, methodology must constantly be "restated" to meet the challenge of new situations. As "pretenders to the throne", the Existentialists, like the Communists, disregarded genuine Marxism.

What relationship does this have to us? On the question of methodology and on the question of other organizations Sartre at least know how to pose the question. The answer is something else again, and he can't fail to be wrong again precisely because he doesn't have the Marxist methodology. But we do have it, and it amazes me to see that the minute a concrete event comes up, that's when some fail to practice dialectics, fail to distinguish between philosophy of revolution and books "about" revolution, fail to relate one's self to both other organizations and our own in a way that bears proof that they are not "ideologues" but "co-editors" of Marxist-Humanism. It is this which we will need to have mastered by the time the convention rolls around and we decide on what kind of pamphlet on Columbia University events we want.

(3) Finally there is the book itself, and I want to quote just a few sentences from the Introduction that was not in the first draft: "It becomes necessary to return to Hegel whose philosophy has a validity all its own. That is why Marx kept returning after he broke with Hegelianism and created historical materialism ... Marx's problems, Lenin's problems aren't ours. No age can speak for another. Precisely because the impulse to grapple with Hegel's Absolutes came, neither from scholastic needs, nor even from the founders of the new world view of Marxist-Humanism, but because our Age imparted a new urgency to it, it would be at our own peril if we were to dismiss the new facets unfolded by our world in transition."

Yours,

Rays

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ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST EUROPE

Dear S.

June 6, 1968

For your manuscript of the whole East European situation which will naturally center around your own country, we're all very much looking forward to it, and I thought it might help you if I reviewed the 1956 situation. The prologue, as you know, actually started in 1955 with the sudden unaccounted attack on the 1844 Manuscripts. As you may know, I then stated that it makes no sense for a great power to start attacking some obscure Hegelian phraseology unless, "negation of negation", as they know very well, means revolution, and therefore it is a sign of restlessness such as we had seen in the East German Revolt of 1953 which had not really been destroyed, but only driven underground, so that we may expect some other explosion somewhere in East Europe. But we didn't know at the time that Imre Nagy had, in fact, written a letter to the Russian Communist Party, Central Committee, complaining about his expulsion from the Party and actually using the Humanist phrases. It was only a full year afterward that we learned that there had been such restlessness as would explode first in Poland and then in Hungary. Again, when this obscure 1955 debate became the famous February, 1956 DeStalinization, that, naturally, captured all the headlines, and seemed therefore to be kosher. Between February and October, it was all among the intellectuals and students — very different from 1953 when the intellectuals had not come to the aid of the East German workers' strike. Once the crushing of Hungarian Revolt takes place, ranks again seem to close; the unanimous statement of the 1957 International Conference of Communists gives no hint that there is any differences beginning between Mao and Khrushchev, and, of course, all eyes are on the Sputnik rather than either philosophy or revolution.

The 1960's begin on a still different plane — a new third world — with the challenge of Mao to Russia reaching a climax in 1963-64 when it would seem that Mao has the greatest appeal in that new world. The tragic 1965 disaster in Indonesia puts an end to all illusion that Mao is the new independent road that can chalk up successes that would rival Russia. Moreover, the inconclusiveness of the struggle with Russia is overshadowed by the Vietnam war and the hatred one feels at US imperialism.

However, the sequence of events — from philosophy to dissent to revolt — reappears. Thus the Humanist debate, far from abating, had first the Russian "joining" it, and then the "West" and East Europe getting together in that seemingly purely academic debate, very much muted, in Socialist Humanism. Then (a year or two elapses) comes news of dissatisfaction among intellectuals and students who begin to protest in "Western" style. Now you may have different dates than we got from the press. Again, it seems to have a higher development in Poland (even as Poland preceded Hungary in the 1950's.) Leszek Kolakowski got thrown out of the Communist Party but not fired from his job. The two youth who directly challenged the party do, however, land in jail, but the news of it is sort of underground and gets only to very few in the Left. It is only 1967 which brings out the fact that the dispute has not abated. The counter-revolution, centering around the military and the Arab-Israeli war, very much at home in Poland where anti-Semitism is rife. In any case, it is evident to the outside world that East Europe, outside of Rumania, followed the line of condemnation of Israel, but in fact it was done from the top and the masses did not feel that the Arab rulers were the bright new hope of the Third World. (Yesterday was the first anniversary of that war.

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No doubt the wires have carried the news of the fantastic ramification -- the assassination of an Irish Catholic anti-Vietnam war critic of the Administration, Robert Kennedy.)

You no doubt think that the direct impulse to restlessness in East Europe is a great deal closer to domestic than foreign policies. So the questions you have to ask yourself are: (1) what was the first impulse -- from students or workers? On economic conditions or "education"? (We understood that in Poland especially there is considerable unemployment among graduate students and that at the same time they do not wish to return to the countryside they came from but wish to remain in Warsaw.) (2) Who joined next and was that just on immediate demands, whatever they might have been, or political questioning as to freedom of the press, existence of other parties, etc., etc.? (3) What is the relationship between workers and intellectuals? Do they function together or separately? Is there a feeling of solidarity or estrangement? Are there new forms of activities -- such as study groups, factory committees? (4) What is the relationship to the rest of East Europe? For example, the demonstration in Czechoslovakia in support of the Polish students was a very new and high step, but I see now that the leaders are patching matters up. (5) Finally, where is it now? In any one country? In East Europe in general? Any feeling for West Europe? Any relationship to China? Any interest in philosophy? It surely is not accidental that there are philosophers prominently both in Poland and in Czechoslovakia and I'm sure elsewhere, including Yugoslavia, which supposedly has "workers' management committees" but so long as the Single Party remains, they mean next to nothing. Ivan Svitak in your country and Leszlek Kolakowski in Poland interest me very much.

Finally, on the matter of philosophic framework, whether or not it is used directly or is only in the back of one's head, do not disregard the theoretic void I talk so much about since the death of Lenin. What is important in that now is the very different result when Lenin, though faced with the betrayal of the Second International and the outbreak of the First World War, tried to work out a new relationship of philosophy to revolution and this did result in the Russian Revolution. On the other hand, neither the Depression nor the Spanish Civil War; neither World War II nor the creation of a Third World -- sans working out a new relationship of theory and practice -- resulted in anything faintly comparable to October, 1917. At best, we had the hybrids of China, Cuba, etc., all of whom considered guerrilla war, not "the population to a man" as the "new universal"! And we now have an arrested revolution in France!

I hope that all this discussion which may seem far removed from the facts "as such" will nevertheless provide the stimulant, if not the framework outright, to your writings. It will be a great and new thing and I do hope it will get published in more than one place. No, you needn't send an extra copy, although it helps, because we will in any case recopy it as we will wish it sent not only to Great Britain, and to New Politics, but also to Italy, Japan, and perhaps France.

Yours,
Raya

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ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

To the New York Local
Dear Friends:

June 7, 1968

Your meeting on May 28th reveals that Marc was in New York, a fact we also learned over the phone since he had wanted to see me. The Minutes reveal that he "hopes to help lay the base for a new international organization or bureau made necessary by the new world-wide stage of worker and student struggles, and to help in the creation of strike committees to express the workers' new consciousness and bypass the reactionary Left parties and unions." The RLB thought it would be helpful if the new friends knew more of the background of our international relations, not merely because some confusion exists about our attitude to Marc's group, but mainly because we all need to know both the positive and negative features of those developments in the proper historic-theoretic framework. Hence this letter.

It is now ten years since MARKISM AND FREEDOM was published. At the time of its publication, we sent a letter to all groups we knew the world over, stating that we have no illusions either on the fact that theory alone can create the basis for a new international, or that a new international could arise without actual revolutions. Between the collapse of the Second International in 1914 and the creation of a Third International in 1919, nothing short of a Russian Revolution had taken place, various attempts and theories to create one between 1914 and 1917 having resulted in hardly more than small groupings for minimum international activities. Nevertheless, these were important in their own way. And it is even more important now when not only the perversion of Leninism into Stalinism had led to counter-revolutionary state-capitalism, but that even those who had not betrayed — the Trotskyists — had proved nothing but a stillbirth. We felt it was precisely because Trotskyism, despite its direct link to the Russian Revolution, had not been able to meet the challenge of the times, had not analyzed the new stage of capitalism, had become nothing but a left front for Stalinism, despite the glorious years of fighting the Stalinist bureaucracy, had failed to understand the class nature of Stalinism.

Therefore we proposed that at least the groups who opposed both poles of world capital — Russia and the US — even if they did not yet think Russia was state-capitalism meet and find out whether some minimum basis could not be established for international relations. We said our contribution to any such proposed conference would be MARKISM AND FREEDOM. They may or may not accept it, but it was incumbent upon them to present to the conference something equally serious and comprehensive about what Marxism means for the age which saw a world war, but no proletarian revolution. We hoped that at least they would help in the publication of M&F in their countries, as a contribution to the reconstruction of a new — new not only against the 3rd but the 4th (Trotskyist) International — type of organization.

A few months after this DeGaulle came to power in France and we explained that it will not do constantly to blame Stalinism for its betrayal and Trotskyism for its stillbirths. We must begin taking responsibility for the objective situation retrogressing. The three articles appeared in News & Letters July and August 1958, entitled "France at the Crossroads," "Whither Paris?", and "The Responsibility of Intellectuals."

The Conference finally convened in 1959 in Italy at which were present, besides ourselves of course, 3 groups in Italy (state-capitalist position on Russia but the differences persisted regarding Partisans as some had considered them "nationalist groupings"), 2 from France as "observers" (one was semi-Trotskyist and one Soc. ou Bar., where the point of kinship was our views on spontaneity of proletarian action, but they hold to a bureaucratic collectivist position), 1 from Spain (in exile). The minimum proposal was to the effect that PROMETEO, the Italian theoretical organ, have a specially colored section devoted to international events and these groups plus any others who wished to join afterwards could contribute their views to it. The financial responsibility was mainly ours. It lasted for approximately two years. (Incidentally, that section was in French).

The achievements during those two years were: 1 - a special edition of MARXISM AND FREEDOM in Italian. Its importance, besides the obvious one, was that we have had continuous new contacts outside of the Committee of International Correspondence that have become correspondents for N&L. 2. although not directly related to this committee, one of the members from Genoa also translated, even though he was able to publish it only in mimeographed form—Workers Battle Automation, American Civilization On Trial, and the Chapter on Mao. 3 - There was more or less regular correspondence and a certain relationship kept up with the editor of PROMETEO, Com. Damon. And 4, some ideas that separated us likewise became clearer. Thus, not only had the groupings not accepted the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, which they had considered "the young Marx" but most of them had an entirely different attitude than ourselves to the emergent third world.

I say emergent because it was before the year 1960, when the African Revolutions were recognized as something new even where the state-capitalist groupings considered them only "nationalist" revolutions. It was in that same year of 1958 when DeGaulle had come to power that I wrote the first draft of the Afro-Asian Revolution, which appeared in N&L September 30, 1958, under the title "Colonial Revolutions and the Creativity of the People", to be contrasted with what I had written the month previous on the theoretic void and the responsibilities of intellectuals in Franco.

This was also the cause of the first serious dispute with Marc, whom I first met in France in 1947, who also had a state-capitalist position, but had stayed away from participation in the Resistance movement, since he had considered that to be "nationalist". Circumstances forced him to leave France, so he had not participated in the formation of the International Committee of Correspondence. But we did correspond off and on, and some youth of his grouping were present at one of our conventions. It was clear, however, that just as we had disagreed on the Resistance, the national revolutions, so we disagreed violently on the Negro Question in the U.S., which Marc's group considered "nationalist". There had also previously been one incident with a grouping stemming from his that had invited me to address them. But though they claimed to be state-capitalist, they turned out not even to be Marxists, but a variation of Proudhonists. Again, however, precisely because everything is very loose, we have kept certain relationships with them, even if it's only for information purposes. But certainly, they were not on the level of actual Marxist-Humanist groupings, such as we have in Scotland, in East Europe. In a somewhat different category is Japan. In contrast to Franco,

which did nothing to try and get a French edition of M&F out, or even help us when we almost had a publisher, the Japanese did get out a Japanese edition, did create a platform for me to speak the length and breadth of Japan, are very anxious to maintain the relation and coordinate the activities both on the anti-war issues and solidarity on class struggles.

In contrast to the Italian, French and Spanish groupings, we not only developed further our ideas on the colonial revolutions, but in general were turned eastward, as is obvious from not only the Japanese edition, but the Chinese publication of some chapters of both M&F and "Mao's Cultural Revolution."

The totally new in both West and East Europe has been, of course, the youth, and these were not only on the general question of Marxist-Humanism, but on the specific development of Philosophy and Revolution. In that respect, the contacts in West Germany and East Europe are closer to us than those in France. I think that the best way to express what is new now is to begin with what we had set out as the challenge in 1958 where we demanded "a new listening and a new doing." The new listening refers to the new voices from below and the new doing refers to the activity of thought as well as activities in the class struggle. This has become further concretized in the request for collaboration on the new book. We cannot forever merely issue challenges that the others who stand for a new society present as comprehensive a view of the world and Marxism as is contained in MARXISM AND FREEDOM. It is now time to say, a decade has passed, we have seen nothing issuing from you that is new or for that matter, that is old, but comprehensive. A leaflet is not a substitute for combining theory and practice, especially not when we now have a fully pre-revolutionary situation with once again the Stalinists thwarting revolution, the Trotskyists screaming betrayal, and the independent Marxists in so small and varied array, that they are neither able to influence events, nor even to prepare at least themselves for meeting these challenges and the spontaneity from the proletariat.

Frankly, it passes my comprehension how someone who had been away from France for very nearly two decades, who knows the history of how the Third International was established, and who can quote by heart Lenin's admonition to his co-leaders, ultraleftists to the marrow of their sectarian bones, that they must be "patient" with the proletariat, who understand the slogan "all power to the Soviets" but not that of dictatorship of the proletariat, who are "shy" and therefore do not challenge the petty bourgeois revolutionary leadership that is not helping the release of the proletarian human dimension that is capable of uniting theory and practice -- in a word, how can anyone like Marc at this moment of spontaneous and new revolutionary activities in France, presume to go there with the aim of helping "in the creation of strike committees to express the workers' new consciousness and bypass the reactionary Left parties and unions". Talking about elitist conceptions!

When you will hear Eugene's report on France and West Germany and when you will see with what sensitivity we are approaching all the groups actually involved in this struggle and listening to them, before we rush "to help" in building other organizations, you will have a pretty good idea of what we consider the proper international relations and what others do. I do not know with what other group Marc united. I can only presume they are principled and we will be glad to hear any report from him that he cares to make at our convention, but we set our own agenda, follow our own international relations, build on our own Marxist-Humanist foundations and above all, have a historic sense of the three (pardon me, 4, but then I didn't know a still-birth was to be counted) internationals.

Yours, Raya

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ON ENOCH POWELLISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

June 11, 1968

Dear Harry;

The June issue of THE MARXIST-HUMANIST just arrived and, if I may, I would like to explain why I consider the article on Powellism quite inadequate. Naturally, Marxist-Humanists "must spread the revolutionary message" and thereby win over the workers, including those who showed their own racist prejudices by coming out in support of the Tory Enoch Powell. But that hardly packs the concrete punch that Marx taught us to deliver when trade unionists take a reactionary position as they took in his day both on the Irish question and on the Paris Commune. Every British trade unionist who left the Working Men's International Association for its enthusiastic support of the Paris Commune excoriated and, in his place, put the name of a Commanard. As far as the "Irish Question" is concerned, and this, as I shall show later is not as far removed from the race question today as might appear on the surface -- here is what Marx wrote:

The English working class ... can never do anything decisive here in England until...it not only makes a common cause with the Irish, but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801, and replacing it by a free federal relationship. And, indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading-strings of the ruling classes...

I should like to approach the question of race at the present moment by (1) showing the historic background of the National Question in general and the Negro question in particular during the World War I and during the Russian Revolution; (2) by comparing Churchill's and Labor's stand after World War II; and (3) by raising the question of the African Revolutions as the only challenge to the decrepit "West" of the Suez War and Totalitarian Communism of the "East" which bloodily put down the Hungarian Freedom Fighters. It is time we faced the question that we are all products of the historic period in which we lived, and that includes holding on to some of the ideas of the ruling class even when we fight exploitation.

You are well acquainted, I am sure, with the Marxist position on the National Question, that "in principle" most stood for the right of self-determination of nations, and yet once the Russian Revolution succeeded, some Bolsheviks opposed it as "a step backward." Lenin, on the other hand, even before the Russian Revolution, insisted that "the dialectic of history and the dialectic of revolution" was such that the Easter Rebellion of the Irish played the vanguard role of bringing the proletarian revolution forward front of the historic stage. That is when he was out of power, of course. He did not change when he was in power and Bukharin then opposed giving some of the National minorities in Russia their freedom. On the contrary he took issue with Bukharin both in content and even in matter of language. Thus, when his co-leader dared bring in the question of the Hottentots, Lenin replied:

When Bukharin said 'We can recognize this right in some cases,' I even wrote down that he had included in the list the Hottentots, the Bushmen and the Indians. Hearing this enumeration, I thought, how is it that Comrade Bukharin has forgotten a small trifle, the Baskirs? There are no Bushmen in Russia, nor have I hear that the Hottentots have laid claim to an autonomous republic, but we have Baskirs,

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Kirghiz and a number of other peoples, and to these we cannot deny recognition. We cannot deny it to a single of the peoples living within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire... Scratch some Communists and you will find Great-Russian chauvinists... The Bashkirs distrust the Great-Russians because the Great-Russians are more cultured and used their culture to rob the Bashkirs. That is why in these remote places the name Great-Russia for the Bashkir is tantamount to oppressor, swindler... The pact holds fast to us, grasps us with a thousand tentacles, and does not allow us to make a single forward step, or compels us to make these steps as badly as we are making them.

Now, in contrast to Churchill who had answered India's demands for independence by the arrogant "I didn't become the King's Prime Minister to preside over the dismemberment of the Empire," British labor correctly branded him for the imperialist and their own oppressor that he was. India gained its independence, as did the African colonies during Labor's reign. What has happened since then?

You, of course, know the answer better than I do: the Labor Government has made such a mess of the situation since they returned to power — the unemployment, the wage freeze, the travelling in company with American imperialism on the barbarous Vietnam war, all this and more has brought out the very worst features of racism not only in the ruling class but also in parts of the working class as if the West Indian immigrant or British citizen of Indian or Pakistani descent or African student had brought these misfortunes on the British working class.

It goes without saying that the exploitative classes love it when the working people of the world fight among themselves and make the rule of their tormentors the easier. My point, however, is that it is not enough to expose that the capitalists have always lived by the principle of "divide and rule." We must tell the proletariat of the technologically developed world that the working people themselves must face the fact that they lived off the fat of the land from the technologically underdeveloped countries. Marx showed that at the root of the freedom of wage labor was not only its own struggles for freedom, but also the fact that slavery still existed in Africa, in Asia, in the oppressed minorities within the developed country. This is why Marx hailed the British proletariat when they said that they would rather starve than perpetuate slavery on the other side of the Atlantic, i.e., in South USA. And this is why he called them a "bourgeoisified proletariat" when they moved away from that principle when it came to establish a totally new form of society: the Paris Commune. And he then moved away from the skilled laborers to the unskilled, from the institutionalized workers to the unorganized, from what Lenin was to call "aristocracy of labor" to what Marx had called "deeper and lower into the masses" to find the true revolutionary core who would stand not just for reforms but for revolution.

What has happened ever since the end of the 1950's when Great Britain embarked on its imperialist adventure in Suez, and Russia (with the help of China) on its destruction of the Hungarian Revolution, is the defeatism that always accompanies lost revolutions. Instead of looking down upon the

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"immigrants", the British, as the American, as the East European, ought to hail the birth of the new Third World, especially the African Revolutions, for once again showing us the power of the ideas of freedom, that the will to freedom, even when unarmed and facing the mightiest empires, can win. The struggle for the minds of men is still the mightiest weapon of all. And now that the French proletariat and the French students have shown that the forces of freedom have not been destroyed in technologically advanced lands, it is all the more quintessential that the British proletariat rise up to its full height and, as their ancestors showed the way to the first Working Men's International, so they should now pave a new road of world solidarity between themselves and all the "immigrants" of the world. The first step in that direction is the recognition of the fact that they have been repeating the reactionary ideas of their own exploiters.

Comradely yours,

Raya

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