

Present: All, plus Deborah from Bay Area.

Agenda: I. Report on Organization, its Projection, by Raya; II. Discussion; III. Next News & Letters and national assignments for Leads; IV. Finances; V. Ongoing Activities/Correspondence; VI. GSW.

1. Raya began her report by calling attention to the length of its title in contrast to the brevity listed in the Agenda. It was for the purpose of incorporating conclusions to questions posed. Here it is:

"What has happened to our Projection of Marxist-Humanism -- that a difference seems to have emerged in two aspects of the dialectics of organization between: 1) the concept, and 2) organizational growth as a 'practical question'. We have to see that this doesn't develop, because nothing short of the task of projecting MH is the issue."

Let me concretize my sharp critique by focusing on two recent seemingly incidental occurrences regarding the book and the superficial attitudes towards it and the body of ideas that constitutes the 30 year uniqueness of Marxist-Humanism: 1) for the relationship of the two opposites of party and spontaneity of mass action that creates new forms of organization, I needed a certain article I remembered reading about the Budapest Worker's Councils of 1956-57. I asked no less than 6 (probably more) to find me this article, for which I didn't remember the date or the author. This dragged on for quite some time, for weeks or even months: I was offered all sorts of substitutes, including essays on the subject. Finally I got angry enough to ask Mike, who was with me that day, what did I write when the Hungarian Revolution burst out onto the historic scene? After all, I had included Budapest Worker's Councils directly into M&F as it was going to press. and I certainly must have continued with several anniversary articles on it.

Being a profound archivist Mike immediately found in my Archives (Raya showed the tremendous amount of articles and letters on the Hungarian Revolution in the Archives, and stressed that that is beside what is in the books. For example, in the second ed. of M&F, in that special chapter on Mao and the Two Kinds of Subjectivity, is where I bring in the Hungarian Revolution all over again) what I specifically want to cite: the Weekly Political Letter of 9/17/61 entitled, "Spontaneity of Action and Organization of Thought: In Memoriam to the Hungarian Revolution." I would like to ask how many have read it, or ever bothered to refer to it, or even think about the concept as well as act on any event occurring today, or for that matter what will not happen until tomorrow, in order to see what the body of ideas called Marxist-Humanism had to say before he/she decides to start ab novo, as if the body of ideas of MH has not had something to say long ago on precisely that type of event.

Today I was re-reading a book on Lenin, and laughed mightily at this statement regarding Lenin in 1906: "He, the founder of Bolshevism, knew scarcely any Bolshevism leader in St. Petersburg not claiming to interpret Bolshevism better than he." (Lenin: A Political Life, Vol. I, by Robert Service, p. 143.) But of course we who are the originals in creating as aim of organization "philosophy, not party," organization inseparable from body of ideas, wouldn't stop at critique alone of "practical questions" or organizing, but go on to work out concretely the context of the concept of organization. On this too I turned back to Hegel's Phenomenology, focusing fully on the last page with its very difficult, abstract climax that leads, at one and the same time, to the Absolute and its Golgotha.

For the first time, I abbreviated that whole page (p. 808 in Baillie's translation, pp. 492-93 in Miller's) into two sentences and suddenly saw that in Hegel's use of the word Organization, twice in the same paragraph, something that could be considered the actual ground for our concept of the relationship both of spontaneity and the party and its inseparability from organization of thought.

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REB Meeting, 3/23/87

History comprehension form at collected by the group

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This brings me to an event very much closer in time and in organization, indeed in the specificity of organization concerning Marxist-Humanist leadership - and we all are leaders; I mean it seriously as a responsibility for the idea of MHism -- I'm referring to the last meeting of the REB on Feb. 23, which was almost limited to discussion of the issue of the paper going to press.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE ORGANIZATION -- ITS CONCEPT? What do you suppose we did when the split was forced upon us; we did seem happy to accept it because we had been acting in that direction*. We called a meeting to arrange for a Conference. I want you to observe the sequence that happened the day of the last issue of Correspondence: first, we went as usual to pick up the paper at the printer, and found that the "owner" had informed the printer that he has not paid for this issue and that he would not release it unless we paid \$72 right on the spot; secondly, we found that the rent had not been paid on the office and that was locked. Because of the fact that since we had no paper, no book, no "party", no organization that had any headquarters, did we disappear? Not at all. -- because we considered ourselves responsible for the body of ideas of Marxism, and that body of ideas meant that we were an organization, no matter how few, and we had an obligation to tell the readers of Correspondence what had happened, and tell them we would hold a Conference within a month, and whether or not they were a member they were welcome to attend.

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So you see there was an organization before there was either a paper or a book. WHAT THERE WAS, THE UNIFYING ELEMENT, WAS A CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATION AS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE IDEA OF MARXISM FOR OUR AGE, WITH ITS AIM BEING MARX'S GOAL OF NO DIVISION BETWEEN MENTAL AND MANUAL LABOR, SPECIFICALLY THEORY AND PRACTICE AS A UNIT. It wasn't that the "practical questions" were ever reduced to the question of "recruitment". First we were to clear our heads, and to clear them collectively at that Conference. And then we were to arrange for a full national Convention. We did, after all have the majority of the JET, but even that fact we never made a point of. What we did make a point of was that we had a majority of the workers.

Imagine, therefore, my shock, now at the end of March 1987, to find that suddenly I see an emergence of a difference between concept and practice and both very nearly disappear this month in the highest body. Which is why I asked that the March 9 REB be called off.

(Raya then said that the great work we did for Black History Month is really best summed up when Lou will have completed his tour of the South, in mid-April. She pointed instead to how the concentration on South Africa is followed in the present issue by the Lead on West Europe and a Theory/Practice Column that will be continued on what everything revolves about -- the struggle between the two nuclear superpowers that threatens humanity's survival. Or take for that matter the whole question of our international relations, whether it be South Africa, Haiti or the Philippines.) Nothing so impressed me as the recent letter from Zimbabwe -- and that was in the period when we were all celebrating IWD -- from the Shabane Mine Women's Club; now how do you think they could have heard of us from so far away if it weren't for the power of the Idea of freedom. The same type of concentration is of course true of us in labor, as you will see from the next issue with the Lead by Mike on Mastpacking.

I repeat that we have only ^{about 2-3} 5 months left for the test of the biweekly, the test of the finances, and the preparation for a summation of the three points we voted for at the last Convention: the biweekly, organizational growth, and the two years for the new book. And with it let's return to our American roots in Abolitionism and recall Wendell Phillips' reply, to those who had laughed at the small Abolitionist groups' challenge to the powers that be, "When you have three people in a room with a single thought...there you have the beginning of revolution."

10729

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10730

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10731

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10732

March 24, 1987

Dear Friends,

It is true that it is only in a very preliminary way that the last REB Meeting can be said to have opened the discussion of Organization. But so very important was Raya's report on Organization, 1st Projection, and the discussion which followed that both regional NEB's and each local should arrange for meetings to discuss this topic, which no doubt will become crucial at this year's Plenum. We've done so well with the biweekly that somehow Organization which is supposed to have been inseparable from the paper, was loosened, both philosophically and practically. Moreover, historically, many of our members seem not to be aware of the concrete stamp of our emergence as an organization in 1955. It became the reason why in 1980 we reprinted the 1955 Conference Bulletin. Though that 1955 Bulletin showed not only that we had an organization before either the paper or the book, consciousness of the arduous long journey of a half-century of new forms, new passions, new thoughts, of the new urgency in the tasks for 20th century Marxism was not present. Missing, too, was even perception of the full significance for Marxists of the post-Lenin era of Lenin's philosophic ambivalence. We did stress that Lenin alone had felt the compulsion to return to Marx's roots in the Hegelian Dialectic, but we did not linger on the ambivalence. Instead, we so passionately emphasized in what mire post-Leninists were, that Lenin's ambivalence looked very nearly accidental because "they" were such fully vulgar materialists that Lenin had to insist that revolution could let nothing, including philosophy, divert attention from it.

What we first found out : as we kept making extensions of RLWLKM from 8 to 12 chapters, was the fact that though Lenin's breakthrough on the relationship of idealism and materialism would remain our ground, we needed to go beyond. What was needed was to recognize that our own originality and uniqueness, is rooted in this age because humanity's world stage of development was altogether new in the post-WWII world: 1) In production, automation; 2) First ever in East Europe revolts against Communist totalitarianism; 3) Emergence of a whole new Third World-- Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America. (It was noted in the Report that we have done very well internationally, and indeed this was shown just recently in how Lillian arranged several meetings for our South African friend in the Bay Area and made an appeal for finances which netted the SA Domestic Workers \$150 extra); 4) The threat to the very survival of humanity that science in the nuclear world has led to. 5) And yet, at the very same time, philosophically, there was a breakthrough on the Absolute Idea, which saw it as a dual movement in unison, not only from theory but from practice, which is itself a form of theory...

Yours,

Raya

10733