

OFFICIAL CALL FOR CONVENTION

June 1, 1986

To All Members of News and Letters Committees

Dear Friends:

This year's Convention Call, both naturally and of necessity, focuses on the new that has happened since Rambo-on-the-Loose carried out U.S. imperialism's missile foray in the Gulf of Sidra as only a curtain-raiser for the outright pouring of bombs on Tripoli, most specifically on Kadafy's headquarters, which housed his family, killing his infant daughter and injuring two young sons. In Russia, the near melt-down of that nuclear super-power's reactor at Chernobyl forced the world to confront those global ramifications. Clearly, a nuclear world does not recognize national boundaries, any more than did the rulers during World War II, when, at the end of the war, they put down markers for where World War III could begin: two Germanies, two Koreas, two Vietnams. Besides that, they established "spheres of influence" between East and West within Europe, with no regard at all for the Third World.

Where, last year, we spoke of the visage of Hitler in apartheid South Africa, this year that benighted land has not only continued its slaughter of the Black majority but has invaded Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, with Botha himself drawing a parallel between his and Reagan's invasion of sovereign lands. For both, the cover was the lie of fighting "terrorism."

Where, last year, we spoke of the visage of Hitler by no means being limited to South Africa, this year it is not only "visage" but a live, leading Nazi in the modern "civilized" West -- Austria -- running confidently for president at the very same time that the so-called summit of the seven most industrialized nations of the West and Japan became signatories to the most hypocritical, totally false diktat* of the U.S. attack on Libya as one of "defense" against "terrorism."

The cauldron of the Middle East, as well as all the counter-revolutionary support for the "contras" in Latin America, are equal proof of the decadence, disintegration and degeneration of this capitalist-imperialist world that forces us to live under the constant threat of the holocaust of humanity as a whole.

It isn't that there isn't a Second America that is opposing not just Reaganism but the exploitative class nature of this society in which Reaganism is rooted. Indeed, the intense battles of the Hormel workers have won international support, as we learned on the trip to Spain this Spring. It isn't

* This word was made famous by the opposition to Stalin when it was used to mean an unquestioned order that must be obeyed.

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that the world demonstrations, against Reagan in particular, were not massive. It isn't that there is no anti-nuclear movement -- and it is sure to grow more massive and international than ever since Chernobyl. It isn't that the little countries that have been invaded by the super-powers are not fighting back. It is a question of where all this is leading when it isn't armed with more than "the will" to revolution -- whether that be the Kantian "men of good will" or the Mao-type of voluntarism and Cultural Revolutions. In a word, it is a question of where it leads when it lacks a philosophy of revolution that would give these revolutionary struggles a direction.

Ever since we worked out the new, the post-WW II truth inherent in the Absolute Idea, we held that, far from being something absolute and finished, the Absolute Idea was the never-ceasing movement from practice as well as from theory. It is this movement from practice in the 1950s that made us see it as the driving force for theory's development grounded in a new unity of theory and practice. It was just such a new unity of theory and practice that Marx had concretized when he transformed the Hegelian dialectic, articulating his philosophy as a "new Humanism." We call it Marxist-Humanism.

Marx had declared that Hegel's own roots were in the reality of the French Revolution. Marx set as his task the dialectical working out of the reality of his age. The self-development of that revolutionary dialectic in the new age is what became his philosophy of revolution, which he called "revolution in permanence."

The new movement from practice in the 1960s that tried to reject "old theory" -- the "New Left" held that theory can be caught "en route" -- ended in unfinished, aborted revolutions. Marx became alive all over again when the "new moments" of his last decade were rediscovered in the 1970s. We called these a trail to the 1980s, whether the subject was the Man/Woman concept, the Third World, or the multilinearism of Marx's vision of human development both in pre-capitalist and capitalist times. Now that we had Marx's Marxism as a totality, it was high time to take the measure of 20th century revolutions whether they succeeded as in Russia or were beheaded as in Germany (as led by Lenin, Trotsky* and Luxemburg). We included as well the national revolution that succeeded in China in 1949, led by Mao Tse-tung. We had analyzed these in Philosophy and Revolution where we also dealt with the new passions and new forces both here and in the Third World.

The final transcription of Marx's Ethnological Notebooks brought a still newer illumination to the concept of "revolution in permanence" in pre-capitalist society as well as in the industrial age, which opened a still newer age with the birth of a whole new Third World. Naturally, the 1980s are crucial to us

*As a revolutionary, Trotsky was great, but his theory of "permanent revolution" was not Marx's, as the Appendix to Chapter XI of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution makes clear.

because that is our generation, that is now. It is for this reason that we must return to the year 1982 and the publication of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution for the Marx Centenary in 1983. Our challenge to all post-Marx Marxists was developed in Chapter XII, "The Last Writings of Marx Point a Trail to the 1980s." The first draft (when we thought it would be the first chapter of the book) was published in News & Letters (Jan.-Feb. 1979) as "Relationship of Philosophy and Revolution to Women's Liberation: Marx's and Engels' Studies Contrasted."

II

What becomes urgent for us this year is a deeper look at the response to the third work of our "trilogy of revolution" by our Black worker-editor, Charles Denby. Let us look again at his perspective for what flowed from this 1982-83 balance sheet of post-Marx Marxists as against Marx's Marxism as we faced a Constitutional Convention* and confronted our organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism. The Marx Centenary tour had produced two new paragraphs on the Black dimension and on Women's Liberation. Denby suggested that the paragraph on the Black dimension be included in the new edition of American Civilization on Trial. The 1986 edition of Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought brings to the forefront that fundamental work of Marxist-Humanism, American Civilization on Trial, as our statement on the American Revolution which we have included in our Constitution.

The amendments added at the Constitutional Convention in 1983 recapitulated the theoretical-philosophic body of ideas of the organization: 1) Marxism and Freedom, which first singled out that there was a movement from practice as well as from theory, creating the ground for the category of what we call "the movement from practice that is itself a form of theory";

2) Philosophy and Revolution, which articulated "the integrality of philosophy and revolution" and took the measure of the historic revolutionary leaders -- Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg -- as well as "the new passions and forces" that emerged from the Third World, highlighted philosophically in Wretched of the Earth, where Fanon develops his concept of "a new humanism."

3) Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, which concentrated on Marx's "new moments" as the trail to the 1980s, both as it was seen in Man/Woman relations and in the relationship of the Third World to the technologically advanced world.

* While Denby was too ill to attend the Convention in person, his statement to the Convention was published in the November 1983 issue of N&L devoted to his life and work.

The following year, the Draft Thesis for 1984-85 was called: "Where are the 1980s going? The imperative need for a totally new direction in uprooting capitalism-imperialism." By the time of the Convention in July, the full Thesis concretized that as: "Not by practice alone: The Movement from Theory." It is this that has given us the direction for the 1980s, whether in the form of what was begun at the Expanded REB on Dec. 30, 1984 and was extended to the Archives as a whole in Detroit on March 21, 1985 as "Marxist-Humanism: American Roots and World Humanist Concepts"; or whether as it was summed up in the Introduction/Overview of the new Vol. XII of the Archives Collection. Indeed, we are now calling the entire collection: "Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of World Development."

The 1984-85 Thesis analyzed U.S. imperialism's tentacles "from Managua to Grenada, from El Salvador to Berlin, from Africa to Asia." Those tentacles have now shown themselves to be outright counter-revolutionary invasions via the air in the bombing of Libya. The very title of the presentation to the Expanded Resident Editorial Board on Dec. 30, 1984 was "Responsibility for Marxist-Humanism in the Historic Mirror: A Revolutionary-Critical Look." That organizational responsibility was projected at the Plenum last year as the task of transforming News & Letters into a bi-weekly, so that we could more quickly meet the challenge of and test ourselves by ongoing events in the objective world and all the new phenomena exuding from this totally crises-ridden epoch. We gave ourselves a year to reach the goal of voting on a bi-weekly. This necessitated our becoming practicing dialecticians in three different processes:

1) We held a series of Workshop/Classes, each of which was to result in a two-page article for N&L as a response to an objective event that very week.

2) Our outreach extended abroad as well as at home. Thus, while a trip to Appalachia by a new kind of collectivity could not be accomplished this year, trips to both Mexico and to Spain were achieved. At the same time, N&L's outreach was met by a reaching out to us from revolutionaries where we had no direct presence -- in Korea, the Philippines, Haiti and South Africa. For that matter we saw this right at home both in the reports from Hormel and in the way in which participation in the Haymarket events in Chicago reached not only all parts of this country but Germany and South Africa, as well.

3) The objective world put to the test our "road to the bi-weekly" when we did not yet have one. Thus, Reagan's foray in the Gulf of Sidra simultaneously produced the "Special-Special-Special" letter of March 27 as well as the changes right on the galleys of our Lead and Editorial as the April issue was going to press.

Our Perspectives Thesis at last year's Plenum expressed the meaning of the fact that the most massive demonstrations in Spain against Reagan's visit to Bitburg had occurred in Spain. (See p. 15 of our "Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 1985-86" and

"Political-Philosophic Notes on Reagan's Visit to Bitburg" in N&L, June, 1985.) The relevance of the Spanish Revolution of 1936-37 to our age was given new meaning, just as the trip to Spain this year brought new meaning to the latest volume of our Archives, Vol. XII, with its "retrospective as perspective." It was this process that we can see as a "new beginning that could determine the end."

III.

The near melt-down in Russia disclosed the horrors that await all of humanity inhabiting this nuclear world. It becomes imperative to keep as one the objective situation and the subjective foundation -- that is, the historic distinctiveness of Marxist-Humanism as we finally worked it out on the eve of the Marx centenary, for which we had completed Rosa Luxemburg Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. For the first time ever, Marxist-Humanism had openly challenged all post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels himself.

At our Convention this year, we will take the measure of the distance we have travelled on the "road to the bi-weekly" that we set out to journey in the past year, and determine what will be needed to launch a Marxist-Humanist bi-weekly in January, 1987. It is at the Convention that all of our activities, past and future, from participation in the mass movements to revolutionary finances in N&L Committees, will be discussed vigorously in an intense two and a half days over the Labor Day weekend.

It is true that we have not yet worked out Dialectics of Organization: Philosophy, the "Party," and Opposite Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity. It may take another two years to complete that work. There is no doubt, however, that Chapter XI of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution -- "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization" -- will be its ground. Indeed, it is this which has permeated our organization from its beginning. It has motivated us to reject all elitist parties, any sort of "vanguard party," and instead to begin working out what forms of organization were emerging from the unity of theory and practice. Instead of proclaiming ourselves "a party," News and Letters Committees concentrated on that missing link, dialectical philosophy.

It is that, in fact, which permeates the reports to the coming Convention, whether that be the Welcome by Kevin A. Barry; the Perspectives Report by the Chairwoman, Raya Dunayevskaya; the sub-report on "Philosophy of the Black Dimension" by Lou Turner; "Philosophy of Archives and Organization" by Mike Connolly; "Philosophy of News & Letters and Organization" by Eugene Walker; the sub-report on "N&L in the Field" by Peter Wermuth; "Philosophy of Revolutionary Finances and Organization" by Olga Domanski, and the report to the final Executive Session by the Chairwoman, Ida Fuller, our Youth columnist who has been involved in an ongoing

dialogue with Philippine youth, will make the Youth report. Terry Moon, who is the "Woman as Reason" columnist, will report on Women's Liberation.

The Convention this year will be preceded by national meetings of both the Youth Committees and the Women's Liberation Committees on Friday, August 29. That evening there will be a plenary meeting of the outgoing full National Editorial Board members and alternates at 7 PM to work out the agenda and chairpersons to be voted on by the whole Convention.

The Convention will open officially on Saturday morning, August 30, at 9 AM, and continue through Monday, September 1, adjourning at Noon. The Monday session will be an Executive Session for members only to take up the election of a new National Editorial Board and hear the final report to the Executive Session by the National Chairwoman. All other sessions are open not only to members but to invited friends, as well, who are given the same privileges to the floor for discussion.

With this Call, we are asking that the Chicago local host the Convention and be responsible for a Saturday evening party to greet out-of-towners.

Pre-Convention discussion begins with the issuing of this Call. It need not wait for the Draft Perspectives Thesis from the REB which will appear directly in the pages of the July issue of News & Letters and come off the press on June 27. This gives us 90 days for full discussion before the Convention convenes to vote on the final Thesis and the Convention reports. All participants in the Discussion Bulletins which will be issued throughout the summer must submit their articles to the Center on stencils, ready to be run off. The deadline for the last Bulletin that can be sent out from the Center is August 7. Any articles after that date must be run off in your local and brought to the Convention to be distributed there.

Discussion throughout the summer within our local committees and with all those we can reach, and whom we may wish to invite to the Convention, becomes a measure of the inseparability for us between activities, philosophy, organization and revolutionary journalism.

-- THE RESIDENT EDITORIAL BOARD

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