

June 21, 1985

Dear Colleague:

In preparing for the Call, which I will draft for the REB meeting on Monday, I thought of you, B , in relationship to an Essay or a Discussion-article during the pre-Plenum period, but changed my mind in relationship to what topic I wish you to write about. In a fundamental sense, of course, everything revolves around Labor and Time, and no doubt I'll have something to say on that later. But the essence of what is specific to us this year, and what I've been stressing ever since Dec. 30, 1985, is how necessary it is to stop repeating, no matter how correct it is, the political-philosophic results we have arrived at and, instead, concentrate on methodology, not merely by saying so but by working it out, practicing what it means by showing what it is in any specific stage. It is the specificity that alone can make the concrete-Universal both concrete and Universal. I tried, obviously not with great success, to do exactly that in the Convention Call of 1982, which remains the only Call that was practically the Draft Thesis itself, and took seven pages instead of the usual two or three. The reason for all this was clear, at least to me; it was that if we knew the whole 30-year history with that question of methodology and politicalization as its center, and if I could show that to be so in the concrete book I had just finished -- RLWLKM -- then that would mean that everyone of us would likewise become a practitioner of dialectics. If that had really happened, I wouldn't be saying almost the same thing with just further "examples" right now, would I? Instead, if any book got completely unreviewed even by us, it was RLWLKM. If any book thought itself wrongly -- I mean got interpreted wrongly -- as if it were just a women's liberation book, it was RLWLKM. Which only led to women less understanding this one than any other book, and that precisely because they really didn't grasp its essence as Part III, which had stated very openly and with great detail that neither RL, nor WL were anywhere close to understanding the whole of their movements, because it is impossible to understand them without knowing the totality of Marx's Marxism AND WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING FULLY OUT ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO IT WHICH WERE SPELLED OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME AS THE GREAT DIVIDE BETWEEN OURSELVES AND ALL POST-MARX MARXISTS WHO NEVER, NEVER UNDERSTOOD FULLY MARX'S MARXISM, BEGINNING WITH ENGELS, AND RELATING THE 'NEW MOMENTS' IN MARX, CENTERING AROUND THE THIRD WORLD, TO WHAT ONLY WE, AND NO OTHERS, INCLUDING NO OTHER AGE, COULD FULLY UNDERSTAND, SO THAT THE TRAIL TO THE 1980S FLOWED, AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME, FROM MARX'S 1880s TO OUR MARXIST-HUMANISM.

Now what has that got to do with specificity for you to work out a very serious discussion article within the next few weeks? Well, let's take those two words I said I wouldn't write about -- Labor and Time. First, you need time for your labor, patience and suffering with the dialectic, time truly alone, communicating only with the self-development of the idea, asking yourself an awful lot of questions, and not accepting the definition that one is doing "nothing" when one is thinking. Secondly, whereas Labor is of the essence at the concrete stage it is in, where it has to fight the Reaganites and the labor bureaucrats. I do not mean that your essay would deal with

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the details of what is happening in your shop, as if it was a shop report for the local and was busy weighing what was wrong and what was right. I am, for example, enclosing also a copy of my letter to Andy on a different topic, though it is also on shop work, or at least with people, with whom you are ~~concerned~~ concerned ^{both} on the question of trade union work and Marxist-Humanism and organization. I was relating to him something that Trotsky was telling me about the thin line one has to tread when one makes anti-war speeches when war has already been declared and must know how not to compromise one's principles and yet be ~~absolutely~~ absolutely sure it gets him perhaps to prison but not killed.

Something of this has to be weighed in every trade union situation, where you certainly don't want to be so sharply against the union that you bear any resemblance to being anti-union, and yet sow no illusions in the proletariat that you think militancy alone will change the bureaucracy or throw it out.

I return to the question of needing to create time for yourself, whether or not you succeed in getting your job back and no matter how many millions of things are required of you at home, which must ~~not~~ not be allowed to disturb your priority for preparing not just to go to a meeting called the Plenum but to consider what you are preparing for pre-Plenum discussion and what comes out from the Center are actually part of preparation for revolution -- and that that cannot be without a philosophy of revolution, a Marxist-Humanist philosophy. Please study carefully what is going to be the determining feature for all reports, whether on Organization, on Perspectives, on Black, on Finances -- the missing philosophic link. You choose your own topic and give yourself a deadline that will permit the organization to have it in time before the Plenum.

Sorry, I seem to be so abstract about your "troubles" but don't forget that, to me, troubles mean that the revolutionary storm is somewhere on the way, like the Irish troubles before the Irish Uprising, and the Kerensky troubles before November, and the troubles that were never recognized by the busy, busy, busy Youth, like May 1968, Paris.

Yours,



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