

REB MEETING OF OCTOBER 22, 1984

Present: All but Eugene on assignment; Suzanne and Diane excused; Jane as sitter-in; Jim present from Detroit. (Bob now present on regular basis.)

- Agenda:
- I. Mike's report on trip to Detroit.
 - II. What is New in the Concept and Practice of Organization since Chapter 11 of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution:
 - 1) in London (brief report by Olga) as against
 - 2) the U.S. in four different periods. (Raya)
 - a) in 1959 when, internationally, we were still with state-capitalist tendencies, though they attacked Marxist-Humanism (Italy Conference).
 - b) in M&F period, 1958-68, when we were still looking for "co-authors" for P&R, including Third World (in Great Britain, in Africa, in Japan).
 - c) in 1973-81, with P&R as our own alone, but as so totally new that by now we could sharply distinguish also from VIL (although his philosophic breakthrough remains something no other post-Marx Marxist has followed, it still had left concept of vanguard party intact). We alone made explicit what is only implicit in Marx on "Absolute Method."
 - d) with Chapter 11 of RLWLKM. (The whole of 1981 shows the process -- the change from "and organization man" to "creates ground for organization.") There is also a 1980s Marxist-Humanist view of Marx's "new moments" and (though all too briefly) Marxist-Humanism in-and-for-itself. But have we carried that through organizationally, to News and Letters Committees itself?
 - III. Discussion on I and II.
 - IV. New on Question of Staff -- Olga; Terry; regularity of evening work and daytime volunteers. Staff discussion to work out the new on Nov. 15th.
 - V. G&W

2) Raya began her report by explaining why discussion of Mike's report would not be separated from the discussion on what she was about to present: Everything is methodology, she said. That is why she had asked Olga to make an abbreviated report of the situation among the London comrades first; none of us fail to understand that what is involved there is a cliquist concept of "organization" which is their "private enclave". But what had concerned Raya was not that situation but our own situation, which she felt demanded a new look at our own history:

my mind again is the ^{what has brought the question of Organization to} condition in the London group. Although we have behaved as if we had been practicing the philosophy of "revolution in permanence" organizationally, with our emphasis on organizational growth, we have to ask ourselves if that is so. What is a great deal more serious than the cliquism in London is that in the U.S. itself, although we have existed some 30 years as Marxist-Humanists (and as many as 43 years as implicitly so, with our state-capitalist theory) we have been taking altogether too much for granted the whole question of organization as if the fact that we were making so many original contributions to theory meant that organization would come by itself.

Being concrete means facing critically our history when it comes to the question of organization. It is with that in mind that I have divided that question into four historic periods. 1959 refers to the question of the international conference held in Italy with the various state-capitalist tendencies. Indeed, you didn't even have to be fully state-capitalist in theory to attend; all that was necessary was to be opposed to both U.S. and Russia. Thus some bureaucratic-collectivists were invited as well. The whole stress was on the objective situation, with De Gaulle and neo-fascism coming to power and the imperative need to fight as revolutionary internationalists. The practical point was to give voice in Western Europe to the opponents of what is -- i.e., to have an organ for that opposition, specifically, to set off in a different color (it turned out to be green paper) within Frometeo, Damen's theoretical Italian journal, an international section for which they were not responsible. We knew there were no other Marxist-Humanists at the Conference, but I was quite taken aback when an open attack against Marxist-Humanism was launched by Munis in so virulent a manner that I said I would walk out if it were not retracted. It was retracted "diplomatically", but

I feel we were altogether too modest about the fact that we alone were presenting Marx's Humanism. We felt many more had to be convinced of it as "members" before we could put that as the condition for international relations. After all, we were so loose ourselves on organizational form that we had virtually no discipline. We did always stress that

committee-form was not only against the "party to lead" but that you had to be open on all spontaneous forms of organization. The same held true for N&L as a revolutionary workers' newspaper. As paper that will always hold true; the question is, what about organization?

This attitude to organization held though we had already come out with our theoretical work, Marxism and Freedom, and it continued not only for 1958-1959, but through the 1960s as our trips abroad continued -- this time not only to Europe but to Africa and Asia. It was only when the Youth, (specifically, Dick G.) simply refused to acknowledge that '69 was not '68, that we realized that philosophical-ly too, some members did not fully recognize how original was Marx's Humanism as Marxist-Humanism. (See our 1969 bulletin on "The Newness of our Philosophic-Historic Contribution.")

We continued to make no organizational demands, but it was then that I realized not only had we gotten no "co-authors" abroad but the whole question of philosophy had to be dug into, ever deeper, all the way through VIL, and philosophically even beyond what Marx had openly expressed on Hegel.

Indeed none could answer, not even the founder of all of us, what is New in our age, on the level of philosophy and not only on politics and economics.

The word "Absolute" scares all Marxists, no matter of what historic period, more than the Afro-hairdo did the white petty-bourgeois in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. Two new "tendencies" were attracted to us, if not as "fellow-travelers" at least as "excitingly interesting": 1) the young Hegelian theoreticians

of the New Left, with many languages at their command, which led them to consider themselves the "real" internationalists -- Telos; and 2) of all strange phenomena, the president of the HSA, a Belgian, probably Jesuit Hegel scholar who happened to drop in on a lecture I gave at Yale. He came, he said, to argue against my Chapter One of F&R; he remained to talk of dialectics of revolution.

By then (the early 1970s) Marx's Ethnological Notebooks surfaced. With them, a new age of cognition opened for all, and even those Marxists who held back from the "Absolute" (specifically, the Yugoslav Marxist dissidents who did refer to "Marxism with a human face" as Humanism) had decided not to shut me out -- especially since I alone had been the first to translate Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, with so original an interpretation. In the 1970s, Conferences on Lenin and Hegel did crisscross. At the same time, Women's Liberation as movement; though they also opposed me philosophically, were inclined to some flirtations with me, as witness my correspondence with Sheila Rowbotham.

And where in all this were we as organization? (Do, please, reread the 1981 Perspectives, "The Trail to the 1980s for Transforming Reality.")

When the idea for RLWLKM was first projected, it centered on Rosa Luxemburg as Woman Revolutionary spontaneist, with 1910 looking as the height from which to look down upon VIL. It wouldn't and didn't work out. History, a successful 1917 revolution, and Lenin's philosophic breakthrough, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the WIM's stubborn refusal to look at anything but the immediate, from opposite points of view, helped me to dislodge 1910 as any "culmination" of the dialectics of revolution. The actual

objective need, the imperative need, was to meet the challenge of all other post-Marx Marxists' refusal to grapple with Marx's Marxism as a totality. It finally forced us to take responsibility, organizational responsibility, at one and the same time, for all the new philosophic contributions we have made and for Marx's "new moments."

The critical year for that is 1981. It was then that the Chapter 11 title was changed. Not only was it important to reveal Marx as an "organization man", but we had to reveal that the little word "and" did not mean that Organization was a separate corollary to Marx's philosophy of "revolution in permanence." The difference between "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization" and "Philosopher of Permanent Revolution and Organization Man" is the difference between still keeping the philosophy and organization in separate categories and finally projecting the single dialectic in objective and subjective development.

Have we really been practicing that one single dialectic when it comes to organization? I believe not. Indeed, that's why I feel it isn't the situation in London that is important but our disregard of organization. Insofar as I am concerned, the question is not what to do in London when in fact they have never accepted our ground. Insofar as I am concerned, we should never have considered them as Marxist-Humanists, but, at best, as sympathizers.

What is serious (as I expressed it in my letter to Anne and the N.Y. NEB of October 10) is this: "Were we wrong when we did not at once include, with the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism the NEED to accept the organizational expression of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. -- News and Letters Committees -- because they and they alone are the founders of Marxist-Humanism internationally?" Which is why I proposed that we take no position whatsoever on the cliquist dispute in London, and consider them only as what they always were -- sympathizers.

I'm not ready to give any definitive answer on the philosophic-historic question on organization -- I'm already thinking a whole new book is necessary for that before we would concretize organizational responsibility for the philosophy we have founded. Let's all start thinking seriously of what exactly is involved in accepting organizational responsibility for the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism.

October 23, 1984

Dear Friends:

The REB heard Raya's report on Organizational Responsibility for the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. It is to be studied by all, but not discussed immediately. The very fact that I introduced no motions on the question I raised, but proposed another discussion, probably before the end-of-the-year Expanded REB, shows there is no immediacy involved in this question. Quite the contrary. As you can see, I suddenly projected the idea that it would take a year or two for me to write a new book on Organization. Its dialectic has yet -- and I'm not referring to us but to the whole period since Marx founded a new continent of thought and revolution -- to be worked out in full. The only motion passed at the REB referred to London.

Finally, a word on the new stage we have entered with the new classes. As you see, Detroit began their classes last week; Chicago will begin its classes this Sunday. When do yours begin?

Yours,

Raya

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ED
October 10, 1984

To Anne and the whole New York NEB:

Dear Anne:

I was glad to get your letter because it was so totally on the one and only thing that should predominate in the whole organization at this moment, and that is the preparation for the new type of classes, the new introduction to the new book (and that new will really not be totally clear until my final lecture, because ~~none~~ none will have seen the whole book, which will be our real test in comprehending that the dialectics of revolution cannot be a single revolutionary force -- be it Women's Liberation or Black or Youth or Labor -- but can only be dialectics of revolution open to the still unknown event-to-be, and that along with our philosophic preparation for it.)

I want to continue with that little word, "new". This new, I'm sorry to say, is really old -- but we seem to have forgotten it. That is to say, objective ^{and} coming from the NEB. Here is what I mean. When it comes to national and international events, be they even "only" internal, New York (or any other local) cannot presume to deliver the answer just because they seem to know more "facts" individually. Insofar as England is concerned -- and here we had relations dating back to 1955, the best of all being Harry McShane, who did the most of all for making Marxist-Humanism known generally (unfortunately, only generally) with the Introduction to M&F and with all the other publications we have written -- there were four separate periods and groups, who though they claimed to be Marxist-Humanists, put Britain's so-called independence above the ~~NEB~~ principles of the totally new, epochal phenomenon, MARXIST-HUMANISM.

Let me emphasize how wrong that is. Again start with Harry McShane. Here is a revolutionary who literally has been part of the Russian Revolution when it was taking place. He remained with that Party until the 1950s. In a word, political breaks like Trotskyism had no effect on him. Splits were always looked at as diversions, as wrong, as "playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie". So what happened in the 1950s that suddenly made all that difference? What made this editor of the Daily Worker suddenly quit? He certainly wasn't conscious that there was a totally new epoch in the world. He was still experimenting with a "real" proletarian paper that was opposed to the Youth being expelled. It was during those experimental ~~18~~ 18 months that we started our dialogue. He could understand state-capitalism as a proletarian; that there had been a betrayal of the working class by the Stalinists. And he had five people with him, who could understand state-capitalism but not the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. And he, himself, could not quite make clear why the other state-capitalist tendency right there (Tony Cliff) he did not agree with but kept working with, because they had a "mass base." That was after he already had accepted Marxist-Humanist "in general." The result was that he could allow himself to be used -- as witness their so-called "autobiography" of him (No Mean Fighter), where Marxist-Humanism appears only as a parade.

17179

In between, the period when we found Harry McShane and the latest young group in London, there were several attempts made to found a new Marxist-Humanist tendency with British roots. One of the groups tried through having a separate British Labour News page in N&L. Unfortunately, when they published something on their own right there in London, it turned out to be quite adventurist, and resulted in the end of that group. There were other flirtations with us from Left trade-union caucuses and so-called philosophers, ranging from Eric Heffer to Alisdair MacIntyre, all of whom only played with the question of philosophy. The latest group appeared totally Marxist-Humanist by not only calling themselves "Marxist-Humanists" and trying to dig into Hegel but actually behaving as Marxist-Humanists -- except never departing from their flirtation with "organizational independence" and meanwhile behaving as a clique. Were we wrong when we did not at once include with the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ the NEED to accept the organizational expression of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. -- News and Letters Committees -- because they and they alone are the founders of Marxist-Humanism internationally?

I am so totally convinced that we were wrong that I now propose that we drop to the status of sympathizer all those in London who call themselves Marxist-Humanist.

Yours,

Nya

National Chairwoman of
News and Letters Committees

Copies to REB, to be discussed at next meeting, Oct. 22.

RD
October 23, 1984

Dear N

The REB took up your letter of Oct. 11 as part of the discussion not just of the situation with the London comrades but as part of what we considered the more serious organizational question of Organization. (Enclosed is the report of that REB meeting held last night.)

Your specific letter, which shows that you have resigned from what was "British News and Letters", does not in any way affect what the REB decided when it voted not to take a position on any argument among the London comrades. Insofar as the REB is concerned, none of the London comrades has ever taken organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism as that revolutionary philosophy was founded in the United States in the form of News and Letters Committees. The REB therefore considers all as sympathizers. This is first and foremost.

Secondly, our meetings have always been open to non-members. This has held true also for our Conventions, with the stipulation that attendance there is by invitation of the local committees with approval of the REB. Should you be present in New York, as you indicate, you will be welcome at local meetings as a sympathizer.

Thirdly, in regard to your question about extending an invitation to British miners for their very necessary fund-raising, we regret we are in no position to make such a formal invitation. Of course we are always willing to publish open appeals such as we did in the October issue of N&L.

Comradely yours, for the REB,

Raya
Raya Dunayevskaya, National
Chairwoman News and Letters
Committees, and of National Edi-
torial Board of News & Letters

17181

RD

October 23, 1984

Dear Dick:

I am not sure that you know what has been happening in London since Nigel resigned and therefore I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent to Nigel. You will see that the REB is taking no sides in the arguments going on in London and considers all of the London comrades as sympathizers. Unfortunately, in one very important respect you are also considered a sympathizer since, indeed, we have never succeeded in establishing organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanist philosophy; in your case, it was a question that, though you agreed with us "in principle", your move to London never materialized.

But, since you were not involved in the cliquist actions that have been passing for "organization" in London, we do wish to make one exception where you are concerned: Where the London comrades will from now on be sent only the paper and the weekly letter, you will get a copy also of the REB minutes. I trust that you will continue to be a reporter for N&L in England and will wish to attend our 1985 Convention over that Labor Day weekend in Chicago. Do let us hear from you.

Yours,
P. Ray

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RD

October 23, 1984

Dear Dave and Celia:

The REB last night considered your letter and passed the following motion: "To take no position on the argument among the London comrades, and to consider all as sympathizers." I was asked to write to you about it.

Frankly, we have always considered that what called itself the "British News and Letters" had never undertaken organizational responsibility for the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism as that revolutionary philosophy was founded in the United States in the form of News and Letters Committees. Put otherwise, we have always considered that you acted as sympathizers only. Therefore, we are from now on sending you the paper and our weekly letter but not the REB minutes. Enclosed here, however, is a copy of the agenda of last night's REB meeting, so that you can see that the focus of our discussion was not the London situation but the question of "What is News in the Concept and Practice of Organization since Chapter 11 of of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution."

News & Letters as paper continues to welcome material from non-members on the objective situation and the revolutionary movement.

Comradely yours, for the REB, 

Raya Dunayevskaya, National Chairwoman
News and Letters Committees, and of
National Editorial Board of News &
Letters.

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RD

October 23, 1984

Dear Lydia:

While we were glad to get your letter, which expressed a desire to receive our communications directly to your own address, you will see from the enclosed copy of our letter to Dave and Celia that the REB considers all the London comrades as sympathizers and from now on will send the paper and the weekly letter but not the REB minutes, to all the comrades.

As we wrote to Dave and Celia, we continue to welcome material on the objective situation and the revolutionary movement.

We enclose a copy of the agenda of last night's REB meeting for your information, and will be sending you individually from now on copies of the paper and the weekly letter.

Comradely yours,

Raya
Raya

1718