

WEEKLY POLITICAL LETTER

June 3, 1961

A Brief Outline of the New Book

Dear Friends:

This is not the regular weekly political letter that is read to the locals and then expanded upon as an educational dealing with current events. This time I'm forwarding a copy of a letter written to Jonathan who is to help with the chapter on China, and explaining to him Hegel's Absolute Idea in terms of what it means to the book and the whole world's objective development. One cannot read such a letter out. One must study it, and even after that no educational should be planned around it. Rather it is the preparation for the philosophic foundations of the problems around which the plenum will revolve. You may, however, read out this covering note, which will now proceed to give a very rough outline of the major portions of the new book on Marxist Humanism and the African Revolutions.

First, the frontispiece will set the theme. It will consist of the quotation from Hegel: "our epoch is a birth-time and period of transition." And another one from Marx: "When actual corporeal Man, standing on firm and well rounded earth, inhaling and exhaling all natural forces, posits...his actual objective essential capacities as alien objects, it is not the act of positing which is the subject. It is the subjectivity of objective essential capacities whose action must, therefore, also be objective....We see here how thorough-going Naturalism, or Humanism, distinguishes itself both from Idealism and Materialism, and is, at the same time, the truth uniting both."

Or I may prefer the one from Marx on Feuerbach rather than on Hegel, thus: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism -- that of Feuerbach included -- is that the object, reality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of object, contemplation but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively....The standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil society'; the standpoint of the new is human society or socialized humanity."

In either case, the theme will be carried through, first, in the Introduction, to stress that we are beginning with the subjective, the actual people's revolutions in Africa from Western imperialism, and that of the Hungarian Revolution from Russian totalitarianism, to show the two new pages opened in history: (1) in the actual reshaping of the world's map; and (2) in adding a new dimension to thought: Marxist Humanism not merely as projected in theory by Marx 120 years ago, but as moved forward in practice in the world of the 1960s. Marx was able to anticipate this only because he built his philosophy on the "subjective element," the human being both in his economic theory where the worker, as the grave-digger of capitalism, transforms the whole science of economics, and in his world outlook where the new society is not merely a negation, an abolition of the old, but its whole transformation on new, truly human foundations. Marx's view of "technology" as the mainspring of the process was not only the foundation of the economic laws -- accumulation of capital and its attendant unemployed army which would bring capitalism down -- but the "all-rounded individual" whose "striving for universality" will be realized on the morrow of the revolution and after as the first beginning of the real history of man, instead of merely his pre-history. Thought can no more be running a losing

13851

race with history than revolutions can be merely recorded to be buried. Hence the narrative of today's revolutions, and the appeal to today's humanity, in Africa or America, cannot separate theory from practice, or thought from activity because only in their unity will the contradictions be so totally resolved that the new will emerge.

Part I — Narrative of the African Revolutions will be greatly expanded Afro-Asian pamphlet which must have as its foundation the report of my actual trip to Africa. Thus far, at most, we have been able to see the action of the masses as a whole at the moment of achievement, and through the voice of a Senghor or Touré; we must listen to the voice of the rank and file, and, as no one records his voice, we must go there to record.

At the same time, this Part I, in showing the higher stage reached by race rather than nation, thus is continent-wide (African continent, or at least West Africa as a totality rather than the individual nations whether little Ghana or large Nigeria). This will be the logical transition then to the Negro Question because it is here the present leaders have been inspired back in the 1930s and 1940s.

Part II — The Negro Question in America. We will here develop our position from our view of its history through the Freedom Riders in the South presently, as well as the dual road from here to Africa, from 1919 Garveyism through Pan-Africanism today, and from Africa here. The two contradictory views of that — of the intellectuals, DuBois' talented tenth, on the one hand, and the proletariat on the other — will be carried through for these 43 years. At the same time, the new point of departure for theory laid by the 2nd CI Congress in 1919, and the 4th in 1924, both for the National Question in general, and the Negro in particular will be developed on the new level of attack against present day Communists who have suddenly rediscovered those plenums to pervert them. It is here, perhaps, rather than in the African Revolutions, Part I, where we will deal with China, and attack Mao-ism as the total opposite of Lenin's view of the nature of the peasantry as ally of the proletariat to reconstruct society.

Part III — Russian-American struggle for world power, vs. American workers' struggle against Automation, and Russian workers' slowdowns.

The burden here will be the analysis of state capitalism in the specific context of the 1950s. This is not only a matter of being current, but the fact that state capitalism was a transformation into opposite of monopoly capitalism on a political scale while, methodologically, there was no difference in production itself, whereas with Automation we have the 2nd Industrial Revolution at full drive. Since the sputnik we have, moreover, discontinuous production in Russia not only as "rates of growth" — that debate was already outlived when it got into swing in American expert testimony in Congress and books on "stages of growth" via Rostow — but above all, as the one-nassq of science, technology, production, thought that go beyond the confines of our one-world of capitalism, private or state, over into life and nuclear death.

The transition point then will be the dialectic and humanism of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution; 1957 debates on "Revisionism"; the 1958 coming of age of Africa in Ghana and Guinea as independent republics; and the year of the Congo crisis, 1960, where the crossroads for "advanced" and "backward" countries has been reached.

Weekly Letter, 6/3/61

- 3 -

Part IV — Hegel's Absolute Idea, or the Subjectivity of
Self-Liberation; and

Part V — on the New Humanism, will bring all threads together
from the present-day revolution backward to the French, and from there to
tomorrow's freedom victory.

Yours,
Raya

13853