

(W. Va.)  
September 14, 1983

Dear Mike:

I would like to have a little philosophic discussion with you in relationship to the 1949-50 strike in which you were an important participant, and which I had labelled as a "movement from practice" that signalled a new stage in cognition. It is this type of Hegelian-Marxian analysis that was further extended by me from that period to the actual completion of Marxism and Freedom and it is that last chapter in the book, Ch. 16 on "Automation and the New Humanism", which, on p. 273 (subheaded "Workers Think Their Own Thoughts") that says:

"What is new in Automation is the maturity of our age in which the totality of the crisis compels philosophy, compels a total outlook."

Naturally, I'm not saying that you should think like I think, much less that you thought like I thought way back then. Where you come in, in the re-telling of the events now, is:

- 1) The actual action in 1949-50, especially the caravan from Detroit and Ohio bringing Miners' Relief as a matter of class solidarity among rank-and-file workers.
- 2) The reason I want both your actions and your thoughts is not only that it makes exciting reading in our day (I mean, of course, 1983), but that it is proven with robotics that that fight against the continuous miner really started something, from which workers still have something to learn.
- 3) I do not know whether miners then, who were East Europeans, were excited about the fact that Tito had broken from Stalin -- as an EUPer then I had to make a lot of speeches on it. But what I was doing was looking at what other resistance to Stalin would emerge from below, and what got so excited happened three years later, with the East German uprising against work-norms after Stalin's death. Simply put, though I'm skipping years here, it is these two events, the miners' strike in 1950 and the East German uprising in 1953 that I related in Marxism and Freedom as what comprised a new stage of cognition, which made workers everywhere raise the question of "What kind of labor must man do?"

The reason I became excited when I met you again after all these years was that the Marx centenary year had made me embark on a trip throughout the country in which I was telling workers and students, and anyone who would listen, the American roots of Marx and the Humanist roots of his philosophy and of workers' own thoughts. The three-month-long lecture tour I made convinced me -- and Talcott Library in New York actually had me on tape recalling this whole story the week after I left West Virginia on the tour -- that the story was very timely to today.

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Wouldn't you be interested in tracing, not just what I said, but what you experienced and what you now see. I know that when I met Frank and Raymond by the time I reached California they were as excited as Andy and I had been about the prospect of a pamphlet on that great event with eyes of today. By "eyes of today" I don't mean we tell it only as remembrance of past, but as actual happening on two levels -- i.e. as it happened then and as we think of it now.

Andy told me that you said you would be willing to come to Detroit to discuss it with us. I was told you would need two weeks advance notice. It happens that I am leaving for New York to participate in an International Conference on "Bureaucracy, Ideology and Human Survival", where I am to speak on "Marx's New Humanism and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation." I will be there about a week. Could you come to Detroit sometime between Oct. 1 and Oct. 10? As I see it, since we would like to have this pamphlet off the press by December -- that is, the last month of the Marx centenary year -- it is important that you come before October 15.

My unlisted phone number is: 1-313-846-1245. Could you call me after Sept. 26 to let me know which days would be convenient for you? Should you have to call before I return, Andy would know where to reach me.

Yours,