

MINUTES OF REB MEETING OF FEBRUARY 17, 1965

Agenda: I & II. The 4th book and concentration on March 21 for the whole organization; Special Bulletin; Discussion. III. Current issue of N&L; Editorial and special Ads of March 21. IV. Ongoing Activities V. G&W.

I. & II

(The introductory part of Raya's talk which took off from the Feb. 11 Dear Colleagues Letter in response to the Feb. 6 Dear Friends Letter will be recorded in the letter of the week)

Raya The crucial point about this report is the integrality of the new 4th book, whose page proofs we are now correcting, with the focus of the organization on the 3-21 lecture and display of selections from the Archives -- all not separated in any way from what I will call The Special Bulletin. This will consist not only of the 1/27-2/3 talk, but begin with the integrality which always characterized Marxist-Humanism -- Organization and Philosophy as expressed both in the book forms and in News & Letters in the period when it was edited, for the first time ever, by a Black production worker, Charles Denby. The reason this is so crucial is precisely the new stage we are in now in concretizing the Dialectics of Revolution, both in its American roots and world Humanist concepts, which will become the title for the whole new collection we will hand in on 3/21, and which will cover the years 1981-85. So it isn't just the title of the lecture, or even being made the overall title for the four years, but -- and that is what makes it what we mean by the historic first in the birth of Marxist-Humanism -- we, on the one hand, have now extended that Dialectics of Revolution from the 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea, back to the 1949-50 Correspondence and the Miners' General Strike; and, on the other hand, have it as a "permanent", continuous development of what I call the Unchaining of the Dialectic.

Let me concretize it so precisely that we can begin a continuous process of development of what unchaining of the dialectic had meant in Marx's age and what it has been in ours. Marx, by unchaining the dialectic first, discovered a whole new continent of thought and of revolution. Read again those words of thought and of revolution. That is what concreteness means in a dialectical sense. This openness and totally new direction found constant proof of itself and its own correctness because Marx's critique of that Hegelian dialectic meant not merely a substitution of materialism for idealism, but an extension of the dialectic from its seeming burial in Thought alone by the presence of the dialectic in the development of reality. Not only that. Marx thereby revealed the historic barrier which none could cross over, not even a Hegel. It is this which exposed the need for Hegel to have that mystical covering spread over his revolutionary dialectic -- the power of negativity. The greatness of the French Revolution, the dialectics in action of the sans culottes, who were the true discoverers and practitioners of democracy. They were artisans and not yet a subject that would successfully, totally transform the old society. Marx, on the other hand, did see a revolutionary subject -- the Proletariat -- who could and, he said would, achieve the revolutionary transformation. Moreover Marx made it clear that just as he was not separating thought from reality, or the fundamental Man/Woman relationship, so he was uniting materialism with idealism, calling

it a "new Humanism." With it, he separated himself from Feuerbach's mechanical materialism and what he called "vulgar communism". Indeed, he praised Hegel for that most creative category "negation of negation" which Feuerbach had rejected as "mystical". He worked for a truly new world which we would call classless, non-sexist, non-racist, truly human relations. Let me sum it up by repeating briefly the two true historic unchainings of the dialectic: (1) no separation between thought and reality; dialectics characterized both the subjective and objective development. (2) He was not keeping in totally separate departments materialism and idealism. He was uniting them to create a totally new category -- a "new Humanism."

Each age has the laborious and unpostponable task of working out for its own era what, precisely, of the dialectic would achieve freedom. Lenin singled out "transformation into opposite" when he was confronted by the betrayal of the 2nd International. What is the most crucial aspect, and was totally new, was that he didn't stop with betrayal and he didn't leave the totally new aspect at the economic stage when capitalism reached imperialism, but showed that since every unit has its opposite within itself, it is also true with a section of labor itself who had become "the aristocracy of labor." AND all this was done in his return to the encounter with the Hegelian dialectic, "in and for itself" by having a totally new "additional" subject that was not just a helpmate. Rather it was the actual bacillus of the revolution -- the national revolution, in his case the 1916 Irish Easter Uprising. Lenin, however, did not know the Humanist Essays of Marx, much less where Marx left off in his Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic, promising to return.

What we had to do for the mid-twentieth century when we were confronted with the shocking fact of counter-revolution arising from within the revolution itself, the transformation into opposite of the first workers' state into a state-capitalist society, was to catch the link of continuity with Karl Marx when he unchained the Hegelian dialectic, transforming and extending it to the Marxian. The climax of what was churning in me in the immediate post WW II period, and came alive first in the simultaneity of my exchange of letters with James and Lee on Lenin's Notebooks and my activity in the general miners' strike, were those letters of May 12 and May 20, 1953.

The first unchaining of the dialectic for our age came with my breakthrough on the Absolute Idea: I held that there was a movement from Practice as well as from theory. In a word, the consciousness in making a category of the movement from Practice was to expand with the added phrase: "which is itself a form of theory." And it is this movement from Practice that is itself a form of Theory that created the challenge for the theoreticians to work out the new stage of cognition where philosophy would be rooted in this movement from practice.

A second unchaining which revealed the specificity, originality and uniqueness of the whole body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism came to first bloom in 1973 when the return to Hegel meant both the grappling with all of Hegel's major philosophic works and the realization that I happened to have started the confrontation in the Encyclopedia at the very paragraph following where Marx left off in the Philosophy of Nature. In our case this resulted in the fact that not even Absolute as combining theory and practice, i.e. as a totality really answered the task. The task first begins, or, to put it the way

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we expressed it in chapter I of P&R: It is Absolute Idea as new Beginning. By then plunging into the three final syllogisms of the Philosophy of Mind we discovered also a new Hegel. Thus Hegel in the last year of his life, in the final paragraph of the Encyclopedia replaced Logic, left it totally open for future generations.

In so far as Marx was concerned, though he didn't comment on those specific syllogisms, he had so unified philosophy and revolution that, though The Critique of the Gotha Program did not contain the expression "revolution in permanence", it could nonetheless become ground for organization.

Indeed, our serious analysis of that work showed that no post-Marx Marxist, unchained the dialectic, not even Lenin, who did penetrate the dialectic on revolution, but did not when it came to the Party. This led us to the creation of a category of post-Marx Marxism as the generation who do not fully reconnect with Marx's Marxism. In a word, even the Great Divide in Marxism which Lenin did create and which was concretized in the magnificent State and Revolution had, however, kept the Party as his own "private enclave" called the vanguard party. The two fields in which I did not follow Lenin were the vanguard party and his confined conception of women's liberation.

Our unique catching the link of continuity with Marx's Marxism and, with it, our original contributions in concretizing the dialectics of revolution for our era by these new unchainings of the dialectic brings us back to the immediate future: (1) the 3/21 lecture and the full month's display of one-half century of Marxist-Humanist Archives. (2) This can as well be concretized in a single bulletin that I propose an overline called Special Bulletin and the title Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and World Humanist Concepts. It will contain (1) My 1/27-2/3 talk plus my "In Memoriam" to CD. (2) Eugene's report "News & Letters as Theory Practice" report to the 1984 Convention; (3) Mike's report on Living Archives; (4) Olga's Essay on Women's Liberation, The Summation of a Decade, with an additional paragraph.

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Feb. 18, 1985

Dear Friends,

The minute the page proofs of the new work, Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future, finally arrived here, that minute we all became so involved in the supposedly purely technical work that only Marxist-Humanists could do, that we had to become most creative in stretching the hours of the work day. The most directly and fully occupied were of course, the two national co-organizers, Olga and Mike, who had to supervise all the proofreading, indexing, bibliography. To help in the work, we had to call not only upon Chicagoans, but had to call upon New York. Mary came to help in all three aspects. Teams worked doing the proofreading. The readers for this were Kevin, Erica, Suzanne and Bob. This still does not cover all the ramifications on other aspects of our work, since removing the two co-national organizers from the office for two weeks put a great deal of extra work upon Lou and Terry in the office. Lou, furthermore, had to go to Michigan for lectures during Black History Month. The weather also refused to cooperate with us. Lou had an additional task of carrying quite a bit of material for the special Archives display back to Detroit. The snowstorm notwithstanding, some beautiful young Blacks did brave the storm to come to PSU to hear Lou under our own sponsorship. For a change the South End of Feb. 14 carried a quite favorable interview with Lou.

All this is only half the story. Since this extra activity on the book coincided with the fact that I, for a change, hit the ceiling and asked the locals to hold off reading the 2/6 letter to the following week when I would send a PS. Because I forever look into the philosophic-historic mirror when any of our practical work is the issue, I was so upset by the looseness of expression in the way the word "new" was used, that I practically stopped paying attention to all the work that was related to the proofreading, indexing, bibliography on the new book; I practically needed to be dragged to take any time out from my PS on 2/11 in order to check all the corrections on the book, and in addition approve the selections made for the Archives exhibition. To me what was of the essence, not alone of the two letters involved, 2/6 and 2/11, but whether we are really practicing never separating philosophy from revolution, practice from theory, stage of cognition from precise character of the daily work we do. Truth to tell, to me the most practical step in that 2/6 letter -- the creation of a single bulletin which would be able to present the essentials of the whole body of Marxist-Humanist ideas, would mean nothing if it was carried out as a merely practical experiment. That is why -- and the horrible weather came to assuage the heat of my dissatisfaction at not being able to hold the PER on Feb. 11 until Feb. 17 -- I still began the whole presentation to the PER by reading the Feb. 11 letter as the first point on the agenda. Please read carefully the minutes of the PER meeting, both the full presentation and the discussion.

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The result was a unanimous approval of a Special Bulletin to be issued which includes: 1) The transcript of my speech of 1/27-2/3 as well as the reprint of my "In Memoriam" for Charles Denby. 2) Eugene's report of News & Letters as Theory/Practice to the 1984-85 Convention. 3) Mike's report on Living Archives to the special classes of last Spring. 4) Olga's report on Women's Liberation, the summary of a Decade, to which is to be added an additional paragraph on the current scene. We also passed a motion to ask LA to do the technical work on the bulletin and for Ine to design a cover.

Among the new things that have come into the office is Michelle's review of RL/LKM which is in Hypatia after a long delay. The office was glad to report that two new subs were sent in by people who had attended the 1/27 lecture. Lou announced that the WOCOT study group in the Black community on the West Side will begin this coming Tuesday. For I'D, Terry, Suzanne and Neda will be appearing on a panel in Chicago. Meanwhile Susie will speak before the Michigan Women's Studies meeting in April on Raya.

Finally, we are all looking forward to 3/21, because it really does mark both a first in the sense in which an established university is taking responsibility for creating the forum for Marxist-Humanism, and because it will signify exactly what we aim for in another way, with that Special Bulletin that presents Marxist-Humanism as a single body of ideas that has contributed in a most original way to unchaining the dialectic. We expect to have our own photographers like Alan from the Bay Area and Mary from NY to record this event. And they will of course be joined by comrades from a number of locals.

Yours,

Raya