

REB MEETING OF MAY 16, 1983

Agenda: I- Ramifications, National and International, of "Have Thumb Will Travel" in this Year of the Marx Centenary and the New Book; II- Report on Correspondence and Ongoing Activities; III - G&W

I- Raya said that while the connection between her report on the 1949-50 proposed pamphlet and Anne's report on Britain might not be obvious, still the very title of this point on the agenda -- Ramifications of "Have Thumb Will Travel" in this year of the Marx Centenary and the new book -- shows the connection in my mind. Here is the process of how I came to this conclusion:

1) I was in the process of writing a letter to the PTC, in which I criticized the May issue of N&L for having too many reviews, and raised the need for looking at the paper as a totality; after all the material is in, but before it gets marked up. The letter said: "I might as well confess that there was another reason that made me jump on that word, totality, over a single mistake, if it was a mistake. You, as the whole organization, have heard me single out 1950 as both the Miners General Strike and Marxist-Humanism's true roots which, by the time of the East European revolts that began directly after Stalin's death, and my breakthrough on the Absolute Idea in 1953 (tomorrow, May 12, marks 30 years to the day) was made into that philosophic category and actuality -- MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY WHICH IS ITSELF A FORM OF THEORY -- which is epochal and specifically us, Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. The West Coast sum-up was particularly exciting since it was there, with Frank and Raymond pouring out their reminiscences of 1950, that our participation in that great event was seen as so relevant to our Constitutional Convention that we are hoping a pamphlet can result this year.

"Olga found the first bulletin we published when the JET had broken from the S&P and was planning to issue a mimeographed paper, Correspondence. It is in this Bulletin i.o. 1 dated Nov. 1, 1951, that it becomes clear beyond any doubt that CLRJ had begun the move away from Marxism and a total attack on our participation in the 1950 strike and especially what I did there. And since he wanted the attack on me (not to mention slander, which continued for nearly three years) in terms of an accusation of 'small mass partyism' -- as if a strike of 100,000 miners could possibly be considered 'small mass partyism'! -- he raised the question of 'organization' (which he never built) so loudly that he said: 'If a mighty bubble broke out, 500,000 miners vs. John L., and shook the minefield, I would not budge an inch from our program.' (my emphasis) What was that great program? That 18-month-long 'underground' existence we were to carry on rather than appearing publicly. The proposal I had made, which he was attacking, was that we have, as our very first issue, a special edition around the miners then on strike again. I had written to Zupan on Sept. 13, 1951: 'The miners are out on strike, we are right there. Nothing could have happened more auspicious both to initiate our paper and to have us learn from workers. It is not being covered by the capitalist press...' (His answer came four days later, on Sept. 17.)"

After quoting these paragraphs from her letter to the PTC, Raya quoted from other letters found from that period, 1950 and 1951. All of this may need to be made available to the membership in the discussion bulletins we will be issuing this

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summer. The key point touches nothing short of the genuine American roots that began in that Miners General Strike of 1949-50, which continued in the 1950 strike that followed on its heels but got lost in that so-called underground existence CLRJ imposed on us and did not become clear enough to lead to the break with CLRJ until the 1953 breakthrough on the Absolute Idea at the very time of the political ramifications that stemmed from the death of Stalin and the East European revolts. Because the 1983 view coincides with our Constitutional Convention, where, on the one hand, we see clearly these roots, and on the other hand, the absolutely new vantage points both nationally and internationally which flow from the new book and the challenge to post-Marx Marxism, it is those new vantage points which become ground for all, whether they joined yesterday or will only join at the Constitutional Convention, or whether they are the ones who lived a whole half century of development before they could see Marx's Marxism as a totality which this generation is fortunate enough to see at their very start.

To the PTC (copy to REB): ~~WMB~~

5/11/83

Because the one criticism I have of the current (my) issue of N&L ties in with totality but the angle from which I talk now, as different from the one when first we established need for a meeting of the PTC before any material for the paper arrived, when only the REB considered what would be lead and kind of editorial whereas now I want to speak of totality when we actually do have all the material in but before the print is locked up, let me make of a single mistake a whole category of totality from the new angle. Here is what I mean:

The current issue has altogether too many book reviews for our type of paper in a single issue, and this so predominates because 2 of them are too long for the topic involved that it creates the illusion that there are more than the 2, that is to say, the Black/Red column which is not on any book review looks like one simply because it, too, deals with "study" considered by an actual conf. As usual it is necessary to be concrete, especially when we deal with totality (contradictory as that may sound). Specifically, then, this is the May issue I'm speaking about and the focus, naturally, is labor and if that ~~was~~ assured that today figured prominently in ~~it~~ the very one I urged--the review of Debs, related to the actual class struggles ending in 1922, then I suppose it ~~not~~ have looked "too long" (the in general I do not favor book reviews, even when written as essay, to take up more than a full page). As it is in the specific issue and for the specific month, a part of that space could have been taken up with Labor Day, 1983, and the horrors of UAW this year, after all those concessions, AND APPOINTING NEXT LEADER JUST WHEN RANK AND FILE IS DEMANDING TRUE ELECTION while leaders is making doubly sure rank & file not be heard by scheduling convention in Dallas!

The 2nd review, on the French book, though it generally would not rate a review, I had both advertised the issue before and suggested it for organizational, international reason which connects with book and trips to see whether we could get foreign editions. That being so, if the PTC had a meeting after all material came in, it would be so obvious that enough is enough on book reviews that the one on Young Women Writers, which certainly is new and needed as topic and which was short enough could definitely have been laid over for next issue. Just look at that p.10 and see whether it doesn't look too "bookish". Moreover, that doesn't end the subject since, in addition, one of those p.10 reviews has already taken up the whole of p.4, and as if that weren't enough, the WL p. likewise has a book review in its Woman as Reason column which could definitely, in that case, been made concrete by contrasting the good conclusion, not as an abstraction, but because very concretely that very book and ~~that~~ its focus was sent to me who was asked to comment. I refused because not only did I not wish to comment on ~~others~~ because M-H had to ~~express~~ to have its expression all ~~its~~ but also because I was working on RL WL KM and it is that totality was needed. Specifically, therefore, the final part of that review should not have been "generally" the need for WL ~~its~~ to turn to ~~the~~ ~~date~~ ~~of~~ ~~publication~~ of that work, 1981, was the date RL WL KM was being worked out, already had two chapters printed AND THAT SPECIFIC EDITOR WAS INFORMED AND REJECTED THE IDEA.

Now then, the point I began with, TOTALITY, is not "just philosophic" but if, before you the PTC looked at the specific issue at hand, and related it to the objective situation as well as actual space allotment of 8 pp. I'm sure that it would have become

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meet when all the material already is in and they can see the specific issue as a totality, even if that should mean that one of the meetings they have prior to knowing the actual material has to be cut.

I might as well confess that there was another reason that made me jump on that word, totality, over a single mistake if it was a mistake. You, as the whole organization, has heard me single out 1950 as both the General Miners Strike and M-H true roots which, by the time EE revolts began directly after Stalin's death and my breakthrough on the Absolute Idea, 1953 (tomorrow, the 12th, is 30 years to the day) was made into that philosophic and actuality --MOVEMENT FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY WHICH IS ITSELF A FORM OF THEORY-- which is epochal and specifically us--M-H IN THE US. The West Coast sum-up was particularly exciting since it is there--with Frank and Raymond pouring out their reminiscences of 1950--that manifested us in the greatest event in which we were participants so relevant to our Constitutional Convention that we are hoping a pamphlet can result this year.

Olga found the 1st Bulletin when JFT had broken from SWP and was planning "Correspondence"--Bulletin 1, Nov.1,1951 and it is clear beyond the overadventure of a doubt that CLRJ had begun the move away from Marxism, and total attack on 1950 and what we (esp.me) did. And since he wanted that attack (not to mention slander, which continued for nearly 3 years) to stick as if a strike of 100,000 miners--an strike couldn't possibly be considered "small" --that he wanted to stick on me, he raises "organization" which he never built, so highly that he says: "If a mighty bubble broke out, 500,000 miners versus John L. and shook the minefield, I would not back an inch from our program." (my emphasis) And what was that great "program"? Well, that 18 month "underground" existence we were to carry on rather than appearing publicly and issued a special edition I proposed a few days before (My letter was dated 9/13/51, his 9/17) when I wrote Zupan: "Theminers are out on strike. We are right there. Nothing could have happened more auspicious both to our paper and to have us learn from workers. It is not being covered by the capitalist press...."

If anyone can think of the actual appearance of Correspondence in 1953 in published form as a "joke" because all this keeping away from strike and objective situation to "our" program to be only had the objective situation burst forth by then into what the capitalist press did pay attention to--Stalin's death, EE revolts, Stalin's Beria purge, and my analysis of it which included seeing Khrushchev, and not Malenkov as the true heir of Stalin--which made it impossible to keep me silenced, then laugh. But, of course, far from laughing, think of how great is is going to be when we too establish our true American labor roots as Marxist-Humanists. So, the little "mistake" of the May issue had me flying in Cloud 9 again.

Yours,



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