

March 21, 1984

Dear Friends:

As we near the end of the classes and approach the Call for the Convention, we received a letter from Peter which has so many points that we all face as we sum up the series that we have decided to send a copy to each local. Here is a part of it:

Dear Raya:

I think this is as good a time as any to put down some thoughts on the development of the local and state of the on-going class series, not so much for their own sake, but within the context of the stage reached with the new 1949/50 Miners Strike pamphlet. Your contribution to its second part "answers" so many questions I have had about the development of our class series, that I want to discuss them both here as a unit...

Far too often philosophy is still discussed by us as a mere subjective concern of ourselves that needs to be "connected" to the objective/subjective situation rather than that which emerges, and is emerging, from the historical process itself. The Classes, in a word, have once again illuminated our great difficulty in putting philosophy and the concrete together.

Because that is the reason for our lack of organizational growth, I feel the new 1949/50 Miners strike pamphlet is the most important document we have received in a long time, for it spells out the method of our organizational re-organization. Of all our writings on our political/philosophic development, your draft of Part II is the first time we have so concretely shown what is the precise method of relating theory to practice as pathway to social revolution.

While the pamphlet will appear as "history" to some, this is clearly the type of history that is a revelation of the methodology by which philosophy becomes concrete...

Peter is then most concrete not only on the question of the 1949/50 pamphlet but the entire question of methodology, tightly bound with one-to-one work with new participants in the classes, so that we assure the pre-convention discussion on a very high ground. Along with such a new point of departure, the REB was concerned with how that is, in turn, inseparable from new aspects of News & Letters that will develop with the move to Chicago. Indeed, because we were animated by just that aspect, the trip Andy and Olga took to West Virginia was related to the Lead for this issue of the paper. In this context of relating everything we do to methodology, to the 49/50 pamphlet, to the Convention, Eugene in his report of the trip to Chicago to search for an office went beyond any single issue of N&L and developed, instead, the whole question of new aspects of N&L. Please be sure to read both reports, not only for information, but for projecting an all-rounded view of your experiences in the classes and your view of how you can use the pamphlet as the concretization as well as the outreach for integrating philosophy with activity.

Thus, we also received a letter from Frank, on Part II of the pamphlet, asking whether we would get a view of the pamphlet as a totality before actual publication. Andy will be completing the final

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draft of his Part I as soon as he finishes the Lead for this issue of N&L, and will be sending a copy to Raymond and to Frank.

The RES minutes speak for themselves on other parts of the agenda, but I do wish to call special attention to that part of Mike's report which dealt with the ads in the NYRB, The Nation and The Guardian, not only in terms of the wide audience they reach but what we will do in our one-to-one work with these ads. Also, please note in Neda's report on Ann Arbor that the Middle Eastern women's liberation group she has there have expanded their interest to attending Marxist-humanist classes in Detroit.

Finally, for our final class in Detroit on April 1, we intend not only to create the type of informal discussion afterwards, over a pot-luck dinner, but relate it to the soon-to-be-issued Convention Call. I believe this should hold true for all the locals, so that it is not only we who make no separation between classes and activities leading to the Convention, but the periphery that has been created around the classes on a Marxist-Humanist body of ideas likewise will wish to continue with helping to prepare for the Convention discussion.

Yours,

Raya

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Classes not done for their own sake  
as rather could

March 14, 1984

Stage I & II gave  
of Dis Part II + my 3rd  
stage

Dear Raya,

I think this is as good a time as any to put down some thoughts on the development of the local and state of the ongoing Class Series, not so much for their own sake but within the context of the stage reached with the new 1949/50 Miners Strike pamphlet. Your contribution to its second part "answers" so many questions I have had about the development of our class series, that I want to discuss them both here as a unit.

The classes, as I am sure you can see, are proceeding with great difficulty. We have not been at a loss for input from the "outside", though clearly we have not involved as many new friends as we would have liked. We have been able to involve several new youth and women, each of whom holds some promise of organizational growth. For the most part our visitors are young, inexperienced and new to the radical movement, making it hard for them to speak expressively in the midst of so intensive and extensive a class as this. But it is not so much they, as our own more experienced comrades, who have not met the challenge of these classes in their discussion. While we have had several fine presentations, for the most part discussion is "off the cuff", without the kind of rigorous, philosophic thought, diving that convinces one that the trilogy of revolution is being grasped. There is discussion at the meetings on ongoing activities, the struggles from below, the movement from practice; and there is also discussion on the importance of philosophy and the need for Marxist-Humanist ideas, etc. But it is as if the two lay side-by-side, without speaking to one another. It is not just a question of the difficulty of being concrete and total at one and the same time; it is much more a question of how we understand the method by which the movement from practice is met by serious revolutionaries. Far too often philosophy is still discussed by us as a mere subjective concern of ourselves that needs to be "connected" to the objective/subjective situation rather than that which emerges, and is emerging, from the historical process itself. The Classes, in a word, have once again illuminated our great difficulty in putting philosophy and the concrete together.

What help  
is there  
of any?

Because that is the reason for our lack of organizational growth, I feel the new 1949/50 Miners strike pamphlet is the most important document we have received in a long time, for it spells out the method of our organizational re-organization. Of all our writings on our political/philosophic development your draft of Part II is the first time we have so concretely shown what is the precise method of relating theory to practice as a pathway to social revolution.

While the pamphlet will appear as "history" to some, this is clearly the type of history that is a revelation of the methodology by which philosophy becomes concrete. I found particularly helpful the very first paragraph which begins with the miners' creating new ways of thinking AND ends with how you developed that into the absolute opposite of automation, the new humanism. From the very beginning there is no doubt about the indispensability of the theoretician once that theoretician is rooted in the struggles from below. It was thus even more striking to see how it was precisely that which was the point of division not alone between JFT and SWP, but between Johnson and Forest. The quote from CLR James on p. 10 of how he wanted Correspondence to speak to "our members and friends only" rather than to the American masses illuminates his evasion of theoretical responsibility for revolution sharper than anything I have read before. As against his reduction of the Tendency's Perspectives to a private, "inner" concern you were compelled to face both the masses

What

What  
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the  
point?

Your Part II is ST as a METHOD

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*Implication as I see it*  
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and the objective situation of Stalin's death armed with the theoretical work of preparing Marxism & Freedom. This reached its fullest expression in the 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea where you now dug into the fullest logical conclusion of the Hegelian dialectic in strict relation to the objective/subjective situation of 1953. By the time we get to the penultimate paragraph on p. 13 we see how it was precisely this kind of labor that met the movement from practice with its theoretical expression. Thus, you saw in Paragraph 575 of Philosophy of Mind that practice "implicitly contains the Idea", signifying that there is a movement from practice. You then see in Paragraph 576 how philosophy is the "subjective cognition" of that new stage reflected in thought. But unlike Lenin (much less a CLR James) you do not stop there but go right on to paragraph 577, where we have "the unification of the two--theory and practice, objective and subjective." Only then are you able to explicitly designate the character, the content, the novelty of the movement from practice: THAT IT IS ITSELF A FORM OF THEORY. That is what gives birth to M&F. In other words, it is only after capturing philosophy, not just as "subjective cognition" but as objective/subjective whose "actual ground and inner persistence is the notion" that the very being of the movement from practice gets discerned. It illuminates that to meet the movement from practice when it is a form of theory the revolutionist needs to be armed with that single dialectic which emerges from history as well as from thought.

*p13*  
*1953*

Why I say part II of the pamphlet "answers" so many questions concerning the classes, is because all too often it is precisely a counter-posing of the movement from practice to "philosophy" without the two meeting that is our problem. Far too often "philosophy" is presented so abstractly as to appear inner, subjective, a concern on our part that we are trying to "connect" to the struggles from below. Not surprisingly, when that is our standpoint, we don't achieve the needed organizational growth precisely because the newcomers don't see the ideas as expressive of themselves. If we are going to achieve the kind of organizational growth we need at this stage, then we are going to have to project philosophy as that unity of objective and subjective that alone deserves the name "dialectics". Grasping dialectic as concrete methodology surely isn't easy, but absorbing the history you have disclosed in the pamphlet can give us direction for becoming practicing dialecticians.

That is also why I thought implicitly, that the pamphlet spells out our unique contribution to organization. I may be wrong, but I am beginning to think that the reason Lenin couldn't break from the party to lead despite his philosophic re-organization was that it wasn't deep enough to get to paragraph 577. He simply did not see "the notion" or philosophy as the unity of subjective and objective as concrete for him. Instead, philosophy remained "private". Those who like CLR James turned away even from the highpoints of Lenin surely didn't do any better whether or not they "broke" with the party to lead (and I have never been able to figure out whether CLR ever did!). Philosophy to CLR to this day remains an inner, subjective concern; that explains both his building himself up as the great philosophic ego as much as it explains him getting no further than judgement in his Nevada Document. As against this legacy, our contribution to organization is rooted, is it not, in taking responsibility for the single dialectical process emerging from history and theory by meeting the movement from practice with it, thereby developing us as organizers for social revolution. It is clear from the last two paragraphs of your draft that everything the committees achieved in creating a new relation of practice to theory, whether that be CD as editor or decentralized form of organization or M&F itself, came out of the 1953 breakthrough

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on the Absolute Idea, and how you concretized it with the creation of News & Letters Committees. Instead of discussing "how to unite philosophy to organization" (as if we were probing into that question from the vantage point of a void), your pamphlet makes it clear the concrete kind of labor that is needed today in order to meet the challenge of our perspectives.

What is still needed?

That is why I also feel some reference to our work after M&F is needed in Part II. So concrete has the truth that no revolution can succeed without a dialectical relation of practice to theory become that we need more of a feel for its todayness. I know the pamphlet has to be concretely focused on 1949/50, and cannot go skipping around, but don't you think it could include a footnote reference to the problematic of today's revolutions and the Grenada pamphlet? A footnote that says: "this unique method of relating practice to theory which gave birth to M&F meant not alone the creation of a book, but a revolutionary methodology that our age of soured revolutions have over and over again shown itself in dire need of, as shown nowhere more brutally than in Grenada, where the counter-revolution emerged from within the very revolution itself once the masses' ideas did not hold counsel in the very corridors of the revolutionary leadership, can be a way of showing how objective is Marxist-Humanist methodology. For what was hit upon methodologically in writing M&F 30 years ago is precisely the form of theoretical preparation for revolution which all revolutionists have to internalize today. In addition, I have one other suggestion: on p. 10 when you say "they correctly predicted split" it is not clear as to whether "they" refers to the SWP leadership or the rank-and-file workers; this would have to be stated explicitly.

Provide me with a copy of the pamphlet

for convention

I am sure that this pamphlet so illuminates what exactly is our role as an organization today that discussion of it will fill pre-convention discussion bulletins as well as the floor of the Convention itself. The fact that the convention is two months earlier than usual this year, and the Center is in the middle of being burdened with moving, demands that an explicit call if not demand that all pre-convention material be submitted no later than June 1 is essential, or else we will once again end up with material submitted 10 days before convention. Could such a "reminder" be strongly stated in the Call? Here in LA, we are making plans to lighten the work of the Center by issuing at least one bulletin by ourselves, and we are encouraging serious contributions by all the membership.

LA will be one person by itself

Even before April 7 arrives, however, we are trying to see if we can overcome some of the difficulties we have encountered in these classes. Thus, Gene will speak Sunday on Class 6, and I will prepare some comments in discussion on the 49/50 pamphlet and how it illuminates our uniqueness as an organization; we have made some changes in the scheduling for classes seven and eight even though both will still be held as against combining them; it has been pointed out to the comrades that both classes are on the philosophy of revolution in permanence and can in no way be compartmentalized between WLM and Organization. Thus, while Michelle will give Class 7, Dale will give a sub-report, not on WLM, but on how Marx's philosophy of revolution-inpermanence has come to life in the history of our organization (I will speak in discussion on the new paragraph on Origin of the Family added to RLWLMFR). For Class eight, instead of giving the complete presentation as originally suggested, Cyrus will give a shorter report on chapter 11 and I will give a presentation summing up the classes and what we aimed to achieve from them. This, along with some one-to-one work with the new visitors, I hope, will mean we will enter pre-convention discussion on HIGH GROUND.

Michelle

Peter

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