

August 11, 1983

Dear Bess:

Yesterday I finally took RD off to her retreat to work on the Perspectives for the Convention -- where she had the chance to first read Peter's piece for the Discussion Bulletin. She just called me and dictated the following note to send to you:

Dear Bess -- You were absolutely right: Peter's piece on "Organizational Growth and the Dialectics of 'Revolution in Permanence'" -- with its focus on the Absolute Idea simultaneously with the concept of Organization -- is a ~~XXXX~~ true, original contribution. Indeed, I'm so impressed that I'm thinking of how to include it in the same pamphlet as his reprint of article for SouthAsia Bulletin. Please have him drop me a note as to when it will be ready -- and what does the cover read like.

RAYA

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Bess, I talked with RD very briefly on what she had in mind after she dictated that, and know that she is excited about Peter's article because she is convinced it will make it possible for us to do many new things, but she is anxious it not look as though it is just for us. Rather than have a title that would focus it on "organizational growth", I believe what she wants to do is change the title to emphasize that it is really on the concept of organization. She might want to excerpt, therefore, from the last Part (III) rather than have that in full, but have I and II pretty much as is.

The office has just informed me that L.A. was planning to bring finished pamphlets to the Convention -- so speed in having Peter reply is probably of the essence, especially if it will mean a lot of time involved in the typesetting or whatever. I would be able to contact RD with any messages for her, of course -- and it would probably be better to send any note to her to my house, for delivery. OK?

Best,

O.

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Handwritten notes: "Handwritten notes" and "Handwritten notes" with arrows pointing to the title.

ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH and the DIALECTICS OF "REVOLUTION IN PERMANENCE"

By Peter, LA

An essential point as well as concluding note of the Marxist-Humanist Draft Perspectives for 1983/4 concerns the need for new organizational growth by the Committees. This is hardly the first time we have raised either that or the need for a new kind of member, but it is the first time discussion of them follows a section entitled, "Marx's Last Writings Lets us Hear Marx Thinking".

The need for organizational growth thus flows from the new ground established by the Trilogy of Revolution, Marx's last decade, and the new view of Marx both have revealed. What follows are some notes on how the philosophic/organizational vantage point developed this year illuminates some aspects of Marxist-Humanism's unique historic contribution, thereby indicating possible ways of achieving the organizational growth so imperative in the year ahead.

I. Marx's Last Decade and its Challenge for Organization

The Draft Perspectives lets us hear Marx think as he developed new pathways to revolution in his last decade. These writings are important not only for the particular views of Marx on agrarian societies, the peasantry, or the Russian revolution, but most of all because they reveal the concreteness and totality of Marx's method.

Thus, in tracing out a pathway to revolution for the Third World, Marx presented several conditions required for the creation of an indigenous socialism. Marx had already traced out the objective material condition for socialism in the West with his chapter "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" in Capital. There, he showed how socialism arises from out of the socialized relations of production of capitalism (the factory system) and the revolutionary praxis of the proletariat which fights them. But this could hardly apply to the East which had neither experienced capitalism or (except for Japan) feudalism.

Marx thus tried to find an indigenous condition for socialism in the East, discovering it in the village commune. Whereas communal relations of working the land had vanished long before in the West, in the East they persisted and could therefore serve as a material condition for a new society.

But the mere existence of the village communes could not in and of themselves create socialism. After all, the communes had existed for millennia, and thus far no socialism had arisen from them. Furthermore, the communes were plagued with caste relations, slave relations, patriarchal relations; these would have to be removed before freedom could issue from the communal form. Needed was a revolution to strip away all elements within the commune which stood in the way of a new society. Only a revolutionary subject--which, Marx said, could in certain cases be the peasantry--could do that uprooting.

But even this was not enough to ensure the creation of a Third World socialism, for how was the peasantry to obtain the insight,

maturity and strength to fight not only against imperialism or backwardness but also for a new society? How would it develop relations with the workers of the West, how could it develop the germ of communalism into a nation-wide system of freely associated production? Marx indicated an approach to an answer in his draft letter to Zasulich:

To save the Russian commune...there must be a Russian revolution...if the revolution takes place in time, if it concentrates all its force (and if the intelligent sector of Russian society, the Russian intellect) concentrates all the living forces of the country, (the commune) will soon develop as a regenerating element of Russian society.

To create a new pathway to revolution, Marx was saying, neither the objective material conditions nor the subjective revolutionary forces will alone suffice; also required is "intellect", cognition, what we call a philosophy of revolution to so inter-relate the two as to develop new pathways to a total uprising. What we can now see thanks to Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution is that in his last decade Marx projected philosophy as a force of revolution.

Such inter-relating of dialectics with "revolution in permanence" characterized all of Marx's development. The basis for his writings in the last decade were the changes he introduced to the French edition of Capital (especially the final Part VII) where he specified that Capital applied only to Western development, and that the growth of colonialism would not vitiate the laws of capitalist crisis. For Marx, such conceptions were not just "theories" but the very ground for organization. Thus, in his 1875 Critique of the Gotha Program he mercilessly criticized the German socialists for separating Marxian principle from an organizational program and sent a covering letter to the "Marxist" leadership saying he would soon send "the final part" of the French edition of Capital and a new edition of the Revolution Concerning the Cologne Communist Trial. That work contained his 1850 Address on Permanent Revolution. Marx was in effect telling the German socialists (but most of all, ourselves) that internalizing and projecting the philosophy of "revolution in permanence" was the only thing that gives a revolutionary organization its historic right to exist. Just as no pathway to revolution could open up for the Third World where no philosophy was present, so could none open for the West as long as philosophy and organization were kept in separate realms.

We have seen from Part III of RLWLMPR that such inter-relation of dialectics and activism constituted the essence and totality of all of Marx's development, from 1841 where he posed the need for philosophy to turn to reality, to 1843 when he wrote "theory too becomes a material force when it seizes the masses" (in the very essay where he first makes use of the term 'proletariat') to his work as organization man in his Critique of the Gotha Program.

In giving us a new vantage point from which to view Marx's Marxism, RLWLMPR also provides a new vantage point from which to view Marxist-Humanism's unique historic contribution, especially as contained in chapter one of Philosophy & Revolution and the 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea.

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II. Absolute Negativity as New Beginning and its Challenge to Organization

Philosophy & Revolution called for a new unity of theory and practice from which a new beginning can arise in today's revolutionary movement. As Raya wrote in Chapter 9, "as against the concept that endless activity, though it be mindless, is sufficient 'to make the revolution', what is needed is a re-statement for our age of Marx's concept of the 'realization' of philosophy, i.e., the inseparability of philosophy and revolution." This inseparability is developed by tracing through Hegel's central philosophic category of the Absolute in his major works - Phenomenology of Mind, Science of Logic, Philosophy of Mind. As Raya wrote in Chapter 1, "because our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the present crisis, Hegel's Absolute Method becomes irresistible." The Hegelian-Marxian method of liberation, Absolute Method, is presented as what needs to be concretized and re-created in order for our age to achieve the unity of theory and practice required for making a successful revolution.

Ever since P&R was published, we have been trying to break down this conception as the ground for organizational growth. The question of how to relate Hegel's Absolutes to organization, far from being new to us, is in fact our unique historic contribution, as disclosed in our actual "founding document", the 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea. Reviewing the contents of those letters can both shed light on some of our perspectives for 1983/4 as well as indicate the relation of Marx's Humanism to Marxist-Humanism.

Raya's first letter [May 12] consists of a patient tracing through of how Hegel's Absolute Idea relates to what was then referred to as "the dialectic of the party". Raya follows Hegel step by step through the 27 paragraphs of the final chapter of the Science of Logic, working out each concept's implications for creating a new form of revolutionary organization.

She begins by quoting Hegel on the very first page: "The Absolute Idea has turned out to be the identity of the Theoretical and the Practical Idea". Raya writes in response, "to me this means that the party is the identity of unity of the activity of the leadership and the activity of the masses." Revolutionary organization, in a word, has to be grounded in Hegel's Absolute, beginning with the unity of thinkers and activists. Hegel, of course, does not stop at the unity of theory and practice, and neither does Raya, as she quotes him thusly: "What remains therefore to be considered here is not a content as such, but the universal elements of its (i.e., the Absolute Idea's) form—that is, the method." To Raya, this means that "the forms of relations between leaders and ranks, between the various layers, and within each layer, tells the whole story." The method obtained from unifying theory with practice becomes key, so key that Hegel insists from here that "every beginning must be made with the Absolute". Raya comments that this means that the new society lives in the shell of the old and that revolutionaries must absorb that theoretically and practically so as to give revolutionary action its direction.

Raya then quotes Hegel: "The second negative, the negative of the negative, which we have reached is this transcendence of the contradiction, but it is no more the activity of an external reflection than the contradiction is; it is the innermost and most objective moment of Life and Spirit by virtue of which a Subject is."

personal and free." Raya sees in this the "abolition of the distinction of theory and practice" and the ground for a new-kind of practice. She comments on Hegel's attack on the inattentiveness of those who try to reach the goal without helping the Subject absorb the Absolute (the unity of theory and practice) as method. She also for the first time issues a criticism of Lenin, for not developing "the creativity" of cognition when he reached the Absolute Idea in his Philosophic Note-books. Later she will demonstrate this criticism, showing how Hegel's concept of the transition from Logic to Nature so illuminated the world Lenin confronted in 1914-17, that Lenin did not move on to grapple with the stage beyond "transition"--the absolute method. By being so enamored of transition, Lenin clung to the need for a mediator to move the dialectic ahead and thereby failed to work out the dialectic "as such" in relation to organization. Raya also mentions in this section the need to "go beyond 1948", i.e., CLR James' Notes on the Dialectic. We begin to glimpse the very emergence of Marxist-Humanism as Raya talks less of "the dialectic of the party" or party as the mediator and instead stresses the method of action and cognition, the dialectic of negativity, as the new which must be worked out as "a totally new revolt in which everyone experiences absolute liberation."

The first letter culminates in Raya quoting Hegel's statement that "The Notion arises as free existence...out of externality has passed into itself; arises to perfect its self-liberation in the Philosophy of Spirit." Raya asks Grace Lee for a copy of Philosophy of Mind so she can follow Hegel on this new course of "self-liberation" and criticizes their earlier approach of presenting "the party" as the mediator between the idea of socialism and the mass struggles: "now I believe that the dialectic of the Absolute Idea is the dialectic of the party. I feel that Mind is the new society gestating in the shell of the old. In a word, Raya has grasped that the pathway to new stages of liberation rests, not upon a mediator, but upon mediation; when Mind, philosophy, the vision of the new society becomes so internal and concrete to the subjects of revolt as to give direction to their struggles, the future will truly issue from the present of their class struggles.

This is where the Letter of May 20 begins, a letter where Raya delves into the three final syllogisms of Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, developing the uniquely Marxist-Humanist ground upon which we stand. The first syllogism--Logic-Nature-Mind--illuminates the new of our day, the movement from practice which is itself a form of theory. The spontaneous struggles from below give birth to new questions, new ideas new theoretical departures which, when internalized and projected anew can become the ground for creating a new society. When practice, "Nature", gives birth to new ideas of freedom, those ideas must be developed into a full philosophy of freedom which can become the determinant, the mediation, to further struggle. Thus, the second syllogism--Nature-Mind-Logic--flows organically from the first, as the underlying theory of freedom which unearths from practice becomes the mediation to the new. When that philosophy becomes fully integrated in revolutionary action, we have reached the development of a living, creative, continuous method of human liberation--the Absolute Method. It is this method, when broken down concretely, which initiates a new beginning. The last paragraph from Philosophy of Mind--the Self-Thinking Idea, or the Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty--means that in order for the movement from practice to reach its fullest revolt-

tionary potential, it must must connect with a method of liberation, the dialectical method, a method worked out through the "labor, patience, seriousness and suffering of the negative."

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Couch
What these letters on the Absolute Idea reveal is the ground for revolutionary organization today. The role of the revolutionary organization is neither that of being the mediator between the struggle and the goal, nor is it one of placing all responsibility for forging new pathways to revolution on the backs of spontaneity. Rather, the revolutionary organization has responsibility for connecting the revolutionary philosophy with the mass revolts so their full revolutionary potential can hear itself speak. Indeed, for our entire 30 year history we have been trying to connect such a method with action in catching the spontaneous struggles from below as a movement from practice to theory, developing that underlying theory into a full philosophy of liberation, and in turn concretizing that philosophy through daily political/organizational work in the mass movements and battle of ideas. This is what makes the upcoming pamphlet on the 1949/50 Miners Strike so very exciting; for now that we are taking notice of our organizational relation to the very development of that strike, we can see how it was the first moment in Marxist-Humanism's recreation of the dialectic for our age. Raya caught the underlying theory in the miners actions, developed it into the full philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, a philosophy that was given an organizational form in News & Letters Committees; so concretely was this done that even 33 years later it becomes possible to hold up the miners' actions as a vision of an alternative to the new "re-structured economy" which gives jobs to robots but not to workers. Skip to p. 10

III. Our Organizational Perspectives and the Challenge of Marx's Marxism

What is new this year, is that armed with the Trilogy of Revolution and the new view of Marx we have obtained in this year of his Centenary, it becomes possible to obtain a much more concrete idea of how to actually develop our organization on the ground of its unique historic contributions. For was not Marx also developing Absolute method as the mediation to the new society in his constant effort to develop "revolution in permanence"? Was he not telling us that the job of a revolutionary organizer is to help develop the new passions for freedom which come from below into a method of advancing the struggles, a method arising from mass action AND from the conscious effort of a cadre of "professional" revolutionaries?

Indeed the trilogy of revolution allows us to see how every moment of Marx's development was inseparable from practicing the method of "revolution in permanence", absolute negativity. As organization man Marx concretized this method continuously, whether in the 1848 revolutions in helping the workers ally with the then-revolutionary bourgeoisie at one and the same time as helping them form independent organizations and ideas to keep their struggles going after the inevitable bourgeois betrayal; whether in his work as a revolutionary journalist where he united action and thought in his Neue Rheinische Zeitung; whether his activity in the First International which culminated in his Critique of the Gotha Program; or in his last decade where he hewed out new pathways to liberation on the basis of the creative nature of his mind. Now that we have the totality of Marx's Marxism in hand, it becomes possible to see how a practicing

revolutionary concretely breaks down the dialectic of negativity, surely, this can help us do the same for our area in developing News & Letters newspaper, connecting to the Third World both at home and abroad, intervention in the class struggle as well as women's liberation movement; all in such a way as to not only support the ongoing struggles but also project what we are for so that we grow as an organization.

In the coming year we are sure to have discussion on the relation of Part III of RLWLMPR to Part I of P&R; the Constitutional Convention will itself lay the ground for that. The notes presented here are at most mere outlines, some preliminary notions. But there can be no doubt that the challenge of organizational growth rests upon connecting with the creative mind of Marx. As Raya says in the new paragraph to RLWLMPR that serves as the centerpoint for the new edition of American Civilization on Trial, Marx's last decade "brought to a conclusion the dialectic he had unchained when he first broke with bourgeois society", which is not an end but "a new beginning, a new vision" by which revolutionaries can meet the challenge of the age. As Hegel himself expressed it as he reached the climax of the Absolute Idea in the Science of Logic,

By virtue of the method just indicated, the science exhibits itself as a circle returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation; the circle is moreover a circle of circles, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member.

The "new member" we are looking for in the year ahead is a far more concrete and revolutionary question than Hegel could ever have imagined. By absorbing the newest developments of Marxist-Humanism, we will reach a new stage not only in thought but in activity, which can result in ~~winning~~ the new kind of member our Perspectives demand.

ourselves become

the new kind of member

alone

Who will ~~not~~ wish to join a

Specifically on the way to
as against any other
party to lead
to improve the
new forces of
this movement on me
also to develop
to the new
challenge