

REB Meeting of May 8, 1984

Agenda: I. The 49-50 Pamphlet as a Totality, and Quotes for going to Press; II. Ramifications of Center's Move to Chicago, as it Affects NY and Bay Area; III. Draft Convention Report on News & Letters by Eugene; IV. Ongoing Activities; V. G&W

Raya then presented the additions that had been made to her section and our proposed overall title, in which we were grappling with how to make it not "past" but 1980s, and how not to divide the two different sections but make sure they were seen as one immediately. What we had come up with, and would like suggestions about within a week is this:

A 1980s View

THE COAL MINERS' GENERAL STRIKE OF 1949-50
AND THE BIRTH OF MARXIST-HUMANISM IN THE U.S.

- O A Missing Page of American Labor History
by Andy Phillips
- O The Emergence of a New Movement from Practice
That is Itself a Form of Theory
by Raya Dunayevskaya

Raya then indicated where a new paragraph was added to p. 11 of the mss. at the point where RD says she asked CD to come over for a discussion following the news of Stalin's death. In the added paragraph RD reports how CD recalled the chapter he had written in IH on the UAW (we would here have a ftn. to IH and IHABWJ) and how his conclusions there had been intensified by his run-in with his local's bureaucrats when the miners had come to ask for aid. (Raya said that it was important for us to note that not a single word of CD's work on or attitude to the miners' relief committee appeared in Part I of IH, which the Johnsonites had edited.)

She then read the five new pages she had added to the very last section (a copy of which is being sent to each local) which is now called "The Birth of a 'New Humanism' for Our Age: Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today," and which takes up not only the pathway from 49-50 to 1953 and then to 1958, but from M&F to P&R, and from P&R to RLWLKM, ending with a quote directly from our 1984-85 Perspectives Draft Thesis. There are two other subheadings, as well. On 5, the page begins with a subhead: "Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks"; and on page 10, just after the first paragraph, we begin the second subhead: "The Beginning of the End of the Johnson-Forest Tendency."

15986

Generally, I speak at the end of a major report about the form. This time I want to speak about only one point and that is where Eugene said he had not yet worked out the last part. I consider the question of Theory/Practice as the unique characteristic of the whole N&L paper, of each writer and not just the columnist of Theory/Practice. I believe it is our weakest point. It is definitely both the most difficult to work out and the least understood, much less dialectically practiced. One of the events of the past which you may not know is that every one of the intellectuals -- and I'm referring to those who did sympathize and even helped support N&L -- opposed the Two Worlds column. It wasn't only Johnsonism that opposed my serious analysis of the Beria purge for the very first issue of Correspondence where I predicted that Khrushchev, not Malenkov, would replace Stalin. No, that type of attitude characterizes all intellectuals. They wish to discuss theory only among intellectuals (and without diving down too far) and "popularize" for the masses. When I established as a principle that a workers' paper was to be where theory/practice were broken down and insisted that if intellectuals were serious about theory they not only had to submit to a critique by the rank and file but had to begin where the masses were by contributing the highest kind of theory to illuminate, not "popularize", the objective situation Marxistically, they all went the other way. Now, when it comes to ourselves, we seem to all agree. In fact, however, we do not work hard at theory and keep taking it for granted as if repeating conclusions can be called theoretic development. What is worse, we portray activity as if that is theory. Theory is a very hard taskmaster. Taking it for granted instead of going through the "labor, patience, suffering of the negative" is what makes it hard to project the uniqueness of RLWLKM, the whole body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, the trilogy of revolution, the challenge to post-Marx Marxists. It is this which needs further serious development, especially in the new home of N&L: Chicago. We had better begin to do so at the convention; whether it is for N&L's further development or the projection of the new collection of WL essays, or for bringing it into all of our activities.

May 9, 1984

Dear Friends:

The great news about the pamphlet on the 1949-50 Miners General Strike is that we can finally be very concrete. First of all, the pamphlet was presented to the REB as a totality this time. The proposed title (for which we would need suggestions within a week) is: A 1980s View

THE COAL MINERS' GENERAL STRIKE OF 1949-50
AND THE BIRTH OF MARXIST-HUMANISM IN THE U.S.

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The REB discussion needs to be read in full to get the thrust as a totality as reflected in the attitude of the REB. Eugene and Mike summarized the essence of this attitude when Eugene described Andy's account as an exciting example of "historic narrative" that historians will have a great deal to learn from. Mike expanded on the total uniqueness this pamphlet will have because of the two authors and the relationship of the two sections, and stressed the creative ways we can work with it, including the importance of the North American Labor History Conference in Detroit this fall.

Lou made a proposal that was unanimously accepted -- to dedicate the pamphlet to the memory of Charles Denby, which gains special importance because we will have as publication date the historic June 17, 1953 as the first revolt from under Russian totalitarianism; 1955 as the first issue of News & Letters in commemoration of that date, with Charles Denby as the new Black worker-editor.

The pamphlet will be one of our most beautiful publications, in two colors. It will cost us \$3000 for 5000 copies; and the great news Andy was able to report was not only that he had been able to get this most reasonable quote from a printer who knows us well, but that a generous contribution of \$1000 from Frank specifically for this pamphlet, together with the monies contributed for it at the last convention, will almost fully pay for it at this time when we face such heavy extra expenses.

That the move of the Center is by no means a matter that concerns only Detroit and Chicago is clearly shown in the following development: Both because of the importance of New York as cultural center and because Kevin will be moving to the Center, the REB felt it important to strengthen New York in a way that would bring it both an experienced and creative addition. Raya had undertaken a special correspondence with Mary, Bay Area, because of her creativity in what she had achieved on the West Coast as well as the responsibility that would be involved in moving once more, which would be inseparable from the concrete 1984-85 philosophic-organizational Perspectives. The response of Mary, who never took the question out of the philosophic context, was expressed also in her formulation: "I am prepared to go anywhere once my bag is packed." Mary's letter and my response have been sent to the NEBs on both East and West Coasts to discuss with their locals. Copies will be sent now to all the locals.

15988

The main report, of course, to the REB last night was Eugene's report on our paper, News & Letters -- which was both a preliminary view of what he wished to present to the Convention, and what he wished to contribute to the special pre-convention bulletin on N&L. It is reported briefly in the enclosed REB minutes, and will be published more fully in that discussion bulletin which will be going to press very soon.

Now that the May issue of N&L is off the press, Eugene is headed for Chicago, where he will give the Perspectives presentation and practice being a Chicagoan.

The international correspondence continues to be quite broad and important whether it is from East Europe or West Germany regarding the Gramsci-Luxemburg conference; or whether it is all the way from India where the correspondence between Neda and Pilar continues to deepen. The most exciting objectively, however, comes not in correspondence but from the Christian Science Monitor of April 16, where it was reported that the Black writers in South Africa have started their own Skotaville Publishing house with that most distinctive declaration that it is for writers "with a purpose" and that that purpose is "for liberation." They also issue a magazine Classic. The first issue was banned at once. We are doing our best to obtain a copy and make live contact with them. Indeed, I am acquainted with with some of the leaders. Lou will devote the next issue of his Black World column to it.

Finally (the REB did, finally, adjourn), Neda reported three new pamphlets E&A has just produced; 1) "Intellectuals in the Age of State Capitalism" (Raya's early critique of Herbert Marcuse's Soviet Marxism); 2) "The Paris Commune" (includes a translation of Chapter 6 of M&F and excerpts from Marx on the Paris Commune); and 3) "The Revolutionary Kurdish Movement" as seen in the pages of E&A. The covers are especially beautiful -- and Neda reported they were contributions from their newest members.

With this letter you will have also the issue of N&L which carries our Perspectives Draft Thesis. I hope it means you are preparing your local discussions on it, as well as all your individual contributions to the bulletins. Next week the REB will take up the deadlines for those bulletins.

Yours,

RAYA

15989

(hand note to Mike T clipped to 49-50 pamphlet)

6/20/84

Dear Mike --

This dual report of all that went on from below in
that great 1949-50 Miners Strike

as well as my "encounters" with Hegel (35 letters
on that subject) with VII, the whole restructuring of M&F, and, above all,
the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.

should interest you enough to wish
to aid us in its (the pamphlets) sales, projection and reviews -- don't you
think?

Here is my home address, do let me hear from you.

Yours,

Raya

15990

May 30, 1984

Dear Andy:

The more I thought of what we spoke of after REB re using a name, RD,--and I'm glad you agreed with me that a name should definitely not be used, but M-H should be used--the more I decided to write this not only on the subject we did agree on, but what we did not--re Nevada document.

Here what is imperative, as always, is concrete, and there is nothing concrete that concerns the 1949-50 pamphlet in that ref. to Nevada, even if GLR has managed to republish one million times and it is getting new publicity. SCWR that I suggested be used as contrast bet. J & RD is both concrete and telling objectively as well as subjectively because Miners' Strike doesn't enter and Philosophy is philosophy of g-g and not of movement from practice from which he absent-ed himself. If you don't feel like using SCWR, then just stick to the pamphlet and actual philosophic categories there developed and that did not include A.I. yet and needed both an actual outbreak in more than one place, country or industry, and in any case it was done 6 weeks before actual outbreak, so that the anticipation came from "Self-Thinking Idea" where that had both Marx and today's, ~~xxxx~~ i.e., this age's actions.

Where past does enter and that on the high level of the founder of all of us is, of course, Marx, and that is why I suggested not using "total refutation" or such "direption" that would signify that the new comes out of the blue, rather than from old principles which stresses the age, the objective, the new point of departure rather than creation ab novo. And of course along with more objective--and that was the good in both Eugene and Mike--is what to do now with such mundane things as selling like founders and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ all three pamphlets as a totality.

No doubt if we get reviews we will have a chance also in battle of ideas in press, but, oh, how many disappointments we encountered there.

O, yes, I don't think we should spend time on Youth other of course than noting it was the returning vets, youth then, who were most active, but we certainly don't wish to create any generational gap that early and of all things on that question--miners who have been laboring in that hell of a place and were to produce the next strike on seniority. Finally I am glad you also agreed with me in being opposed to the word, orthodox Marxists, when you interrupted to state you meant to say post-Marx Marxists.

Yours,

15991

Dear Ray

Conscience is what comes to mind when I think about the 1949-50 strike. I like what Andy has written. He has it all from a few students on the campus to a few going into the mines and their experiences in the strike - the last big strike against John L. Lewis, the government's Taft-Hartley law and the change in the mode of production, the cont in very minor.

I like the way he ended it about the strike came the birth of Marxist Humanism.

P.S. on page one the size of that timber is 1400000.

h/ed/h