

1969

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Fri., Aug. 29th - Executive Session - Prefatory Note: (1) No election this year to interfere with obj-ity. & (2) Naming names here will not be summarized for open sessions.

PHILOSOPHY and LEADERSHIP

3 levels: (1) historical-philosophic (2) theoretical-American (3) organizational--today, yesterday, & tomorrow, esp. upon Phil. & Rev., the basis for which was laid in M&F, 1955-58, as A.I. the failure, in 1953, to have seen in that challenge ~~leading~~ killed CORR. ~~and~~ ~~more~~ ~~concretely~~ in 1960, with new 3rd world, ~~continued~~ through 1966 ~~draft form~~ ~~from this 3rd stage~~, Bl/R & Phil. Conference, outside as well as inside, it is time leadership understood its theoretic as well as practical responsibilities, hence the title of this report.

Why Only One? - His - Phil

NOW THEN LET'S GO BACK TO THE BEGINNINGS OF THE HISTORY OF MARXISM, and why it was Marx only ~~not Marx and Engels~~. Nothing whatever to do

Developing

with "cult of personality"; the cultists are invariably those who start out with being "for collective leadership", witness Stalin. It has to do with the philosophic moment when an epoch is summed up so totally that it has in it ~~the~~ tendencies ~~that~~ will keep ~~to be~~ till a totally new ~~has~~ arrived, as Marx will remain true so long as capitalism exists, till after its contradictions are overcome. But it doesn't have to do only with revolutionaries, but with revolutionaries in thought. Thus Descartes, Hegel, Marx, cover 3 centuries

1844 = 1848
1848 = 1852
1852 = 1858
1858 = 1888
1888 = 1917
1917 = 1934
1934 = 1969
1888 is 1888, CAP. as a ~~gent~~ ~~product~~

1st thing to keep in mind & never to forget is Marx, the founder of historical materialism, never was a "materialist", but a Humanist, 1844; never thought only of "method", but said from start dialectics is a critique of bourgeois society even in Hegel's hands; never "applied" dialectics but let it emerge out of new obj.-subj. relationships; in a word, created it out of what he called "history and its process", i.e., class struggles and battle of ideas.

2nd factor is that the 1880's-1890's following almost immediately upon Marx's death, there emerged a new stage of cap. monopoly--and Engels saw only the material changes, not the phil. beginnings, 1844's: 1888 Feuerbach

Crab with
1844-1888

V.W. Levin 1915-1917 1917-1934 21st Cont.

1941, 1953-55
Theoretic - Phil.
beginning in THEORY

WW II did give birth to new tendency on economics--STATE CAPITALISM--there was much talk of philosophy and historic link directly Lenin, but in truth until from practice there was break, actual overthrow of Stalin; and from theory, the return to Hegel was direct and pointed at that historic new -- from practice to theory as being in A.I. (1953, May-June) was there finally a break in philosophy.

1958 vs 1953 as Correspondence says Th
I believe no one understood that but J, not I who made the discovery, and not G who recognized it abstractly; only J knew the philosophic foundation had been laid against the claim he is "the one" forced split. The Arabs, the concentration on counter-revolutions, the raising of literature (Melville, but actually meant for lit., "as such") above theory, philosophy, as "anticipator" of "original characters" was the direct foundation of "African Personality"; although J did not think of African, but of his own, that was in fact the philosophic foundation of the national revolutions.

at birth when they could be directed to Opp. Classes.
International, world revolution, on the other hand, re-emerged on 2 levels, as a unity, theory and practice in 1953 in Det. Berlin, again in corr. wanting "to free itself" of Beria purge.
PHILOSOPHIC CATEGORIES AS PATH TO REVOLUTION **A.I. Nature, A.M.**

Age of Absolutes; A kinds of Subjectivity; not only a question of opposition to p.b. subjectiv-ism, but opp/ to perversions, RETROGRESSION on question of "practice", which SDS is repeating all over again; to descend to their level would violate what is unique, new unity of wkr-intell., original with us and us alone MHR

Black Editor, CP
BY MHR
1954

PROLETARIANIZATION plus color has been theoretical core of MHR as far back as 1949-50, and not only as we all know it--what kind of labor should man do--but as release from MALE CHAUVINISM which I never spoke of before in order not to divert from philosophy, but it is high time there too to speak the truth of J vs. F

AK vs "Inez" but actually RD
Saul
by no means

FP vs M:F?
or, Phil. Rev.?
Touring Europe Africa (refuse)

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Stewardship of Leadership in Phil.
① let break & M&L
② good record of M&L

In a word, no one is free from "blame", though this was our best year from point of view of growth of membership, from point of view of most successful lecture tour, from point of view of the many activities, and not only by youth

BUT WHAT ABOUT RESP. TO PHIL. & REV.

Beginning with tomorrow morning, and lasting till convention next year, this will be the TEST & IT WILL TEST ALL OF US!

NY is to learn finally that without proletarianization and black it will hardly learn the difference between SELF-DISCIPLINE VS. SELF-EXPRESSION, much less responsibility for our THEORETIC UNIQUENESS instead of dipping into the alleged "new" of the sons of the old.

NO ONE, ABSOLUTELY NO ONE, will be allowed to reject PHIL. & REV. under the excuse that they do not "fully understand" because of fuzzy language. I don't know that any one in this room has written anything comparable to M&L even if only "as language".

There has been absolutely too much bending backwards, esp. by me, just because of appreciation of new, of youth, of need for growth. From now on, nothing will take precedence of the completion of Phil. & Rev. in 1970--

We're a long way off from publication, incidentally, & that in no sense is NY local's responsibility; their best preparation for being able to become "sub-center" is by prol-ization plus black

Great changes in paper--both technical and pol--Eugene's new assignment for OL&T--means there can no longer be procrastination by Mike & Ray F. perhaps we can add Anne J. who will become a Newwriter for a year.

responsibilities for black pamphlets, for M&L's continued existence, for office sans E&A, & above all for M&L

We have one year in which to make it, to come up organizationally to the HISTORIC PHIL. RESPONSIBILITY OF PHIL. & REV.

Proletarianism free, they separate from phil. to work from... only way... AM. Rev.

CHAIRMAN'S ORAL REPORT ON NEB EXECUTIVE SESSION ON PHILOSOPHY AND LEADERSHIP
Sunday, August 31, 1969 (Abbreviated)

Let me first say a few words on what an executive session is. Once a year the National Editorial Board members have a chance to talk with each other, to check whether they have fulfilled their stewardship of leadership, their obligations to the membership, their perspectives for the following year. It also sometimes includes some strictly security matters -- we had two such this year, one here and one abroad. These, along with the naming of names, do not get reported to the membership. Everything else does get reported, and, for that matter, I do not believe you will not recognize who the unnamed persons are. Nevertheless, it is important that we discuss the principles involved, not the personalities. This is especially true this year, when we hope to have finished the writing of Philosophy and Revolution, and everything therefore will center here, as it did at the plenary session, around "Philosophy and Leadership."

The three levels of the discussion are: 1) historic-philosophic, 2) theoretical-American, and 3) organizational -- today, yesterday, and tomorrow, all tightly related to Philosophy and Revolution, 1970, and dependent, of course, on Marxism and Freedom, which established us, 1955-58. The failure to base Correspondence on the first breakthrough on the "Absolute Idea" as a movement from practice, in 1953; led to the collapse of that first public attempt at an independent existence for the state-capitalist theory as organization and as paper. We did not repeat that error when we established News & Letters in 1955 and simultaneously assigned the writing of Marxism and Freedom. And now we have had a 15 year development both in theory and practice, against the objective background of the challenging 1960's, which, as we saw with the Black/Red Conferences, involved the outside as well as the inside, it is high time leadership and membership understood the philosophic as well as practical responsibilities, hence the title, "Philosophy and Leadership."

I. Historic-Philosophic

Now then, let us go back to the beginnings of the history of Marxism, its philosophic origins, and see why there was only one founder -- Marx, Marx only, not Marx and Engels, but Marx alone. It has nothing to do with the idiocies of the state-capitalist age and the "cult of personality." The anti-cultists are invariably the ones who start out with being for "collective" leadership -- that's how Stalin started his campaign against Trotsky. Trotsky, in turn, fell into Stalin's trap of talking quantitatively about one versus many and vice-versa, instead of catching the philosophic moment when a whole epoch is summed up so totally that it has in it all the tendencies that will keep developing its contradictions, and, out of them, its new leaps forward. Thus it was in 1844, when Marx first established the new Humanism. So it has remained -- and will remain until we have done away, root and branch, with all ramifications of exploitative capitalism. We all, beginning with Engels, are followers. (I don't, as you know, very often agree with Jean-Paul Sartre, but he did catch what is meant by philosophic moment, how rare these creations are, when he said that from the start of modern philosophy, that is, the start of capitalism, from the 17th century and Descartes to the 19th century and Marx, there were only three periods for nearly three centuries: Descartes-Locke, Kant-Hegel, and Marx.)

Again, when we say there was only one, not only do we mean philosophic moment, and not "personality," but we are aware that there were hundreds--and sometimes, at the revolutionary moment of transformation, millions -- of talented, creative human beings. The important thing is to catch the question of summation. Summation means so total a conclusion of what is happening in

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this epoch, that it includes the tendencies for the future, i.e., anticipates what will happen when it does get transformed into actual revolution.

And yet there is only one person who does the summing up. It sounds especially shocking when that refers to the truth that it was only Marx, not Marx and Engels. How could it possibly be just one, when these two men were both breaking with bourgeois thought -- in economics Engels, in fact, was the "superior," knew more -- and no philosophy known as Marxism had yet been evolved. No greater friendship exists in intellectual history, and at no time was Engels separated from Marx. What Marx had left for him to edit -- Volumes II and III of Capital -- couldn't have been done by any other, and without Engels we would have been deprived of Marx's greatest heritage.

And yet -- and yet -- because he was the talented co-leader but follower, not originator, it was precisely Engels who, in "rewriting" the 1844 Critique of Feuerbach into the 1888 Feuerbach pamphlet, laid the basis for the Second International's mechanistic materialism. (We cannot go into this here -- and I have heretofore not even mentioned it because the "learned" who have discovered the differences between Marx and Engels, misuse it for their own purposes -- none more so than Sartre who had the audacity to attribute "today's Marxists," that is to say, Communist perverters, with whom he collaborated all too easily, to, as he put it, "that unfortunate meeting of Marx with Engels in 1844." All that concerns us here is to catch the quintessential importance and continuity of the philosophic moments.)

II. The Theoretic-American -- Leon Trotsky is not the Historic-Philosophic Continuator of Marx and Lenin.

The whole point, insofar as our age in our pragmatic America is concerned, is that the Humanism which Marx laid down as the foundation of Materialism, Historical Materialism, is the Humanism which we singled out theoretically, philosophically, in the mid-1950's. The fact that the East European proletariat, in a full revolution, and the American proletariat in its battles with Automation, were both doing in practice what we were doing in theory, is no accident. What we were doing had been done by none other, and made it necessary not only to break with Stalinism and Trotskyism, but also with those with whom on the economic-political plane, we were as one -- the state-capitalist tendency.

In a word, the theory of state-capitalism without the Marxist-Humanist philosophy, like materialism without dialectics, ends both in vulgar materialism and purely negative opposition to the bourgeoisie without the live revolutionary subject to do the reorganization of society. Organizationally, the state-capitalist tendency, as we all know, was broken up in a most unprincipled manner, verging not only and not merely on cliquism, but actual betrayal. It was only after that that we could spell out the Absolute Idea -- the unity of theory and practice, the movement from practice -- as black production worker (as well as white, at first) as editor, as columnists, as the new voices to be heard above the din of the glib, and which we spelled out in our Constitution as worker, youth, women, and that extra dimension of black as color....

And I'm sorry to have to add that if Engels had published the 1844 manuscript instead of bring it "up to date" and "simplifying" or "popularizing" dialectics (we all loved Feuerbach, whole generations were raised on this one booklet) we would have had a foundation with which to fight Kautsky and Plekhanov. Instead, the heritage was left to Kautsky. All the rest of the story of the collapse of the Second International and Lenin's need to return to Hegel for himself need not be gone into here. But let us not forget that it took a revolution as great as the Russian, scholars as great and persistent as Ryzanov to pry those MSS from those vaults. And in our age as great a revolution as the Hungarian to make that Humanism live.

The fact that the transition point from Lenin -- Trotsky -- was not the philosophic point of continuity is what makes it so difficult. The fact of the Second International's betrayal was easy to see. But with Lenin and Trotsky -- because Trotsky did not betray, he was always a great revolutionary -- the philosophic void is not easy to comprehend. OK. We have to tarry here. Trotsky's position was, "Yes, I had differences with Lenin. But the fact that Lenin and I were on the same side of the barricades in 1917 erased all differences between us." No, it didn't. The revolution proved that Trotsky was a very great revolutionary and despite the fact that he had not reorganized his philosophic conceptions as had Lenin, he was on the right side of the barricades. We now know that it was sufficient only because Lenin was there and Lenin had made a philosophic break with his past.

I wasn't aware of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks when I was Trotsky's secretary in 1937, and didn't know that Trotsky had not committed himself on the Philosophic Notebooks. There was no discussion between us on that question.

Now, for you to grasp how serious it is, and how important it is for us to see that Trotsky wasn't the philosophic continuator, as we are, means to see that Lenin himself left us a dual heritage, in other words, his philosophic notebooks were private. If you read Imperialism alone, it wouldn't mean anything -- he had just found the latest stage of capitalism. In fact, that's what the bourgeoisie always tells you, that all he did was steal from Hobson's latest figures, and then he made some concrete conclusions about what the proletariat would do about it. You would have seen the transformation into opposition in Imperialism, that became his new category. But what would result from the opposite? The new universal, the Subject, "to a man"? No sir. You have to read State and Revolution to see that.

When you catch the economic moment of break, and the economic new stage in the world development, that's only the beginning. You can't do without that beginning, but it's a beginning only. It just won't do, unless you get the positive, the negative, the new universal -- and through the dialectic as well as through the actual movement of history. So we had 1915-1917. Lenin operated on the basis of his great new discovery, but he kept these Philosophic Notes "private," unpublished. In other words, he gave us the results. We must begin anew -- and show the process, so everyone, "to a man" will have the dialectic as unity of theory and practice. This is the new. This is what no one caught, though the state-capitalist tendency at least tried. With the outbreak of World War II, it was clear that Trotskyism, as opposed to Stalinism, also didn't answer the problem. We were back again in a war, we had nothing that Lenin had when the war broke out and he was betrayed. We had no one who had gone back to Hegel, who had gone back to Marx, and forward with these philosophic foundations to the new.

The first thing that evolved was the state-capitalist theory. We said that we had reached a new stage, not just monopoly, but a world state-capitalist stage; Stalinism was but the Russian name for it. But the real question was: What is the role of labor? How could such a thing happen? Not only how could a workers' state get transformed into its opposite, but how could it be that a revolutionary leader who opposed Stalin, who stood for world revolution, "permanent revolution," nevertheless not grasp the philosophic moment both of transformation into opposite and the new concrete universal, the Subject for total resolution of differences?

Seeing the error does not mean you see the new concrete universal. In part, it is because the proletariat had not yet shown it from below. In part, it is because you as theoretician had not worked out the break. So, as state-capitalists, we saw the error of Trotskyism, the need for new beginnings. When we finally started as an independent grouping -- not just as a tendency remaining as parasites within Trotskyism, but responsible to the public, the proletarian public -- with Correspondence, the world confronted also the death of Stalin. The proletariat, in East Germany specifically, did have an answer, an affirmative answer, to the question: Can man win freedom under totalitarianism? And it is within that same crucial three months intervening between the death of Stalin and the East German revolt, that I first wrote those letters on the Absolute Idea, discovered the movement from practice some six weeks before the revolt actually broke out. I believe that Johnson did understand what, philosophically, that meant, and began at once to conspire to break with me, to break the organization from England whither he had departed. Grace, with her usual hyperboles, did say that my letters on the Absolute Idea were the equivalent of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks -- but then he got her back into line precisely because we had not built leadership on philosophic foundations.

Along with our establishing N&L, and working out M&F, we took great trouble to see that we were not known by a "name" -- Trotskyite, Johnsonite, or, for that matter, Johnson-Forestite -- but by that philosophic moment, Marxist-Humanist. The unique, the new, the philosophic moment, expressed itself in the black dimension of editor as well as Marxist-Humanism as philosophy; in concretization of that philosophy as forces of revolution -- proletariat, national minorities, youth, women, the "outside" in Readers' Views, as well as in every facet; the internationalization of these forces of revolution by the tours (and the editions of M&F as well as current articles) not merely to Europe but to Africa and Asia; and the manner in which this was reflected in the leadership, and in the ranks, in relations with other organizations.

III. Organizational -- Today, Yesterday, Tomorrow

Two years ago, at the executive session, what we concentrated on as the philosophic foundation of the organizational question was: What killed Lenin? We said that we know that he died of physical causes, but we also know that something tears you apart in other ways as well. He had greater responsibilities than Marx had -- Marx was the founder, but the Paris Commune was in Paris. But Lenin suddenly found himself the head of a state, instead of just the developer of a theory. And there seemed a contradiction in what he had as a new workers' state and the new bureaucratization. He gave a very moving talk to his Central Committee. He said: what is killing us, what is killing this workers' state? We must remember that history has known all sorts of degeneration. It looks like an absolute contradiction between the masses, who we say must do everything to a man, and this little tiny thin layer of Bolsheviks. It is not only the bureaucratization that is killing us, not only the isolation. There have been no successful revolutions outside Russia, but let us look not only West, but East, to the Orient. What is killing us also -- well, look at the leadership. And he proceeded in his will to give his assessment of them. (Again, we have no time here to develop this, although it becomes, of course, a part of Philosophy and Revolution. The chapter on Lenin will deal with the essential we are here concerned with -- philosophy and organization, where Lenin writes that the "greatest theoretician," Bukharin, "didn't understand the dialectic.") The point for us is the understanding of this dialectic, the crucial importance of philosophy not only

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in relation to revolution, but even in "little things" such as leadership in small Marxist groupings -- and it is this which brings us to today.

We are at the stage of needing to finish the writing of Philosophy and Revolution. We have made two outlines of the work, and the discussions around it were, very often, better with the outside than with the inside. Black/Red conferences proved that -- we had them run by blacks who were not members both in LA and SF, but we did not have one in NY. The best of course was where we could combine inside and outside, like Detroit. But the point I'm stressing is that every time we have reached a new stage in philosophy -- with Marxism and Freedom, for example -- there was also a separation from those on the inside who could not grasp it, while the outside did. Thus, we lost some, but gained others, and on new foundations.

So I said last year that not all of the ramifications were noted. Take for example Steve; he made such a beautiful motion -- that I must go away and finish the book and that that was really important -- yet he was acting like an awful cad ever since in New York, not understanding what this obligation meant, in relation to his responsibility as a leader in this new stage that we have reached. (Steve, I'm very glad to say, has changed very much.)

But, it never fails that when you reach a new stage in philosophy -- and we have reached a very new stage with Philosophy and Revolution -- all things seem to fall apart. It is so big that you come to the threshold and feel you're falling backwards more than getting over the threshold. It never fails.

The first break we had in the leadership before any of you were members -- except a few of the older ones -- was Marxism and Freedom. We reached that high stage, and someone you all know in a very different capacity, Arthur, said that what is really the trouble with us is that we don't know how to become a mass organization and what we need is an offset paper. Well I'm sure that nobody thinks the LA Free Press and News & Letters are the same thing. But that's how the opposition first expressed itself. They couldn't grapple with Marxism and Freedom. And now it is Philosophy and Revolution. When it was projected a few years ago we said that if you were serious about it, then the New Yorkers had to try to become a new sub-center, for both the battle of ideas and for proletarianization. Saul couldn't make it, because it meant that he had to break with whatever he was doing here and move back to New York. It's not important for us to go into the details of what else went wrong in NY. (Perhaps some day we will go into that.)

I'm just saying that we had these breaks as we approached this new stage. And now we have a much higher stage, when it's not just that we think we will finish it someday, but when we think we can finish it within the year. What we discussed, therefore, was the needed self-discipline, and the fact that everybody in the leadership must realize that nobody can be allowed to reject Philosophy and Revolution on the excuse that it cannot be understood. You can do all you want with the language but you cannot reject Philosophy and Revolution and still be a Marxist-Humanist. And therefore the responsibility of the leadership to philosophy had to be expressed in certain of the changes -- we've gone through it all through the sessions. In other words, we went through the proletarianization of the branches, the black pamphlets, youth, Women's Liberation, etc. We spelled it out concretely for this year in the Perspective, the Needed American Revolution. Now all that is needed, in carrying out these concrete perspectives, is to grapple with the relationship of leadership to philosophy, philosophy to membership, and organization to philosophy.