

March 3, 1971

Dear Allen,

This is not for the local; it is "personal" in the sense in which we use the word when we mean political but informal and directed to only one person. The reason I stress this will become obvious in the text itself.

I feel that your letter of February 23rd about both "the guerrilla warfare of IDEAS" and Black Masses as vanguard has not only hit the nail on the head but also illuminated some totally new aspects. Thus, to mention Black as if it were only one of many forces of revolution would tend to reduce the Black dimension to a quantitative sphere. Of course, there are always more than one force of revolution; indeed, it isn't a revolution unless it does bring on the historic stage many new strata. But, vanguard, not in the elitist sense but as a mass movement is crucial both as concept and as actual live persistent force. For example, in the Hungarian Revolution, it was the Youth who had started it, the intellectuals, in general, played a very important role. And yet once the going got tough, those people were able to escape whereas the workers, not only remained but continued their workman's councils for several weeks after the revolution was lost, which is why "its only working existence" was singled out by Marx as the greatest achievement of the Paris Commune, and why we, in 1955, insisted in placing the Montgomery Bus Boycott on the same level as the Workers Councils. This is something that few recognize even among Marxists, especially when something new arises, in this case the Womens Liberation and the Chicano. We certainly must include these forces but they must be judged objectively and not allowed to predominate over the Black when it is the latter that has proven itself ever since the birth of this country and is, at this very moment, the key to outright revolution in the fullness of time.

The tragedy here is that there is such an unbridgeable gulf between intellectuals and masses that, instead of a developing unity of theory and practice, we get evermore unprincipled cleavages in total isolation from what the masses aspire to. What for example is the present backbiting between Cleaver and Newton and Angela Davis and the New York Panthers and Stokeley Carmichael, not to mention the CP and the Nazis? I have yet to see a genuine idea issue from the mouths of any of them and Angela has dealt with nothing other than ideas all of her life before! In a word, she is keeping the ideas only when she is arguing with Marcuse, not to working out a philosophy of revolution in which the movement from practice would be the catalyst for development of ideas, a philosophy of liberation.

For the local to be able to grapple with these ideas, we would have to have, as a starter, a very much more formal room for meeting than a home and a ~~xxx~~ much greater rigor with which ideas are discussed; they cannot come from the top of ones head. What do you suppose you can do on that?

The acceptance by both black and white to work in their own "communities" was the real cop-out from any battle of ideas. I wish you would try to recollect what you thought during that period and how, as a Marxist-Humanist, you would now compel some of your old buddies to engage in a battle of ideas, which is the one activity they seem never to participate in.

Yours,

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