

SUMMARY OF EXPANDED REB MEETING, JAN. 2, 1982

III - RAYA'S REPORT was entitled:

Under the Whip of the Counter-Revolution: MOMENTOUS WORLD-HISTORIC EVENTS
STRUGGLE TO FIND REVOLUTIONARY PHILOSOPHIC EXPRESSION

"Our epoch is a birth-time, and
a period of transition...."

-- Hegel

I- Introduction: Today's Task and the Intermergings of the Three Books -- Marxism
and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's
Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution -- with the
Objective Situation

If we should consider only the two weeks just past, the whip of the counter-revolution would seem overwhelming. We face the new reality in Poland, Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, and Begin's taking full advantage of Regan's amateurishness in the Middle East as he flirts with a shift in global relations at the very moment when the U.S. is deep in the mire with Russia on Poland, continues its genocidal actions in El Salvador, and intensifies the retrogressions at home on all fronts -- from labor to race to women's liberation to endless nuclear buildup.

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At the same time, we must not forget the 18 months of revolutionary achievements in Poland, but must keep the highest developments before us. The Polish resistance as it struggles underground to find revolutionary philosophic expression must have as great solidarity from us as the physical solidarity.

In this light, it is clear the disarray in the left cannot be disregarded. While thousands of revolutionaries were executed in Iran Trotskyists dared to still whitewash Khomeini and praise his "anti-imperialism" and call the Mujahadeen "CIA-supported left". And what is most horrifying of the counter-revolution in Poland is that it comes from within, thereby stressing that there is nothing worse than state-capitalism, national state-capitalism, militarized, which is proving that the greatest enemy is always at home. Nor is the Muslim religion the only reaction on the scene; the Catholic Church in Poland has helped state-capitalism establish itself. The absolute opposite is the revolutionary vision. While all these whips of counter-revolution, abroad and at home, make our task -- the transformation of reality -- impossible for a small group like ours, we know there are millions the world over struggling for exactly what we aim for, and searching for a philosophic expression.

It is because that is so that we are proposing to launch not just "the book" but three books, one of which is celebrating its own 25th anniversary as a living banner that initiated the link with Marx's Marxism precisely at the moment when the movement from practice discovered it. Here I wish to limit myself, for the moment, to what was achieved in the latest work, RL, WL, KM, by seeing the phrase "post-Marx Marxists" not as chronology but as category, which began with Engels, his closest collaborator when Marx was still alive -- indeed, before Marxism, itself, was a "totality." The new continent of thought and of revolution was discovered because of the very profound intermerging of the Individual and the Universal. That kind of intermerging is not easy; it is the key to the new additions that were made to Part III and called "A 1980s View". It is what I want to carry through today, objectively and subjectively, beginning with Poland.

II-Poland: Revolution and Counter-Revolution -- and the Philosophic Gap.

Everyone has followed, breathlessly, the events in Poland -- the counter-revolution and the resistance against it, especially in the Silesian mines where over 1000 barricaded themselves for two weeks. But we must follow the counter-revolution just as precisely. Tad Szulc has caught its dialectic. In the NYT of Dec. 24, 1981, he points out that the declaration of martial law was undertaken because so many of the Communists let it be known they would not vote for forbidding strikes that Jaruzelski withdrew that proposed legislation and decided on the other option open to them. Martial law was declared on a weekend because workers would not be in a position then to occupy their factories. It was this that had not been anticipated by Solidarnosc. The article also points out how national everything is -- the military council calls it "National Salvation", not Socialism. The emphasis everywhere is on military and national; on Polish interests, not on the CP. That is why it is necessary to go deeper into when nationalism is not revolutionary but reactionary rule.

More important is to see why Solidarnosc was so unprepared; why all eyes were on invasion, not on the reactionary Polish rule; why Kuron, who did so much to organize the unity of workers and intellectuals in KOR, gave it up and began talking of the "self-limiting revolution"; why the Church has been whitewashed as if it did not have its own goals; why the anti-Semitism in Poland cannot be ignored.

It is crucial when counter-revolution strikes, and when the revolutionary forces have to go underground, that those forces have a banner, a philosophy of revolution to go underground with. And Poland must be seen in the whole world context ...

III- Begin's Israel Moves Further and Further Backward to his Reactionary Terrorist Beginnings in the 1940s

No sooner was the world preoccupied with the counter-revolution in Poland than Begin very nearly leaped out of the hospital to annex the Golan Heights -- and the focus was taken away from Poland. The same thing happened when the Russian tanks moved into Hungary in 1956 and Ben Gurion marched Israel's troops to the Suez -- and nobody talked of the Hungarian Revolution. That does not make them twin moves. Begin's move today is without the aid of British and French imperialism; it is "all on his own." Furthermore, it comes as a follow-up to all the other unilateral, neo-fascistic moves -- beginning with the destruction on June 7 of the Iraqi nuclear reaction; on July 17 the bombing of a heavily populated village in Lebanon. It came without a word to his "benefactor" U.S. imperialism; and was followed by hitting out against Reagan for the U.S. having voted for the UN Resolution which declared his unilateral annexation of the Golan Heights "null and void." This does not mean that the vitriolic outburst was off the top of his head. Far from it. It was long-planned. And aimed to raise his terrorist acts (which were aimed against his own country-about-to-be-born in the 1940s) into state policy.

It is necessary to study every single word of Begin's statement and grasp the timing. (It is printed in full in the NYT of Dec. 21, 1982.) You have to know this methodology in order to know how to analyze it. The minute Reagan began flirting with Saudi Arabia when Crown Prince Fahd announced his plan, I began to prepare an analysis because it was clear there was a total change in the situation that assumed global proportions. I wasn't the only one who saw that; so did Begin. From that moment on, he was waiting for his chance. That is why he rushed home in a wheelchair, summoned his cabinet, proceeded to the Knesset. The need to study his statement is because it is there that he shows he wants to establish that it was he, and not Ben Gurion, who founded Israel. It is not only the Arabs he is against; it is the Jews. What we are seeing unfold now is what Begin began working out the moment he got power.

The only way you can see, before all the new events even occurred, what is happening globally (or what is about to happen) is to practice dialectics every moment of our lives, to live 24 hours a day in dialectic methodology, which looks at all the facts both past and present.

Whether or not there will be some slight modification of Begin's statement and a much greater retreat on the part of Reagan, so that some sort of deal can be worked out with Israel as to its primacy in the Middle East, is not the question for Marxist Humanists. What is the question is that this fanaticism, sprinkled with so-called "fundamentalism" in religion -- and Begin already has the praise of Falwell -- is all an indication of the degeneracy of the capitalistic-imperialistic world development that threatens civilization with total destruction. Take the Iranian Revolution which is now experiencing a counter-revolutionary turn. When it first erupted it was a breath of fresh air on the revolutionary horizon; it meant that a totally new dimension was born in the Middle East. Instead of oil, and then Arab-Israeli conflict, now revolution was the determinant. The imperialists also read it that way, and the Arab kingdoms were shaken up as well. Because the Shi-ites were the poor, the masses, religion was disregarded by the Left, as if it would be overcome by the revolution itself. Instead, it was religion in its most retrogressive, fundamentalist form, which conquered the power, is destroying the revolution, and has become one more prop in the US-Russian rivalry for total world domination.

Or consider a knowledgeable revolutionary like Fred Halliday who writes in an issue of Merip Reports on the "Arc of Crisis" and yet is so immersed in geopolitics instead of a philosophy of revolution that he accepts 1978 as the "turning point" -- focusing on the Cuban and Soviet help to

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Ethiopia in 1978,
/ instead of 1979 and the Iranian Revolution. If all that was needed was to expose imperialism's global reach in the Middle East, we could prove it with 1947 and the Truman Doctrine, which was intended to guarantee no revolutions in the post-war world; or with 1957 and Eisenhower and the Suez crisis. But that is not what is needed. What is needed is to understand how the world changed in 1979, and how that Iranian Revolution fell under the grip of the counter-revolution from within.

IV- Back to the Task for 1982: The Intermerging of the Three Books with the Objective Situation

We have gone today into greater detail on the objective situation than we generally do at REB meetings, expanded or otherwise, since always there are too many practical activities to map out. But it was necessary because the truth is that -- if we succeeded with projecting and selling our three books for a full year; and if that led to a significant growth in membership to prove we could execute it, and deserved it; and if both our Youth work and our WL work meant autonomous outpourings; and if we really had a sound financial picture -- then, the truth is I repeat, that N&L should really become a bi-weekly.

Instead of being able to deal with a question like that, however, we must admit that it is impossible to consider such a goal today, because we truly do not yet fully appreciate ourselves. We have to learn such elementary things as camaraderie and patience. Heretofore, we have stressed Hegel's attacks on the "romantics" for trying to get to the Absolute like a shot out of the pistol, with his statement that "Impatience asks for the impossible, and wants to reach the goal without the means of getting there." (*Phenomenology*, p. 90) We did not, on the other hand, stress the corollary of Hegel's praise for "patience" since that, politically, surely looks reformist if not outright counter-revolutionary, forgetting that patience is the exact, precise, philosophic term for the hard labor of the negative. Indeed, the word seems missing when we quote Hegel (p. 81) on "the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative" as the only way to reach the free flow of the dialectic.

If we dive into those pages 90-91 we find what followed his attack on impatience and praise of patience: "... because the universal mind at work in the world has had the patience to go through these forms in the long stretch of time's extent, and to take upon itself the prodigious labor of the world's history, where it bodied forth in each form the entire content of itself, as each is capable of presenting it."

The pivot and goal of all was this: "For the real subject matter is not exhausted in the purpose but in working the matter out; nor is the mere result attained the concrete whole itself, but the result along with the process of arriving at it." (p. 69)

You will now be getting, as a totality rather than in the form of individual letters on individual additions, the changes or rather expansions made in Part III. They are to be studied carefully, and not in isolation from our concrete organizational responsibilities. Thus, such a simple matter as who will take over Diane's work next year as technical-philosophic assistant for the Center is not "simple" because it is not "technical." It is not only a question of our never considering that only women and not men can be "secretaries", but the choice of Jim to take over that work involves Jim's seeing the organization as a totality and not only generational, not only "youth oriented" but globally oriented. At the same time it means asking Peter to become more center-oriented in terms of carrying on some of the national correspondence around the Youth, and some of the international correspondence as well, as the youth assume a true global importance in the world-wide anti-nuclear movement.

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Just as there is something new in the Youth work (and Russell has done magnificently since he took the campus work seriously), we are seeing something new also in the Black dimension and with Labor -- and especially so in Los Angeles. And we have reached something new with relations in Latin America, as witness Anna's successful trip. Above all, however, is the right here and now. From now to Labor Day will be our testing period for what we will reach with the three books and the Archives.

Methodology is not just for books or essays but for daily activities; it is the dialectics both of liberation and of thought we must recreate for analysis of daily events without ever forgetting it is as critical for organization building as for organization of thought. Self-development is not proven until it expresses Marxist-Humanism to others. The litmus paper is the three books and the Archives. Saying the Individual is inseparable from the Universal won't make it so. Only doing it will.

IN HER SUMMATION, RAYA said she wanted to limit herself to two things: 1) The interminglings of the three books; and 2) the intermingling of the three with the objective situation. Take each work in relationship to the objective situation at the time it was published. In 1956, we had East Europe revolt, and Automation -- and we didn't separate them. The essence to us was to find the American roots of Marxism as evidenced in Abolitionism and the Black dimension -- but just as Abolitionism meant a new dimension to the human character, so Humanism was seen as a world aspect.

Now take P&R -- on the face of it the crucial year was 1969, which we said was not 1968. But that didn't mean that the revolution was ended -- it meant there had to be (and there was) a new passion for philosophy. What 1974 brought the world was what I have called a new type of revolution -- just consider that it was Portugal that brought out apartidarismo and that it was the women who raised that.

In P&R we took up all of Hegel -- nobody had done that in this way before. And the shock was that nobody -- absolutely NOBODY -- had ever made a category of the last three paragraphs (#54 to 57).

We have to be able to take up things even when they aren't there. I mean that there is no discussion of WL in M&F -- there was no WLM then. But I had developed woman as a new category way back in the post-war world. How do you express that when there is no movement? Look at what M&F does with the milkmaids who were the first ones on the streets in Paris. You have to be able to take that and show how and why women were made into a category.

The danger with the new book insofar as Luxemburg is concerned is that some will tend to appreciate what they learn there as just new facts that they didn't know before. We have to be able to show why these "facts" were found. Look at Fenthesilea -- Luxemburg didn't know why she took that story up. What is it we are saying about that? And how could we find all these things nobody ever noticed before?

If we see all three books as one, we will be able to show the interminglings.

I want to say something about what Erica raised on Amnesty International. They have quite a history. One of the best things they did was to point the finger at Carter right here at home and his treatment of the Blacks. They do their best work in Britain -- which is where the CND is also greatest. (Raya developed some of the experiences we have had with these activists.) We have to know some of this history to see how important this work can be; and the many ways we have to know how to present Marxist-Humanism.

We also have to take up, in relationship to "post-Marx Marxism's" what Vera Zasulich did when she got Marx's answer, to her letter. It wasn't the answer she wanted, so she just put it away. What does that mean in terms of appreciation of the Self-Thinking Idea? It is every bit as important as the dialectics of liberation itself. If you have that kind of appreciation, you will keep digging and come up with a whole new category.

There is nothing more important than being able to listen, and to catch when something new appears. It wasn't easy in 1953, but by now it is not too hard to catch "movement from practice." But the little phrase that is important and that nobody has but us is "... that is itself a form of theory." Who ever thought anything of Sojourner Truth's expression about "short-minded" men? Douglass was the intellectual, the editor of the paper, her leader. But ^{her} expression "short-minded men" was a tremendous revolutionary theory that he could not see. Tell that to anybody who says; first we have to get this (then it was the vote for Black men), and then we will do that (pay attention to the women). There is no stagi-fying possible if we are ever to create that totally new society.

And, what are all these three books in relationship to finances? They are not a "trilogy" because it is not an intellectual endeavor we are talking about. Each one responded to a particular situation and to the Self-Thinking Idea. Please reread the first Preface to M&F, where I say that no theoretician can write out of his own head -- it has to be the whole movement. It is because it is a whole movement that we do not have to despair totally at one more counter-revolution. We can see we are laying the ground for new revolutions yet to come.