

February 6, 1985

Parentheses

Dear friends,  
The March 21, 1985 lecture, which the Wayne State University Labor Archives is arranging for me, with a whole month devoted to an exhibit of a representative portion of the body of ideas we call Marxist-Humanism, is an historic first -- but quite taxing for me. How can I possibly cover the range of a half century of writings and activities in a one-hour presentation, to be followed by one hour of questions and discussion, and a third hour for a reception?

Take, for example, the question of the Archives. I seldom have a chance, even in a two hour talk, to do more than simply point to our Archives Guide. How, I repeat, can I solve that problem, especially when what I would like to work out is not only the talk but actually how to project our Body of Ideas in a single bulletin. When I remembered that our National co-organizer, Mike, had covered much of the Archives Collection in substantial form in the classes we held last Spring, I decided that I would like that included in the bulletin we want to issue. On my Jan. 27 talk on "The Dialectics of Revolution and Women's Liberation" (that will actually be on Jan. 27, Feb. 3rd talk, as I developed a new conclusion on "Unchaining the Dialectic" which was video-taped on Feb. 3, 1985) I decided to combine it with the Jan. 27 talk. Having made that decision, I then felt strongly that the special bulletin I had in mind in our Body of Ideas also had to include our journalistic organ, News & Letters. Not only have we never separated philosophy from practice, but a truly historic and philosophical first was established by us at our very first conference in 1955 when we decided, on the very same motion, to have a Black production worker-editor as Editor of this Marxist-Humanist organ and to assign me to work out the first of what became the "trilogy of revolution" -- Marxism and Freedom from 1776 Until Today. Therefore, I think it is quintessential that my "In Memoriam" -- which covers the entire period from the very first time I met Denby in 1947 to the very last writing he did for the 1983-84 News and Letters Convention -- should be included in any overall view of paper, philosophy and organization. I felt such a bulletin should then also include the Convention report on "News & Letters as Theory/Practice", given at our 1984-85 Convention by Eugene, whom Charles Denby had asked to come to Detroit to be Chairman of the Philosophic-Technical Committee when we decided to become a 12 page paper.

I wanted to include in my March 21 lecture, but cannot possibly expand on, was a presentation of the new book, which was to have been published on International Women's Day, 1985. I was especially anxious for this because it is the very first time I included two contributions by Olga in a book for the first time totally devoted to ourselves rather than giving a Marxist-Humanist analysis of other

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Mike  
Denby  
Charles  
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February 6, 1985

Dear Friends,

The 3-21-85 lecture which the WSU Labor Archives is arranging for me, with a whole month of <sup>an exhibit of</sup> a representative portion of <sup>the</sup> body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, <sup>\*</sup> along with pictures <sup>\*</sup>, is a historic first but quite taxing on me. How can I possibly cover the range of a half century of writings and activities in an one hour presentation, one hour of questions and discussion and a third hour for reception?

Take for example the question of the Archives. I seldom have any chance, even in a two hour talk, to do more than simply point to our Archives Guide. I repeat, how can I solve that problem, especially when what I <sup>would like to work out</sup> have in mind is not alone the talk but actually how to project our body of ideas in a single bulletin. <sup>W</sup> Then I remembered that our national co-organizer Mike had covered much of the Archives collection in a ~~more~~ substantial form than I ~~covered~~ in the classes we held in the Spring, I therefore decided that, together with my 1-27-85 talk on the Dialectics of Revolution and Women's Liberation, I can <sup>The Archives Guide is on my list I had to include</sup> include that report on Archives <sup>by Mike.</sup> <sup>The Bulletin we want to issue on</sup>

But I felt strongly <sup>of presence of our</sup> the lack in the journalistic organ, News & Letters, <sup>in</sup> of that body of ideas. Not only have we never separated philosophy from practice, but <sup>to assign</sup> truly historic and philosophic first was established by us at our very first conference in 1955 when we decided in the very same motion to have a Black production worker as editor of this Marxist-Humanist organ and me to work out the first of <sup>what became</sup> the trilogy of revolution, Marxism and Freedom from 1776 until today. Therefore I think it is quintessential that my "In Memoriam," <sup>The entire period</sup> which covers from the very first time I met Denby in 1947 to the very last writing he did for the 1983-84 News and Letters Convention, <sup>should be included in this over-</sup> all view of <sup>feel such a bulletin</sup> <sup>It also needs as</sup> <sup>in "NRAS Th/Pu"</sup> ~~supplement~~, the ~~strictly~~ News & Letters convention report ~~as a~~

~~whole that was~~, given at our 1984-85 Convention by Eugene whom Charles

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What we wanted to include in <sup>my</sup> that 3-21 lecture <sup>but cannot possibly expand on</sup> was a presentation

of the new book which was to have been published on International Women's Day, 1985. I was especially anxious for this because it is the very first time that I <sup>included 2 contributions by</sup> combined Olga's name with mine in a book <sup>for the first time</sup> totally

devoted to ourselves, and not just giving a Marxist-Humanist analysis of other revolutionaries. <sup>Rep. cause</sup> This is a most important step in our development, <sup>I felt the Dec. 1984 issue of the journal should include the Essay on</sup> which brings the National Co-Organizer, Olga, <sup>summing up a whole</sup>

decade of Women's Liberation since it became a Movement. <sup>2010</sup> We thus will have in this special Bulletin a Black production worker and the two National Co-Organizers, as well as the chair <sup>man</sup> of the Philosophical-Technical Committee,

all in a single bulletin which will project the integrality of philosophy, revolutionary journalism, pamphlets <sup>of</sup> from voices below, as well as both books and activities of the organization. <sup>MIN</sup> I am proposing <sup>to include</sup> as the <sup>1</sup>

<sup>both</sup> title <sup>of</sup> my lecture <sup>on</sup> of 3-21-85, <sup>but all the four years, '81-85</sup> <sup>for the book cover</sup> we are adding in bring our collection up to date: MINISTRIAN DIALECTICS

OF REVOLUTION: AMERICAN ROOTS AND WORLD HUMANIST CONCEPTS."

I will be proposing this ~~new~~ special bulletin to the REB <sup>at our</sup> meeting this Monday. You, of course, will get <sup>the</sup> the 1/27 speech,

which Olga is now stenciling as soon as it is ready ~~at the~~ at the end of the week. <sup>if the REB agrees</sup> But <sup>the speech</sup> it will not have a cover since you already have

all the material we will be adding to my 1/27 speech, the last section of which I redid for video 2/3/85. <sup>The</sup> <sup>bulletin</sup> That one we will put the cover <sup>on</sup> on <sup>present</sup> present to the Archives and <sup>will</sup> offer for sale so that an overview of our work is contained in a single bulletin.

You will hear from me again after the REB meeting when <sup>we send</sup> I ~~present~~ present the REB Minutes and the Letter of the Week, which will also have on its agenda the Editorial assignment, and the first report of looking

for a new convention hall for Labor Day.

Yours,

The exhibit will include photos and <sup>news</sup> ~~news~~ <sup>clippings</sup> ~~clippings~~ from what they will call the "early years", including <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~ <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>gun</sup> ~~gun on guard duty for Leon Trotsky during the year '37-38 I was LT's secretary, translator and guard.~~

~~Even~~ though that Marxist-Humanist Archives specifies <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>collection</sup> ~~collection~~ of state-capitalism and Marxist Humanism begins in 1941, it actually <sup>has</sup> ~~has~~ <sup>material</sup> ~~material~~ which includes the correspondence with Trotsky <sup>and in</sup> ~~and in~~ <sup>fact</sup> ~~fact~~ from the early 1930s <sup>1932</sup> ~~1932~~ to be exact, when I became business <sup>manager</sup> ~~manager~~ for Trotsky's Russian Opposition Bulletin (the underground edition was so tiny as to need <sup>one</sup> ~~one~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>a</sup> ~~a <sup>special</sup> ~~special <sup>reading</sup> ~~reading <sup>glass</sup> ~~glass~~), <sup>and for the first</sup> ~~and for the first~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~time~~ I sold the idea of a Trotsky Archives to Harvard University. <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~the <sup>material</sup> ~~material~~ that, of course, hardly covers all the new translations I did from Marx's untranslated works ( and I'm not referring only to the Humanist Essays, but <sup>much</sup> ~~much~~ <sup>more</sup> ~~more~~ I did for just the Tendency) as well as <sup>Lenin's</sup> ~~Lenin's~~ Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic.~~~~~~~~

February 11, 1985

To: Local Organizers  
Re: Feb. 6, 1985 Dear Friends letter

Dear Colleagues:

The reason you were asked to withhold reading the Feb. 6 letter until this "P.S." could be read directly after completion of the reading of the end of the second paragraph on page 1 was to assure the removal of the loose expression "new conclusion on 'Unchaining the Dialectic'" and thus to correct the historic-philosophic record.

First, there is nothing "new" -- in 1985! -- in the unchaining of the dialectic, which signalled the 1953 birth of Marxist-Humanism.

The word, "new", is a specific, dialectical, Hegelian-Marxian, philosophic category, which signifies a historic first -- in Hegel's concept, that of a "birth-time of history"; Marx unchained it, not to deny its revolutionary-critical nature, but to deepen it by uniting Dialectical Philosophy with Reality. For our age, I caught the link of continuity with Marx, and freed it from the vulgar-materialistic-communist post-Marx Marxists' grip, by unlocking the specificity of the post World War II era as an age that revealed a "movement from practice" as well as from theory. (See the very first bulletin News & Letters issued in 1955, which contained both my Letters on the Absolute Idea of May 12 and 20 and my translation of Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic.)

Even before the May 1953 Letters, it was the first translation of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks and my commentaries as I sent that translation to CLRJ that alerted him philosophically that I was moving beyond where he left the Dialectic in his "Nevada Document" on

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Hegel. That was followed by my activity in an actual Miners' General Strike in 1949-50. Both philosophically and practically my unchaining of the dialectic was climaxed in the specifically most difficult, final section both of Logic and of Mind. It soon was to "coincide," by no accident whatsoever, directly with the McCarthyite and FBI listing of the "Johnson-Forest Tendency." So far as CLRJ was concerned all this laid the philosophic and practical ground for his physical break-up of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, beginning, first, with the legal absconding of our paper, which was then called Correspondence, and was preceded by his recall from California to his side of our "official" philosopher, Grace Lee, who had greeted those May 1953 letters as: "I think that these notes represent our Philosophic Notebooks, comparable to those of VL in 1915."

As the ending of the very first chapter of the very first book, Marxism and Freedom, discloses, when we were free from the Johnsonite restrictions, CLRJ and his "Johnsonites" took the absolute opposite road from that of "Freddie Forest" (Raya Dunayevskaya). Where, for me, the philosophic ground was to meet the challenge of our age's Absolutes, as well as the challenge of Hegel's, CLRJ's direction was to escape -- and I don't mean only to England, but from any need to fight against the McCarthyite-FBI listing of our Tendency.

Secondly, once the 1950s ended with the revolutions both in East Europe and in Africa, and we began to record the new voices of revolt internationally as well as in the U.S., especially Black America, we found that the 1960s had also brought to the newly-named paper, News & Letters, one who could not distinguish the difference between me and

Herbert Marcuse at the very time (1960) when Marcuse revised his concept of the Dialectic in a new Preface to his 1941 work, Reason and Revolution. The 1960s, in a word, made clear to me that the 1950s' breakthrough on the Absolute Idea needed further concretization. I had to plunge much deeper into all of Hegel's major philosophic works than had ever been done before. Whether Melville did or did not think strictly philosophically, he certainly created a philosophic poetry of "thought divers". It took me from 1958 to 1973 before Philosophy and Revolution from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao worked out anew "Hegel's Absolute Idea as New Beginning -- the Ceaseless Movement of History and Ideas", as I entitled Chapter 1 of Philosophy and Revolution.

In the 1970s a bourgeois academic Hegelian singled out the precise phrase, "unchaining the dialectic", as the climax of his critique of my work. Here is how George Armstrong Kelly expressed himself: "For the complex linkage of culture, politics and philosophy within the matrix of 'absolute idea', Mme. Dunayevskaya proposes to substitute an unchained dialectic which she baptises 'Absolute Method,' a method that 'becomes irresistible...because our hunger for theory arises from the totality of the present global crisis' (p. 239)."

My reply to Kelly's critique in the new 1982 Introduction to Philosophy and Revolution isn't what marks the second stage of my original contribution. Rather, the persistence of dissatisfaction continued with me until I worked out the 1984-85 Perspectives Thesis for our Convention, the last section of which I called "Not by Practice Alone". All this came to a climax at the special Expanded REB Meeting



on Dec. 30, 1984.

There I began using the expression "Dialectics of Revolution", which I had used for the Syllabus for the series of new classes relating Perspectives to Dialectics. Even that did not seem to satisfy me, so I decided, at that Dec. 30 meeting to concretize further, in a very specific way, what I presented in the Introduction and Overview to the new book: Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future. Where, in the Syllabus, I had reversed the title for the lecture I was to give as the final class, in order to show that it isn't only Women's Liberation but all four forces of revolution, on Dec. 30 I traced six dialectics of revolution through the Introduction and Overview.

When I delivered the talk on Jan. 27, I was so disturbed by the condition of my throat that I decided to retape that final section on the Dialectics of Revolution on Feb. 3. I hope this makes it clear that nothing, absolute nothing "new" reversed what was the apex on Jan. 27.

One final word -- my god, I should have learned never to say that an historic first which took more than three decades to achieve can be summarized in one word, or one sentence, and can be narrowed into a parenthesis -- the word "new" should never have been used in that Feb. 6 letter. It certainly doesn't begin to express what is required of Marxist-Humanists who are serious about the need to grapple with the dialectics of revolution expressed in that phrase, "Unchaining the Dialectic." Indeed, I would like to say that the truth of the Dialectic, contrary to the existential mystification of the "Adventures of the Dialectic", demands the hard "seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative."

Yours, Raya

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