

MINUTES OF REB MEETING, NOV. 25, 1985

Agenda: I. Report by Raya on New York trip in context of Year-End Sum-Up; II. Report by Mike on Ongoing Activities and Communications; III. G&W

I. Raya's report of her New York tour was so fully reported to the locals in the letter sent out last week that her emphasis in her presentation to the REB was on what this magnificent trip meant in relationship to the Dec. 29 Year-End sum-up, which will set us on our direction toward the next Convention. What will be involved will be the kinds of re-organization that include both individuals and whole locals. All the ideas Raya came back to the Center with, however, are so tentative that there is no way anything concrete can be discussed at this point; the proposals and discussion will be on the agenda on Dec. 29. What is clear from this trip is the unique character of each local, and the importance of New York as publication and intellectual center. The meeting that N&L sponsored can be considered the best -- both in turn-out^{and} in lit sales -- and in disclosing the most unusual periphery the New York local has which opens so many new doors in so many directions for us. The very fact that there was so much interest in the 5th book, on the Dialectic of the Party, that Raya had to turn away offers to give her money for a copy of it although not a word has yet been written, is significant of what New York represents as locale and as local. New York's importance as this kind of intellectual center has to be appreciated just as Detroit's importance as "home of the Archives" is now grasped. The context in which the entire organization engages in its activities at this moment is selling WLDR as founders and preparing for the bi-weekly.

In her sum-up to the New York local, Raya said, the most urgent question she had raised was the question of "getting subs" -- that is, what do we project to others when we ask for subs, when we go "contacting." How do we explain Marxist-Humanism in such a way that those we are talking to will see that "Theory/Practice" at the top of our paper spells out the uniqueness of this paper? How do we explain that this has been true of N&L ever since we were born? In her sum-up it was this question that compelled RD to take up the whole pathway, our whole history since the break from all the "old", the listing, the counter-revolutionary nature of that period and our insistence on responding not by retreating but by raising a whole new banner. It is that principle that we have to spell out to others when we go out to get a new sub today, and are proposing as our response to Reaganism nothing less than a bi-weekly. It is what we are doing now that lays the ground for the kind of help we will be asking for to make that a reality. And it is all this that we will have to discuss fully at the Expanded REB on December 29.

November 29, 1965

Dear Ted and Suzanne,

In the same breath with which I say, "Great! Hurrah!" about your consent to consider New York as your habitat, let me also say:

Dear Jim and Laurie,

whom I likewise asked to consider New York as their next political-philosophic-organizational place of residence.

The "why" of singling out New York as well as "why" of my seeming to disregard our principle that each is an individual is precisely the specificity of New York in this period of Marxist-Humanism's development when we not only have WLDOR but are projecting though it be in the distant future, a fifth book for which the perspective of a bi-weekly is imperative.

The choice of New York seems to contradict what was the direction ever since 1947, when what was trying hard to come out in the very first post WW II years and I expressed it on my return from France, where I had met both the Camerounian and the French Youth that were breaking with the Socialist Party and had come to what they thought was revolutionary Trotskyism which I had just finished debating at the 4th International, I hoped for the last time. The concrete result was that I announced both to Cannon and to Johnson that I did not wish to continue to live in New York, and I wanted to go to some proletarian concentration like Pittsburgh-West Virginia. But it took to 1950 and the miners' general strike for the difference between me and James on what type of paper a J-F T paper would be as an independent one (see Archives). And even then, so far as being fully aware of what these tensions between me and J. were, nothing short of breaking through on the Absolute Idea, 1953, the continued harassment during the McCarthy period which hit us directly in 1954 and the departure of Johnson and the break up of J-F T in 1955: lead to the appearance, at one and the same time, of two decisions: a) News & Letters as that unique combination of intellectual and Black production worker, and b) to complete Marxism and Freedom which finally announced us as Marxist-Humanists. So, why am I now making a category of New York?

Take the specificity of NY as revealed in my lecture tour there and the fantastic sales of literature, and the very new type of periphery that is present and is not elsewhere at the moment. The new type of periphery is very far from being Marxist-Humanist, but is willing to open new doors for Marxist-Humanism. At the same time the Black dimension in New York is so very international that some circle from the Caribbean to Kenya and South Africa.

Moreover, it isn't true that New York is all intellectual. With new immigrants in the sweatshops and Anne and Bert's return from Mexico, renewal with Latino friends resulted in making the Spanish edition of RLWLKM a "best seller." In the short weeks since the book arrived, they sold 13 copies. In a word, it isn't that we don't have proletarian contact in New York, and it certainly isn't that anything is a substitute for organizational growth in itself as well as for the actuality of a bi-weekly. Rather the concentration on New York. In the context what we will first workout for the whole organization in all its activities and perspectives at the expanded REB 12/29 when we sum up everything since the Plenum and further concretize our Perspectives between 12/29 and the Conbention over Labor Day relates to this projection of four instead of two for NY.

Let me begin with Jim and Laurie; in fact let me begin with Laurie who is a New Yorker even if she lived in New Jersey and New York is a very hard town to live in, as Mary can both testify -- and glorify -- before she has to think about leaving it for Detroit. But most important is that Laurie as Youth and women's liberationist and activist, is most distinctively needed in this period of WLDOR and new type of periphery with those Wlers who have gotten a Marxist-Humanist sense of history in the making. Suzanne too is in the needed category for NY with the added dimension that she is new. The freshness of Marxist-Humanism on the part of one who has come from an entirely different background is precious indeed.

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Because Marxist-Humanism is a whole, it is the revolutionary Independent Marxists' reply to all of what post-Marx Marxism has done to Marx. At one and the same time, Marxist-Humanism tried to recapture the historic link with Marx's, not Engels' Marxism, and is working this out for our age. WLDOR in its very title shows the inseparability of any single force/reason "Reaching for the Future" and thus points to the next stage needed for working out the dialectics as Dialectic of the Party. It means working out the specificity of every aspect of our task, beginning with New York. This means NY must be bigger.

Jim and Ted are very important not only as activists, not only because one of you is adept in moving in academic circles, and one is very knowledgeable about proletarian circles as well as archives, and both are Marxist-Humanist organizers. New York needs strengthening not only because we need to transfer Mary to Detroit and New York would become smaller thereby, but because in this specific moment quantity is quality is concept -- the specific form of the Universal. Just as in the various trips -- to Mexico, to Spain, to Appalachia -- we have begun stressing the new type of collectivity, so in New York we stressed both the local as a collectivity rather than as individuals, and what I am proposing now is four instead of two to New York which will illuminate further what we need to do in this very pivotal period.

I do not think I need to indulge in knowing before I know, in anticipating all of what I mean by "in the context of" for 12/29, of the entire perspectives for the whole organization. Let me just repeat what I am thinking about in just remembering my deadlines for the end of this year -- 1) the new introduction and new appendices to FFSABT; 2) classes as workshops; 3) completion of 30-year Retrospective/Perspective on the 1980s AND 4) though that is by others, I am waiting for Dec 6 which is the date of publication of the post Plenum Bulletin that will include Eugenés -- a sense of 10 years of Perspectives -- Methodology of Marxist-Humanist Perspectives. This is a prime necessity for the classes and is my responsibility for the 12/29 sum-up itself.

For that I need to "disappear" so please "you four" be as precise as you can about your plans for change of residence but ask questions directly to Olga or Mike.

Yours,

RAYA

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