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On Organization And Women's Liberation And The Dialectics Of Revolution

REPORT TO THE 1985 NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES PLENUM

BY OLGA DOMANSKI

NATIONAL CO-ORGANIZER, NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Marxist-Humanist Philosophy In Readers' Views And In News And Letters Committees Organization

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PLUS:

A SUMMARY OF THE PLENUM, HELD AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 1, 1985

Post-Plenum Bulletin #3

October, 1985

NEWS & LETTERS 59 E. VAN BUREN--RM.707 CHICAGO, IL 60605

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Report to News and Letters Plenum, Sept. 1, 1985
by National Co-Organizer, Olga Domanski

ON ORGANIZATION AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND THE DIALECTICS
OF REVOLUTION: REACHING FOR THE FUTURE

It is two months, exactly, since the first draft of this report was given to the Resident Editorial Board on July 1. They have been two months filled with new developments on the objective scene, in every part of the globe, especially the ever-heightening civil war in South Africa, where, with every more bloody crackdown by the apartheid forces, the revolt both deepens and broadens; and the period was marked as well by the rush of the super-powers to nuclear annihilation, with Reagan determined to fire the first volley in his insane Star Wars scheme as his only answer to the world-wide demonstrations on Hiroshima-Day-plus-40 this year; and by the ever-worsening economic plight of the workers at home, which not only has not kept the Massey strikers from continuing their struggle for 11 long months but now sees caravans bringing support from, of all places, destitute Detroit, and caravans of support for embattled steel workers from destitute Chicago.

But those objective developments are not all that has happened since July 1 -- and certainly not what has dictated the different focus of this report from that of the draft. What did shift the focus was the challenge to become a biweekly IF -- and a mighty important IF it is -- we can transform the year ahead of us into preparation for that, financially, politically, organizationally, philosophically. For suddenly, with that stunning proposal, becoming "practicing dialecticians" became an immediate, concrete task, that cannot be separated from any of the other concrete tasks, from walking a picket line to selling a book. Suddenly, there was new urgency to the concept of Marxist-Humanism as a "subjectivity that has absorbed objectivity" and thereby can influence, can help transform, that objective situation. It not only made Lenin's translation of Hegel that "cognition not only reflects the world, but creates it" come very alive -- but it shifted the emphasis of this report, for me, from the view of all our Unfinished Tasks to Marx's beautiful Hegelian view of the "absolute movement of becoming."

All three of the accomplishments that dominated our organizational life over the past 14 months -- whether that was the Big Move of the Center of Marxist-Humanism to Chicago; or whether it was all the work around the Archives (which confirmed that, while Detroit remains firmly their Home, those Marxist-Humanist Archives have been universalized through their objectivity over more than four decades); or whether it was the demanding work to make reality what was still only Idea for a new book when we met in Convention last year, and Raya did not yet even have the contract signed, much less have the actual form and content worked out of what we finally do have between two covers and in hand at this Plenum today!

It is not that all these great tasks we carried out last year do not, indeed, remain Unfinished. It is that our organiza-

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tional "absolute movement of becoming" is concretely what is involved in the challenge we face in the year ahead and the only way those Tasks will become reality, as we work (especially with the new book in hand) to see if N&L can, indeed, become the bi-weekly needed to confront the objective crises we face.

The fact that objectivity and subjectivity can no longer be separated is nowhere more powerfully demonstrated than in just those three so-called objective situations we started with. Take the events in South Africa, which have such world impact, and consider how it happened that, at the REB on April 29 --- which took place at the very height of all the anti-apartheid demonstrations sweeping the land --- it was not those that Raya chose to discuss and then write to the locals about, at once, but Reagan's decision to visit the Bitburg cemetery where Hitler's storm troopers were buried. (I remember it very well, because at Cal State, where I was speaking on the new book that same day, a question had been raised from the audience about Bitburg, and answered, I'm afraid, not very profoundly. In fact, I dare say some might have considered the questioner "over-concerned" with the "Jewish Question." Whereupon, the first letter I found when I returned to Chicago was that week's "Dear Friends" on Bitburg.) Consider how that became the Political-Philosophic Notes for the next issue of N&L, and then look at the Perspectives we just heard yesterday -- where South Africa's Hitlerian visage is revealed as showing us the future for us ALL, if that barbarism is not finally uprooted once and for all -- and then think of what the next issue of N&L, which will carry the excerpts from this Thesis, will mean to the new youth correspondent we have just won in Johannesburg. And what the new book will mean with that powerful 1960 article that ends: "In a society where revolt walks always in the shadow of massacre ... change and revolution have finally become inseparable." It is in the Introduction/Overview of the new book that we are shown that the uniqueness and maturity of the post-World War II generation is precisely because they began asking new questions when WWII ended not only without solving a single question, whether that be Depression or Fascism, but only exacerbating them. And don't stop there -- consider further what all of these relationships mean for the trip to Spain next year.

Or take the Hiroshima-Day-plus-40 demonstrations -- and consider what it means that, in the greeting that was read to both the International Anti-War Assembly in Tokyo on Aug. 4 and to the rallies right here in Chicago, as well as distributed wherever we participated in those demonstrations with the magnificent August-September issue of N&L (that carried on the front page both the beginning of our Draft Perspectives and our greetings to the anti-war assembly), we were able to include that powerful statement that the founder of Marxist-Humanism made to the New Left right in Hiroshima in the mid-60s that "the true day of infamy was not Pearl Harbor's Dec. 7 but Hiroshima's Aug. 6" -- and then consider that that very experience is described along with the full battle of ideas we waged there, in this same new book.

Or take that wonderful caravan -- 200 cars winding through West Virginia from Detroit to the Massey strikers -- and consider how, when Jim and Laurie went to participate in the caravan send-off,

they had to correct those who called this "caravan #2" (referring to an earlier one in 1978), by presenting our pamphlet on the truly historic 49-50 Miners' General Strike and the caravan that proved to be one of its turning points -- and then consider that it is precisely that experience that the reader will find in its philosophic context in the very first paragraph of the very first page of this same new book...

and you already have an idea of what a tremendous year is in store for us ahead, for which the ground has been laid in the three great accomplishments of the year past, unfinished though they are, because it was in working those out that we did find that Marxist-Humanism had an audience, a serious one, this year.

What is it that gave Marxist-Humanism a hearing this past year? Whether we are talking about the mass audience Raya had in Detroit, where the Labor Archives Library was the sponsor; or the outpouring here in Chicago, where we had to work without the help of an official academic sponsor, and where Women's Studies brought a whole class, for the first time; or whether we are talking about the wonderful kinds of audiences we had for the video of March 21 in Salt Lake City, or that Lou had for his classes in American Civilization on Trial; or whether it is the number of reviews (certainly not enough), but just look at the host of places appeared in journals this year. It was a year that began with the Raya/Rosa article in off our backs, then moved to include everything from the review in Dimensions to the Chicago Literary Review, and the whole variety of the reprints of our material elsewhere, that included everything from a Black Journal reprinting the "Black World" review of "We Are Bosses Ourselves" to an Indian journal reprinting the Youth Page column on the Paris Commune. (It is impossible to mention all, but you have surely got a whiff from the display on the walls of this hall.)

And when we are looking at the whole host of ways Marxist-Humanism got a hearing this year, it certainly has to include the impressive number of orders through the mail, and the 40 copies the Bay Area local sold in one day to an international conference on the History of Science, of our new and truly unique pamphlet on Marx's Mathematical Manuscripts that was created right out of the Convention discussion last year.

Isn't this response we have seen this year -- in our audiences, in the reviews, in the reprints, in the impressive number of subs and orders that have come in directly through the mails -- evidence of the fact that objectivity this year is manifested precisely in what seems like subjectivity? Far from that being an "upside down" way to see the world, isn't it one more indication of the maturity of the age we keep talking about? Isn't it evidence of how urgently the need is being seen to find a way out of the counter-revolutions and barbarism confronting us everywhere? Isn't that what makes it urgent for us to finally unite philosophy and organization as one dialectic, not two, in the way it has been expressed this year: "Taking organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanist philosophy," which in its very formulation makes them one? Simply put, isn't the question of how we can win members to News and Letters Committees to share that responsibility with us the measure of whether

or not we have united philosophy and organization? Let's see how that is all spelled out concretely in the task of "selling the new book as founders" next year, with the new book in hand, at last.

First of all, let's acknowledge that while some of us will surely be able to find openings for a full review, or platforms on which we can make a full 45 minute or hour talk on the new book, the truth is that not all of us will be able to expand a presentation that way. But all of us will be participating in one activity or another. And all of us will be meeting new friends, or developing old ones. All of us will be living and working with others in a whole variety of labors.

And, in a certain sense, it doesn't matter whether the problem we have to tackle is how to speak an hour or how to speak five minutes to somebody at a demonstration or a lit table -- because in either case the question of "where to begin?" is determined, more or less, by our audience or by the activity.

Anyone who has simply looked over the Contents Page knows that there is scarcely a subject on earth or a spot on earth that does not have a "starting point" in this wonderful little book. Just consider how the three objective situations we began with today all found a vital relationship to this work.

The truth is, I think, that more than with any of our other works, many readers may want to pick and choose, if not a particular essay, then a certain Part. The question is: where do you take that beginning to make it a "new beginning" for both your audience and you? Ultimately, the new beginning of a relationship to Marxist-Humanism, as philosophy and as organization -- through whatever pathways are created (and that is the creativity that has to fill next year) -- leads through both Part IV and the Introduction/Overview, indeed, as inseparables. Because you cannot answer "Can there be an Organizational Answer?" without the deep dive into philosophy. And it is Part IV we will want to spend a little time on here.

But to get there, although there is no time to take up all four of our forces and Reason of revolution today, let's take two of them, at least, to explore the richness and depth of this work, no matter where we start.

Let's take Labor -- not only because, as we have already seen, it is the very first fact of life and philosophy that this work begins with, but because of the breadth and depth it represents here. Just for the impact of it, look up Labor in your Index. You will see you are directed to also consult Black Dimension, General Strike, Marx's Capital, Reason, and Women Workers -- among others. You will see there, as well, references to everything from intellectuals and workers, mental and manual, skilled and unskilled, to the question of the unemployed -- and a whole host of references on class struggle, with the note that you must also see Women in class struggles. But let's be specific. Let's look at the particularly powerful way Labor is taken up in the article on Japan

in relation to Toyota (and could there possibly be a worker in any industry today, not just auto, who is not concerned with the combined Japanese-U.S. onslaught against working conditions in both lands?)

And then there is the Polish article with its description of Solidarnosc's "horizontal solidarity" -- which surely has a great deal to say to American workers in their struggles right now. And what about Jade's powerful description of her labor in China and the way Marxist-Humanism illuminates that with the simple sub-heading: "ALL Labor is forced labor," but ends that essay by showing that the real power and energy in all our struggles today comes from the power and energy of the Idea of Freedom.

Now -- jam all that power of Ideas against these three little events that I happened to experience within a two-week period earlier this year, and you will see why I thought Labor was the perfect force to start with today. The first was in L.A., where Ned happened to have come in from Oklahoma the very weekend I was there, and was telling us of his experiences on his job. He was discussing the problems of trying to project Marxist-Humanism in the Bible Belt, and was comparing two of his fellow-workers, one who was vocal and militant but still somehow didn't seem a very good candidate for Marxist-Humanist discussion, and the other a very quiet guy Ned certainly considered even less a candidate -- until the day he discovered that his quiet friend was reading the Communist Manifesto.

The second experience came a week later when I was in Salt Lake City, and in between the radio interview and a meeting Ted and I ran to the unemployment office to sell N&L. We sold a reasonable number but the most thought-provoking discussion was with one young worker who was resisting buying one. He was wearing a union hat and announced that he was going to be going to an AFL-type conference there the next week -- you know, the kind that "only little bureaucrats attend" -- and I surely didn't think he was on a list of those most likely to be interested in Marxist-Humanism, when he suddenly said that the reason he was hesitating to buy N&L was because he didn't get time to read much and he was still trying to finish the copy of -- you guessed it -- the Communist Manifesto he had recently bought somewhere.

OK, now the third. I came back to Chicago and Mike was giving a report of a picket line he had just participated in. He described the kind of discussion about our "workers' paper" he was having with the pickets, when one young worker asked him, "what's the difference between News & Letters and this?" And he pulled out the IS paper, pointing out that they are also opposed to both the U.S. and Russia and that they had workers' stories, too. And Mike suddenly found himself having a most illuminating discussion of post-Marx Marxism in a very concrete situation, right there and then.

Please believe me -- I am not ready to conclude that the American working class is suddenly all reading the Communist Manifesto or ready to join News and Letters Committees, en masse! But I am saying that we will find out plenty when we take this book into our activities this year, all of our activities, including picket lines.

I want to make Women the other force to take up today, because I sometimes wonder whether, in stretching so far to make it clear to ourselves that this book is about all the forces of revolution, not Women's Liberation alone, we might forget that not only is Woman a vital one of those forces, but it is because the focus is on only this one force, which is seen as both force and as Reason -- it is because, that is, the focus is on dialectics of revolution, to which dialectics of thought is integral -- that all the forces are there. And we want to make it with some Women's Liberationists this time.

There is not a single serious question that the Women's Liberation Movement has raised that is not here in this book. Not one. Moreover, precisely because the essays can be read separately and yet the "totality" is there; precisely because they are deceptively simple and short; precisely because they are all concrete, naming names, naming events, both in history past and history as it is being made -- it is not only not wrong, but would open doors everywhere for us to emphasize the importance of this fantastic collection as the most comprehensive kind of journalistic reporting -- just plain "reporting" -- and let the philosophy flow on its own. Which it will.

Let's take up the short, so-called reportorial article on the Houston Conference for International Women's Year, 1977. I want to take that essay out of the more than two dozen here (any one of which we could take) because if we missed the philosophy that was being projected in that brief report then, which it was up to us to develop as methodology and then as our practice in everything we would be doing in the WLM from then on -- we surely cannot miss it now, in the new form in which the International Women's Decade Conference, just concluded in Kenya, was taken up in the Perspectives Draft this year. It is not only that the Black dimension as Reason permeates both columns, or that the critique of the rulers and their representatives is made all the sharper by showing how those Conferences were transformed despite the leaders, by the spontaneous outpouring that accompanied both (what conference in the whole last two decades as not surprised its organizers most of all, in the depth and the breadth of the outpourings?)

It is not only that, in both, what comes through is the importance of, not what was decided there, but what would come after, and we can find "new beginnings" if our ears are listening both to all the new voices and to a philosophy of revolution.

All that is true, but, for us as Marxist-Humanists, the most significant aspect of that little column in December, 1977 is that it was right there that the column title, "Woman as Reason", which we had just decided upon at the Plenum two months earlier, was shown to be "Woman as Reason -- and as revolutionary." That, this most concrete little report declared, "unfolds an entirely new banner," adding, "nothing short of it will help uproot this exploitative, sexist, racist society."

Originally, this little essay was supposed to end Part III on "Is There an Organizational Answer?" and be the transition to Part IV. For, as we have said, you cannot answer that question

without the plunge into philosophy. What is important to see is that the question is not original to the WIM, but that it was they who asked it in so new a way that it opened all sorts of new doors. But they didn't walk through them. The philosopher of Marxist-Humanism did -- and made new discoveries for the whole freedom movement thereby.

As it developed, this little article on the IWY Houston Conference became the transition, first, to the Political-Philosophic Letter on the "Unfinished Latin American Revolutions" and the magnificent exchange with Frondizi -- and then we reached Part IV.

The two sections of Part IV -- "The Trail to the 1980s, The Missing Link -- Philosophy -- in the Relationship of Revolution to Organization -- were originally two separate Parts, until Raya decided it was essential to unite the concept of "The Trail to the 1980s" (which had at first been considered as the title for only the final Part) with the whole of Marx's total philosophy and the totality of today's global crises. You could say that the first section centers primarily on the Grundrisse and the second on the Ethnological Notebooks -- but from beginning to end, to me, this whole Part IV is a demonstration that Marx's profoundly beautiful expression -- "absolute movement of becoming" -- permeated and is the methodology not only of the Grundrisse and all of Marx's works, but of all the works of Marxist-Humanism, which is Marx's Marxism for our age. And which is why I believe "absolute movement of becoming" -- through overcoming all the contradictions, including (or perhaps more correctly, especially) those from within ourselves -- is so essential for us to grasp organizationally for the year ahead.

With that in mind, it is what the publisher called Chapter 25 -- the "Selected Letters on the Process of Writing Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution" that I want to single out for this Organizational Report. Just consider the Marxist-Humanist uniqueness of wanted to share with everyone who will read them these fantastic letters published just as they were written during the process of working out RLWLKM. They begin in August 1978 and don't end until March 1981, and the objective situations of those three years are certainly embedded in them -- most essentially the Iranian Revolution and swift counter-revolution from out of that revolution, but also Poland, and Portugal, and China.

And you see the no-holds-barred battles with the Evelyn Reeds as well as the Sheila Rowbothams, the Mary-Alice Waters as well as the Simone de Beauvoirs. You read the moving letter on Erich Fromm's death and the stinging critique of Herbert Marcuse. These letters are not a substitute for the finished, worked out chapters of the actual book, but a magnificent summary of some points and expansion of others. And you cannot help feeling that the freedom that the letter-form gives is what makes them so powerful and exciting, as some of the deepest philosophic problems are worked out right before your eyes.

What marks them most of all is that they are letters to us -- and the most highly and deeply philosophic-organizational thereby. But it was not until I was re-reading them last week that I realized that, when you read them carefully, you become witness -- in the three final letters, written between Nov. 3, 1980 and Jan. 30, 1981 -- to the process whereby the profound new category of post-Marx Marxist was created as pejorative.

The first, Nov. 3, 1980, is the one that tells us that Marx's philosophy of revolution refused to be confined to a single chapter (this author really does active battle with her subject matter!) -- and it would have to become a whole new Part Two. The next letter, Dec. 16, 1980, tells us that everything is almost finished, and the final chapter is being called "Philosopher of Permanent Revolution and Organization Man." And then, on Jan. 30, 1981 we are suddenly told, "One more new moment has arisen in the book" -- this time, Women's Liberation, too, will have to become a whole Part, not a single chapter.

What becomes clear is that that could not have happened without first working out what we now know as Part III on Marx's Marxism. For then, Raya writes, "Clearly, the new Part II I am proposing will not be just a critique of modern women's liberationist theorists, but a critique of all post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels' Origin of the Family..." Isn't it a jolt, to think, then, of how long it took us to actually grasp that this category is what Raya considers the greatest contribution of the third of our trilogy?

These fantastic letters are then followed by the full presentation of the three Parts as a whole on March 16, 1981, with that amazing little starred footnote on p. 255: "Before the book was actually published, Chapter 11 was expanded to become a whole new Chapter 12, 'The Last Writings of Marx Point a Trail to the 1980s.'" Which is what the rest of the book, including the new paragraphs added even after publication, addresses most precisely.

There is no way we can let anyone of the hundreds we will be meeting with this book not know that the 1980s view is Marxist-Humanism, spelled out as News and Letters Committees. That is the most wonderful aspect of having the special label, inviting dialogue with the author and with N&L Committees -- for we will meet many new friends in the year ahead, to be sure.

This little book holds the key to understanding why the Call to this Plenum pointed us back to the 1981 Call as the point where the expression, "Organizational Responsibility for the Marxist-Humanist philosophy of liberation" -- which we have been working out ever since our birth -- was first made into a category and pitted against the ominous nature of our age because of Reagan's coming to power.

The expansion of Chapter 11 to become a whole new Chapter 12 was because the organization so much loved that original final chapter on Marx as creator of the ground for organization, that Raya felt it necessary to make clear that ground was not yet the answer, but only the all-important way to get to the answer.

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The expression, "Selling the new book as founders", is not new with us this year. We talked of that and have tried to practice it with every work since Marxism and Freedom. But Gary caught what was new in that category this year, and Peter articulated it beautifully in the Youth Bulletin: "Selling the new book as founders isn't a quantitative question of making believe you as a youth were there from the beginning, nor a question of just presenting lists of what we have done since our birth. It is a question of finding ever-more creative ways to present this body of ideas to others in strict relation to the objective situation and the questions posed by those we are working with."

That is what is meant by saying that this book -- the first that presents the dialectical development of Marxist-Humanism itself, as philosophy and as organization -- is not only for studying (though that may be where it begins) but for doing.

Indeed, it is not only "selling as founders" but all the categories of our activities, even some that may seem well-worn, that are new this year. Take the idea of a sub-drive. While it was certainly great to see the response from the outside, both in our pre-publication orders and in the subs that kept coming in so well through the mail, we have to confront whether it didn't mean that our own sub-drive was carried out only "routinely" (successful as it may have been in some respects) when it was dropped so completely after the official three months of the so-called "drive." It is not only that "drive" means nothing if it doesn't mean the energy that Ideas create. It is that subs and sales flow from your activities when there is no separation between philosophy and organization. And what is totally new this year is that our drive will be integral to an Appeal to all our readers to help us establish a fund to expand N&L into the bi-weekly we have in our sights.

The classes, too, this year have that goal in mind, and are completely new -- workshops that certainly have an affinity to an editing session but must be steeped at one and the same time in history and philosophy.

And what of "Have Thumb, Will Travel" that so distinguished our Marx Centenary Year in 1983? There is no denying that the most overwhelming travel in 1984 was from Detroit to Chicago (along with Kevin's move from N.Y. to Chicago and Mary's from Bay Area to New York). And the travel highlight of this year was certainly March 21, which took us right back to Detroit for the magnificent Archives experience. But the truth is that the new development last year, in the expansion of our activities, was our intervention as Marxist-Humanists in a wide variety of forums, debates, conferences, and a whole host of platforms for N&L Committees, which saw quite a bit of "Have Thumb, Will Travel" for many of us.

But what makes the category so new this year, of course, are all the new kinds of collectivities that we will see in the planned trips and the kind of outreach we are attempting in those trips that will take us everywhere from Mexico to India, and from Spain to Kentucky.

Everywhere, in every activity, what the work will focus around is our new book (which should be waiting for you on your re-

turn from this Plenum) and, by January, a whole new pamphlet on the 30 Year Retrospective of N&L since our birth, together with the Perspectives Thesis that has flowed out of this Plenum. And soon after, we will have the new edition of the Frantz Fanon pamphlet that could not be coming out at a better time, both objectively and subjectively. And is there a single one of our trilogy or our pamphlets that is not integral to the way we will be able to work with this new book?

Because what motivates this entire collection is the need to transform reality and overcome today's crises; because it is in opposition to all other post-Marx Marxists that we have worked out the fullness of our own philosophy; because we have discovered that Marx's philosophy of revolution-in-permanence is the ground for the organization needed for that total uprooting; and because we are firmly rooted in that ground, though we do not have all the answers -- the kinds of discussions we begin with this new book and in all our activities this year will be part of finding those answers.

It was great, indeed, that we were able to end the momentous year we have just experienced with some modest (all too modest, to be sure) membership growth. In the year ahead -- on the way to "a bi-weekly if" -- we are sure to find others who want to share the excitement of an "absolute movement of becoming" by accepting the organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism with us.

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REPORT TO PLENUM ON "MARXIST-HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY
IN READERS' VIEWS AND IN NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES ORGANIZATION"

I. What is New in the Marxist-Humanist Categories of Readers' Views and of News and Letters Committees Organization -- and why do we link them here?

Never before at a national gathering such as this have we sought to take up in a single report the two seemingly divergent and unconnected categories of Readers' Views and of News and Letters Committees (NLC) organization. The one concerned with those little informal comments in the centerfold of News & Letters each month; the other spelled out precisely in our Constitution, amended three times since 1956. We do so now because we have taken the "trail to the 1980s", a trail not alone from Marx's last decade and his Archives, but from four long decades in the self-development of the Idea of Marxist-Humanism, and our Archives.

Thus when we ask "what is new" in these categories, it signals not alone a question of chronology, but rather a deeper probing into the historic-philosophic new for our epoch, including a probing we now undertake into the "dialectics of the party", which could only have fully begun once Chapter 12 of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution created the category "post-Marx Marxists", and included within it not only Luxemburg and Lenin, but Engels.

At the same time the proposal that in the next year we prepare to transform N&L into a bi-weekly demands so new a relation between organization of thought, as expressed in our newspaper, and the organization of Marxist-Humanists, NLC, as well as of readers to writers, "outside" to "inside", that we have to raise again what Raya posed at the Resident Editorial Board, October 22, 1984. She said:

"Although we have existed some 30 years as Marxist-Humanists (and as many as 43 years implicitly so with state-capitalist theory) we have been taking altogether too much for granted the whole of question of organization, as if we were making so many original contributions to theory meant that organization would come by itself". And she goes on to say: "Have we really been practicing the single dialectic of subjective and objective development when it comes to organization? I think not."

This attack on "taking for granted" says to me: Look, we've tried to work out the dialectic of organization, but we have a long ways to go. We have to be sure we know what we have achieved and what we haven't. And what Readers' Views means in that context

is two-fold: 1) that they illuminate in a very concrete way how far we have or haven't gotten, and 2) that the creative labor of working with RVs can be one of the pathways helping us work out the dialectics of organization.

The absolute opposite to the kind of taking for granted Raya critiques, is, I would argue, to take a "1980s view". I want to stop here and say that I don't think a 1980s view is a question of time alone, of the "maturity of the age". Rather, the "1980s views" Raya has been taking since completing the trilogy of revolution have a uniquely Marxist-Humanist character. Remember how Raya opens Ch. 1 of Philosophy & Revolution, proposing to seek the full expression of Hegel's Absolutes by "subjecting" them to Absolute Method? That was the path to the creation of the epochal new concept -- Absolute Idea as New Beginning. So it is with the "1980s Views". Except, instead of focusing on Hegel's Absolutes, they seek to subject the Absolute of our age -- Marxist-Humanism -- to its method. And not for the sake of method, but for the full unfoldment and expression of the goal.

Let's attempt a "1980s View" of RVs and our organization. RVs are at one and the same time the place where "inside" meets "outside", where the new impulses from subjects of revolution are recorded, and they are the place where our projection of Marxist-Humanism, which helps to create those responses, is tested in the battle of ideas.

Listen to how the beginnings of RVs were described in the N&L 30 Year Retrospective:

"Readers' Views ^{were} created to give priority not merely to letters to the editor, but also to unwritten letters, i.e. to views of non-members, often only spoken. The purpose of this section was to reveal what people thought and said of the world, and of their own lives, which would not depend on whether or not they were writers. Rather, it was a question of our members needing to be alert to what the masses said to each other, what they thought, how they felt, whether at work or just on public transportation. Involved here is the whole concept of oral history".

"Oral history" had from its beginning an entirely different meaning for Marxist-Humanism than for the social sciences, who, since the 1960s have seized upon it as a tool of analysis to uncover the structure and function of society as it is. For us, oral history always meant the expression of new passions and new forces to uproot society as it is.

Nor did our concept of it have anything in common with the way Engels, in his footnote to the 1888 English edition of the Communist Manifesto, sought to divide the dialectic of written history from

that of unwritten by removing the class struggle from the latter. On the contrary, the contradictions within forces of revolution, whether literate or illiterate -- workers, Blacks, women, youth -- were not skipped over in N&L. RVs presented revolutionary ideas as they actually emerged, entangled with the baggage of bourgeois ideology.

The Marxist-Humanist concept of RVs broke first with the view Lenin had adopted from Kautsky in What is to be Done?, that socialist consciousness is something introduced to the working class from outside, from the intelligensia. But we broke also with those who would place all responsibility for thought on the shoulders of the workers, truncating the role of the revolutionary organization to "full fountain pens". In our very first 1955 Conference Bulletin, as we were preparing for Volume 1, #1 of N&L, Raya insisted: "We have a function. It is to clarify workers' politics. We don't only talk and listen to workers. We introduce subjects to them. We give a logical organization to their instincts, impulses, gripes, desires".

What does it mean to create categories in thought, as we seek to do every month in RVs? How does it illuminate the way organization of thought drives organizational practice? For Hegel, this question reaches the Absolute in the last paragraph of the Phenomenology: "The goal, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves, and as they accomplish the organization of their realm. Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; but regarded from the side of their philosophically comprehended organization, it is the science in which knowledge appears . . ."

The categories of RVs come to life in N&L as they appear within the philosophic structure of the paper, a structure that jams a view from the shop floor with a Lead on international events and with a dialogue on problems of history and philosophy in "Theory/Practice". They give each comment a new quality, and that quality is our contribution. It illuminates not only RVs, but what we have uniquely developed as organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanist philosophy.

And yet, how do we often express that uniqueness in our daily activity? When we are talking with workers on a picket line and want to explain what kind of group we are, don't we often say something like: "We are against capitalism, not only Reagan's kind, but what they call socialism in Russia and China -- that's capitalism too. We don't believe in the vanguard party to lead the workers. We have a decentralized committee form of organization, which offers more freedom than the vanguard party."

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And how do we explain RVs? Don't we say: "We have broken with the old radicals' view that revolutionary consciousness comes from outside the working class. We print their voices -- workers, Blacks, women, youth -- in N&L, so that intellectuals can learn from them".

What these expressions -- on RVs and on our form of organization -- reveal, by being only halfway-dialectical by missing the uniquely Marxist-Humanist contribution, is how easy it is, even today, to fall back into the profound dualism which permeated both of those categories in the period of the "united state-capitalist tendency", before NLC were born.

II. Dualities: Organization and Readers' Views in the State-Capitalist Tendency

Try to answer a simple question: when did the state-capitalist tendency break with the vanguard party form of organization and pose the committee-form as its alternative? You won't find the answer by reading C.L.R. James' writings from 1945 to 1954, whether you examine Education, Propaganda, Agitation, on "building the mass Bolshevik party" in the U.S., or study the section on "The Theory of the Party" in State-Capitalism and World Revolution. Correspondence Committees, which was born in 1951 and lived without a Constitution until 1955, proclaimed: "We are finished with the old radicals and their concept of organization". And yet CLRJ never worked out the "dialectics of the party" that was the quest of so many letters.

What got substituted for the dialectics of organization was CLRJ's theory of "layers", which he imposed as the form of organization on Correspondence Committees. The third layer (the workers) were to struggle with the second layer (the intellectuals), while CLRJ observed as "critic" and made sure that the whole form was both unorganized and rootless. The fact is that Correspondence Committees never established a philosophic-historic basis for working out the "dialectics of the party".

The practice of CLRJ's theory of layers was no where better revealed than in his use of "Readers' Views" as a battering ram against Raya. Though they began under that name in issue #4 of Correspondence, the context of their origin as early as 1953 in mimeoed Correspondence was one of Civil War between two tendencies. And where for Marxist-Humanism the concept was tied to the struggle to abolish the division between mental and manual labor, its purpose here was above all factional.

"A 1980s View" of duality in the pre-Marxist-Humanist concept of RVs would have to include the contrast between two works of that

period that are not, strictly speaking, RVs at all. One is James' direction of the 1952 edition of Indignant Heart, the other is the 1953 work Raya created with Charles Denby when Stalin died -- "Then and Now". Just ask: how did each listen to Denby's magnificent "voice from below", and where does each work lead today

CLRJ so stunted 1952 IH to fit his purposes that it excluded any account of how Denby worked to organize autoworkers' support for the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike against automation. James thus was not listening to precisely what was new in the workers' opposition to the new stage of production, and he reached a philosophic dead-end. For him, no new stage of cognition was born out of the new stage of production. The great discontinuity between the 1952 edition of IH and the 1978 edition, which Denby titled Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal, stems from the great divide between Jamesism and Marxist-Humanism.

"Then and Now" dates from that same period, and it began simply by Raya asking Denby, "What are workers in your shop saying about Stalin's death?". Yet look at the way Denby's report of workers saying "I have just the one to take Stalin's place -- my foreman", sent Raya first to writing it up in the context of the 1920-21 Trade Union debate between Lenin and Trotsky, and then to considering the new questions Denby and other workers had raised in the context of a re-examination of Hegel's Absolute Idea. Denby's comments became, in this philosophic framework, a crucial moment on the path to the discovery of the category of a "movement from practice that is itself a form of theory". "Then and Now" still speaks to us today. It reveals the kind of elicitation that makes workers' comments into the Notion, "Workers as Reason".

III. Struggles in the Self-Realization of the Idea, as seen in Readers' Views and in our organization

The creation of the newspaper N&L and the organization, News and Letters Committees, was a deep discontinuity with what had gone before. You can get a very good concrete view of that in John's 1956 bulletin, "Johnsonism: a political appraisal". But at the same time it was a path-breaking continuity with a different correspondence committee -- the International Communist Correspondence Committee, created by Marx in 1846, when he was exiled in Brussels. He had listened to workers in Paris and wrote of their "freshness" and "nobility". And he had listened so well that the 1844 Humanist Essays brought to birth a whole new continent of thought and of revolution. And now he asked socialist intellectuals -- Proudhon and others -- to listen to them also. He didn't call it "RVs", but it was not limited to being full fountain pens either. The correspondence Marx sought was to be a battle of ideas on socialism -- to listen to workers, and to listen to Marx also.

N&L in our age got the chance to develop in practice what Marx could only pose in embryo in his. The first bound volume of N&L reveals the expression of each subject of revolution as a category of RVs. Read through those early years and you will find the wealth of comments that went into M&F, from the coal mines and auto plants to views of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Hungarian Revolution.

But it is only with the completion of M&F, which presented these expressions of the maturity of the age in their historic-philosophic context, that we were able to speak not alone of Marx's Humanism, but finally to dare to call our original contribution by its own name-- Marxist-Humanism. That was in June, 1957. Even then, more than a full year passed before "Marxist-Humanism" became the title of a category in RVs. M&F brought debates on theory into the RVs pages. Readers posed questions about NLC as organization, and we sought to answer those questions. Indeed, the history of Marxist-Humanism shows that each book of the trilogy of revolution has been accompanied by a new look at organization, whether the discussion on "organizational consciousness" and how it could lead to "organization building" after Marxism and Freedom; "Philosophy & Revolution as organization builder" in 1973, with its startling statement that "Lenin was a "Lassalleian" or "Organization, Organization, Organization" in 1979, after the publication of the first draft chapter of RLWLKM.

What characterizes 30 years of RVs are the struggles in the self-realization of the Idea, struggles also carried on in our Constitution. In 1956 we said: "We make no pretense of being a political party." We called ourselves News and Letters Committees. And we saw the committee form of organization as a powerful negation of the bankruptcy of the party-to-lead. But we made no endorsement of the committee-form as the only form of organization for Marxist-Humanist philosophic expression. Yes, that is the form the workers took that same year in Hungary, when they established Workers' Councils. But the mass revolutionary form of organization is not the same thing as working out the "dialectics of organization".

When we did speak directly on philosophy and organization was in the 1973 and 1982 amendments to our Constitution. They are not on the committee-form; they are on the "integrality of philosophy and organization". I would argue that form of organization by itself is an incomplete question. If the organization of thought as Absolute Idea isn't ground for organization, then the form becomes no more than an empty abstraction, saying you don't know where and to what it will lead.

"Organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanist philosophy" can only escape that realm of empty abstraction when it is concrete. Consider how that most concrete form, RVs, projected that

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philosophy. Take the document that P&R calls "a new divide in Marxism" -- the 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea. We were very proud that our first pamphlet in 1955 published Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks together with those 1953 letters. The letters were, we remember, written out of a drive to work out the "dialectics of the party", and we were convinced that they represented the basis for News and Letters Committees.

But what did we tell the readers of N&L, those whose voices from below we recorded so well in RVs? The little ads for the pamphlet only mentioned Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, never the 1953 Letters, and Raya's name did not even appear as a translator. No RV ever discussed the pamphlet, either on Lenin's work or Dunayevskaya's.

That was some 30 years ago, and we have come a very long way since. But such difficulties did not end for us in 1955. We can trace how RVs failed to respond to the "Newness of Our Philosophic-Historic Contribution" in 1969, or even see what minimal attention we gave this year to Raya's December 30th presentation: "Responsibility for Marxist-Humanism in the Historic Mirror: a Revolutionary-Critical Look". Why is it, we ask, that when the highest expressions of our philosophy are produced, we suddenly erect great barriers between "inside" and "outside", and become shy? Because RVs offer a far-reaching test of the extent to which Marxist-Humanist philosophy knows itself organizationally, and point out our troubles, it becomes imperative to focus attention on a transition point which can help us now to prepare for the new demands we will face with a bi-weekly N&L.

I am referring to the moment when RLWLKM was nearing completion, and suddenly the "trail to the 1980s" from the totality of Marx's Archives both gave us a new appreciation of Marxist-Humanism's Archives and led Raya to create Chapter 12's category: "post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels". I am concerned here not with the events of 1981, however, but with our understanding of them in 1985, and what they mean for our future in 1986. Olga will take up the way they are manifested in Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future tomorrow, but here I want to stress that the deep involvement of the whole organization in the process by which this category came to be allowed us to see that the self-development of the Idea of Marxist-Humanism is not limited to the maturity of the age, to its magnificent new passions and new forces. On the contrary, in stressing that the 30 years movements from practice have given us contributions that are both unique and unfinished, we saw that the drive of the Idea for full expression is fueled also by the battle of ideas with other tendencies. And those battles with every halfway-dialectic, beginning with Engels, are an important part of the process of deepening our own Idea.

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Just look at the RVs pages during Raya's Marx Centenary Tour in 1983, when others were having their own celebrations, and you will see how that Tour began to change the way we viewed our own contribution. Then look at the responses to Raya's column on Terrell Carver in 1984, and at the highpoint of RVs this year -- the special half-page "from the Archives lecture audience" -- and you will see some of the openings that the category "post-Marx Marxism" has created.

IV. Can Readers' Views and News and Letters Committees Organization Help Each Other Develop?

"Being alert" to "what the masses said to each other, what they thought, how they felt", has provided us this year, as it has since 1955, with a rich source of RVs. It is here that we present, in a very different language, Hegel's magnificent declaration of "objective world whose inner ground and actual persistence is the Notion". Readers' Views from the shops and high schools, from anti-war protests and Free South Africa demonstrations, from literature tables and Women's Liberation meetings, were sent in by the comrades, and quite a few arrived spontaneously from readers. Some of the best came during our sub drive last fall, as readers spoke also of their views of our newspaper.

But what happens after a RV is printed in N&L, and what happens after a subscription is entered for a new friend? ("What happens after", is, after all, not only a question about an event as big as a revolution.) If we go through the labor of placing that RV in a philosophic context, investing it with a new quality, and then fail to discuss that labor, that context, with the author of the RV, aren't we stripping RVs of their uniquely Marxist-Humanist stamp? And if we allow the sale of a subscription to be the end of discussion, rather than seeing each issue as a point of departure, aren't we missing the way a determination to end the division between readers and writers can become a pathway to membership growth?

Immediately, we can test ourselves by visiting those who subscribed a year ago, during our subscription drive, and, while asking for subscription renewals, discuss with them our preparations to deepen N&L into a bi-weekly. The kind of Appeal we plan for this year will develop as never before the category of subscriber to N&L, underlining the uniqueness of that friend who has the opportunity to trace our revolutionary journalism over a whole year or more of development, and now to participate in it -- in writing and with financial support.

Our greatest difficulties last year remained in the process of getting RVs on philosophy, on theory. They are not so often the RVs

you overhear on the "L" or at work; nor are they alone a question of eliciting. Rather, such RVs turn on the question of how we work with N&L, how we project the paper as a totality of philosophy and organization that offers its readers a new beginning for their own development. As Denby pointed out at the 1981 Plenum, writing RVs ourselves on Essay articles or Theory/Practice columns is no substitute for the hard labor of developing friends and subscribers.

What can help us in this is the creation of RV categories by the editor of the page in such a way that its underlying philosophy is made explicit, as Olga did so creatively with the category "Philosophy and Revolution" in the 1970s -- as both title of the book and inner ground of the age.

The new category that was the highpoint of RVs this year was the special half-page of RVs from the Archives lecture audience, recorded in the intense discussions that followed Raya's March 21st lecture at Wayne State University. They demonstrated better than anything we could say, the deep appreciation that workers, Black and white, as well as serious activists and intellectuals who came, have for Raya Dunayevskaya as founder of a philosophy of liberation.

Some of the RVs we seek will be ones that differ with Marxist-Humanism. That is part of what we mean by the battle of ideas that is urgently needed in the movement after the tragedy of Grenada. The other part is the way such a battle tests our own projection of our concrete-Universal. Isn't such testing, such development of ourselves, involved in the decision to renew our 1983 Marx Centenary Year category of "Have Thumb, Will Travel" with such new collectivities of trips everywhere from Mexico to Appalachia, from Spain to India? Those trips will themselves be such important dialogues, that whether they appear in RVs or not, they are sure to make their way into the pages of N&L.

And then there is the richest new source of RVs of all -- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future. Raya's decision -- for the first time ever in one of her books -- to invite readers to write to her at N&L in Chicago, speaks volumes about the importance we place on dialogue in this period. It is sure to elicit responses from readers we might otherwise have never known. But we aren't simply going to wait for the letters to come in either. Every sale of a book, every delivery of one already paid through a pre-publication order, can be the ground for a discussion of why he or she bought this book at this moment in their life or the life of the movement.

Can we propose here that organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanist philosophy include a new test for each of us -- that we set ourselves a goal of seeking to send to the Center one

RV each issue. It can be one overheard at work, or from a discussion at a literature table, or in a meeting with a subscriber who is reading WLDR. We have to think of the full range of RVs. Carrying out such a perspective will help each of us prepare for the bi-weekly N&L, and at the same time, illuminate the way RVs and NLC organization can help each other develop. I hasten to say that, naturally, if everyone carried out this Perspective each month, we couldn't print all the RVs -- but wouldn't we learn something from the process?

In place of a conclusion, I want to return to WLDR, as it relates to the problem of this report. We have correctly concentrated these past months in our study of the book, on its "Introduction/Overview". But here I think its last chapter, "Answers to Questions Raised During the Marx Centenary Lecture Tour on the Book", deserves equal attention, especially its very last "answer", on the relationship of a philosophy of revolution to organization. In the Plenum Call, Raya pointed to the way Lenin's unchaining of the dialectic got stuck in his 1902-03 concept of the vanguard party, and then says that today's urgent need is for the further development of the New Continent of Thought that Marxist-Humanism has created, the need to so fully follow-through on the Absolute for our age that "getting stuck" in the dialectics of organization is not going to be the fate of this epoch.

That need for further development of our new continent of thought is not for any purposes separable from its new continent of revolution, our ongoing labor with all the freedom movements seeking to create a human society out of this counter-revolutionary one under which we are living. It is in that sense that singling out what is new -- epochally new -- in the Marxist-Humanist concept of RVs and of our organization can help us this year.

-- Michael Connolly
August 31, 1985