

March 28, 1983

Dear Friends:

The East Coast tour began with the Sunday, March 13, regular New York local meeting, where Teru was presenting Part II of the new book, and related it to the latest situation of virulent racism in Chicago, following Harold Washington's nomination. I took advantage of the fact that I was present at the meeting in an "un-scheduled" way to speak on two points: 1) I called attention to the fact that having one's eyes always on the objective situation in this way, when one speaks on the book, is a good way to practice the relationship of objective to subjective; and 2) I also expanded on the report from Andy on the West Virginia lecture, which was read at this meeting, in order both to describe what West Virginia was like 34 years ago during the '49-50 miners' General Strike, and to develop Hegel's concept of return, not as a mere repetition of the old, but as a return to a previous state when that is so enriched by 34 years of experience and self-determination of the Idea that we have reached Absolute Idea as New Beginning.

That may be a peculiar way to start this report of the New York tour, but the fact that I appeared at that local meeting where we had such a discussion underlines the focal point of this tour, the coming convention, and the relationship of the new book to both.

Take the most unique aspect of the New York tour -- the mass media (and, indeed, I doubt any other local could attain as much on that question). First and foremost was the interview on an all-Black radio station that has no less than 105 outlets nationally. Not only was this the first time we have had the Black media as a platform in this way, but what was especially important was that, although the interview was only a brief 15 minutes, the Black woman who interviewed me was so excited by the many points I presented -- constantly shifting from America to Africa, from the West Indies to Latin America, from young Black women like Miriam Gafoor of South Africa to women in the U.S. like Maria Stewart in 1831 as well as those in our own age -- that the last words from her in the interview were: "This has certainly been a learning experience for me!"

The next interview was on a very different kind of station: a half-hour interview by Casper Citron. Although it centered on the book, I had the opportunity to criticize the current events since Andropov came to power.

A third interview lasted an entire hour with Bertell Ollman on the educational station there -- the only one in the country that devotes a full hour weekly to different tendencies within Marxism. This interview will not be aired until June. The interview on the Black stations will be heard in April. And the Casper Citron show airs today. Obviously, New York will not be finished with me for a long time.

As for the five scheduled public meetings, forget that number. I believe it was closer to eight or nine if they are ever counted. R has summarized, briefly, both the first, at Hunter College where our youngest member, Craig, was chairman, and the one at New School: "Approximately 50 attended the Hunter College lecture despite competition with a free showing of the movie, 'Missing,' in the main Assembly Hall and the unfortunate coincidence of a general student body meeting on a recently announced tuition hike. The

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audience consisted of old friends and several new people, including some Third World students -- which was reflected in the good literature sales on the Black dimension as well as 2 copies of RL, WL, KM... The best attended of all the lectures was at the New School, where 75 crowded in to hear a critique of post-Marx Marxists. It was a little disconcerting to notice that nearly all the audience, except our own 'outside' contacts were men. A substantial number were Iranian, Pakistani, or other Third World. It appeared that this audience at the most sophisticated of radical/theoretical schools was on the whole a little stunned by the comprehensiveness of what they heard. Unfortunately, the level of the discussion did not begin to match the presentation, as it bogged down in assertions of Marxism as Structuralist, or Science, or purely Objective. Nonetheless, each of these assertions was met by a capsule history of Marx's humanism, and of Marxist-Humanism through three books that represent 30 years of labor and development."

As for CUNY, which heard a lecture on the Ethnological Notebooks, it was there that I developed for the first time the question of new moments as impossible to catch without catching the very first moment of discovery of that new continent of thought and revolution, especially as that discovery related both to Women's Liberation and to the Third World. It was at CUNY, also, that we had with us in the audience women who came clearly hostile to post-Marx Marxist attitudes to WL, and who, upon hearing me read the two pages from the new book that present the uniqueness of today's WL and its critique of such attitudes, promptly decided to come to all the rest of my meetings to follow this through, including the final sum-up at the local.

In between the New York lectures, I went to Philadelphia for the lecture at the University of Pa. -- which was the most disgusting, professorily speaking, and the most exciting in other ways. The disgusting aspect arose from the fact that although this was scheduled for Women's History Week, it had been decided that the topic being "German", a German specialist was needed -- who turned out to be a male, a reactionary, and someone who thought he was to give the political line and I was to talk about flowers, birds and bees. I need hardly tell you that is not what happened. I was so furious when he took up 15 minutes of the time, not to introduce me, other than giving my name, but to try to usurp the political importance (or to him, non-importance) of Luxemburg -- daring to refer to the betrayers as the Socialists -- that I yelled out so loud you could have heard me back in New York: "Do you know what Luxemburg called them? A STINKING corpse!" After which, when I finally got the floor, I hit so hard at his male chauvinism and just plain ignorance as contrasted to the genius of Luxemburg and of Marx's philosophy of revolution, that the young students in the audience gave me a thundering ovation while he got no applause whatsoever. The talk had been taped by the anarchist group called The Wooden Shoe Bookstore to play over their radio station; we had a good sale of literature; and six signed the list for further contact with us.

The total lit sold at all four meetings came to \$148.80 including 7 copies of the new book; 2 P&R, and copies of a very wide variety of all our other pamphlets. You have already received a copy of the excellent article Anne got into Off Our Backs before the tour began, and R got an article into the Hunter College paper before and another after the lecture there.

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I must also report that even before the Hunter lecture, the very first lecture I presented was to Kevin's class, which is studying RLWLKM as a Sociology course. The discussion there was more profound in many ways than that from some of the audiences at the more "prestigious" schools -- and three of the students felt especially close to Marxist-Humanism, with one of them coming to our sum-up meeting.

On my last day, just before that sum-up, came still another interview -- this one full of still more surprises and important new features. Tamiment Library, which owns my Archives collection, is preparing what they are calling an "Oral History of the Left," and had requested an interview with me by Dan Georgakas. When I refused because I doubt any objectivity possible with him, they got a different interviewer who asked for my comments on the Shachtman Archives to be opened next week. When I again refused because I wasn't interested in making that kind of commentary, the interviewer not only agreed with me but said what he really wanted was a discussion about my own work. So many class struggles became obvious in that discussion that the young man, whose area is labor history, taped an hour and a half on what turned out to be the deep roots of Marxist-Humanism in the labor dimension, beginning with the 1949-50 miners' strike. (I cannot here go into the brainstorm I had on this, which will have to wait until the tour is over and we begin actual pre-convention discussion.)

Finally, the sum-up itself for the New York local. Five new friends came and participated as actively as our members in the discussion. Since all of these sum-ups are preliminary, I will not detail that discussion here, except to say that both the question of the new edition of ACOT, the question of the Constitution, and the impact of the trilogy of revolution have created totally new ground for membership growth, where, on the one hand, we have over a quarter of a century of history and philosophy, and, on the other hand, even non-members feel as much at home in these discussions as the most experienced members.

In a sense, the New York tour has not ended yet. I'm not referring only to the media events that are still to be aired, but to the fact that N.Y. as true cultural center has extended itself not only to Philadelphia and to Boston (where the lectures had to be refused because they came in too late) but also to Washington, D.C., where Ray and R worked very hard to get a lecture at American University -- and the students and faculty there were so interested in hearing Marxist-Humanism that they scheduled the talk for the only day that was open in my schedule, even though that turns out to be April 1, Good Friday.

Yours,

RAYA

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