

Sept. 14, 1953

Dear Munis:

It was wonderful once again to see your own handwriting and know that you are a free man and active at work. I'm sorry the first note was so brief and I detected a note of urgency which is, of course, called forth by the objective situation, but, unfortunately, tries to separate that from the book as if MARXISM & FREEDOM were something for leisure times to read. I hope I'm wrong in having detected such a note, for I am sure that you do not underestimate theory, and feel more than any of us because of Spain that this is indeed the age where it is difficult to separate theory from practice. If Lenin in 1915 had to find first of all his own bearings in philosophy, then for us who are not Lenins it is a hundredfold more important, and we are fortunate in one respect: and that is the maturity of our age and the feeling for a philosophy that is total and that answers the workers' most pressing problems of the future society as one that would not repeat all over again that of dividing revolution from what happens after--and thus allow for a new bureaucracy to arise.

Now to the questions you asked on the breakup of Johnson and Forest. I will treat it as if you had not been given any of the documents, although Socialisme ou Barbarie has them all, and I will send you some under separate cover:

1) On Dec. 30, 1954, Correspondence received a letter addressed to "Johnson-Forest Group" from Attorney General's Subversive List. Correspondence returned the letter unopened, with the remark, "No such group here."

2) While that was true--Johnson-Forest had never operated as an organization, but only as a political tendency, and had not used even that designation ever since its break from the SWP in 1951--I had naturally assumed that I would defend all our political positions on state capitalism and on war for I rejected none of the fundamental positions I had developed, although I no longer used the name of Forest. Johnson thought quite opposite. He thought it the proper moment to unleash an attack on his co-founder.

a) for alleged "old politics"--wanting to "politicize" the organization, or rather the paper, or both. It was the time of the war clouds over Formosa and he opposed the anti-war position, saying the times of Lenin were gone, and that now the steward's movement in England was so strong that all they had to do was say, No, and there would be no war. He did not develop the position--just threw it into a letter.

b) began a series of fantastic Moscow-Trial type of accusations without politics, such as saying, I was sick and needed 6 months vacation to think it all over, and leave everything to him.

c) that the Europeans, not Americans, would defend Marxism--urging Lee and others on to acting in such a way that the 10 days the Government allows for an answer were gone since, of course, it is impossible to begin conducting a battle with the bourgeoisie when your own organization --or at least its leader and cohorts; for the workers would have nothing of all this--is splitting before you.

9429

9430

3) The majority of the REB--Resident Editorial Board which is what other organizations call a Political Committee--reacted vehemently against this unprincipled attack. The worker editor and the majority of the workers said it was an abandonment of the American Revolution, that Johnson was running from his safe refuge in England while leave the co-founder to the attacks of the bourgeoisie here. They asked for presentation of political positions so they could judge for themselves--but Johnson and Lee were in a hurry, (although she, in the absence of the first word of attack from Johnson, had voted for the political position worked out by me for the struggle against the listing; indeed it was the unanimous position of the REB) and in short few weeks even took advantage of the fact that legally one of theirs was "owner" of Correspondence and refused to pay for Vol. II, #7, which was the last issue of that paper.

4) The one and only Bulletin of positions we had tried to force out of them who had not appeared before any membership to defend itself I will forward you; also Johnsonism: A Political Appraisal. Naturally I informed the friends abroad. Socialism ou Barbarie chose to disregard all this, while Damen and the Italian friends immediately solidarized themselves with the American group. The International Memo was also published in PROMETEO and I enclose a copy for you so you can see the position worked out formally, instead of informally in a letter.

Now the background for all this had really begun in 1950: a) Shortly after Natalia presented her position against the Trotskyist position on Yugoslavia and in general considering Eastern Europe "the road to socialism", we worked out the position of state capitalism, and for the first time including philosophy as integral to a political position, and presented it in thesis form to SWP convention--State Capitalism and World Revolution. It was then when most of us felt we should leave Trotskyism for good, but Johnson convinced us to remain in--when we did leave the following year suddenly, it was not on the political positions but on the "moral" life in the party. b) That same year, 1950 the miners strike had shaken up all previous concepts on the development of the working class in America, and led me to wish to restate Marxism for our age from 2 new vantage points: American proletariat, and Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks of 1915 which had remained untranslated into English. c) That same year Johnson began his own special brand of deviation, toward literature, and began working out the position on Herman Melville, a great American writer, as if he were more prescient than Marx, although this never came out in so many words.

However, by 1953, it came very close to those words for the American Government had begun deportation proceedings against Johnson, who, however, chose, to fight, not as Johnson the politico, but James, the great literary figure who made such a contribution to America. No doubt you have James' "Mariners, Renegades and Castaways", and have seen how he crawled before the authorities in his final Chapter 7. This was also the year of founding Correspondence, with the 2 of us pulling in quite different directions, climaxed by the fact that Lee wanted not to consider Stalin's death at all since that was "old politics" and go to "the new"--what workers on the line were discussing, which in one specific instance that she knew, included a recipe on how to make hamburgers. I was, however, permitted in issue No. 1 to discuss

Beria's downfall. But the paper, Correspondence, continued for two years--to wobble between Marxist position with workers recording their own attitudes--and some attempt, never stated explicitly, to escape Marxism.

Dear Munis, it appears to me that now that there are published, my MARXISM AND FREEDOM, on the one hand, and Lee & Chauilleu's (although I understand he denies authorship), FACING REALITY, positions are so crystal clear that there is no necessity for the past remaining unclear.

I assume you read in Facing Reality that (1) The "new" are such as Kwame Nkrumah who have "combined" Gandhi with Lenin-- and that is what we should follow for Gandhi was evidently the greatest political genius of the 20th century. (2) That the downfall of Trotskyism is due "to one and only one" basic reason: they wanted to build a "vanguard party" when the proletariat had no use for such. I do not know where that leaves the positions of state capitalism and the philosophy we worked so hard for--but Johnson is a great one for reducing all the world's problems to single items, as his fancy and personal security demand. (3) That the key arch to all else is editorial committees that would publish paper independent of any organization. Correspondence is of course given the perfect example-- although there is no more cliquist totalitarian controlled paper than that. But, in any case, the politics to prove why that one single item--independent editorial committees--are the answer to all the world's problems in 1958 and prove how they alone "face reality" is the following: (a) Although the Hungarian Workers Councils are correctly given as the highest point reached in our era of self-activity, (b) still it is explained that in America it was correct for this independent committee nearly completely to ignore them because there the murder of the Negro youth, Emmett Till, had so predominated in the minds of Negroes that the latter even opposed Hungarian refugees "remembering that Prisoners of War were given freedoms Negroes who fought for their country had not had."

It is just painful to go on with such trash and yet have a group in France seriously face the reality of De Gaulle contend that that is something and that they "don't understand" the "differences."

What I want to know from you is the answers to the letter I wrote you a few days ago--we evidently had crossed in the mail--on possible publication of MARXISM AND FREEDOM in France. What precisely is Socialisme ou Barbarie group doing for its positions to leave the isolation of their lives and begin to affect those of European proletariat. It is tragic that all the Trotskyist opposition can think up in these critical times is factional disputes on "autonomy".

Do please write on these positions. Be sure to convey my warmest greetings to Natalia.

Yours,

Raya Dunayevskaya
4482-28th St.

Detroit 10, Mich--Do please note slight change in my address.

9431

Oct. 20, 1959

Dear Com. Munis:

I do not doubt that you had valid reasons for remaining in Paris when I was in Milan, but neither do I doubt that it is what I would call too much of a "laissez faire" attitude in international relations. Your note, for example, to me was warm and comradely, but hardly of the highest political nature when you consider (1) The American movement may not always have the privilege of sending me to Europe; (2) MARXISM AND FREEDOM is coming out in an Italian edition, and that is excellent, but I have not heard a word from you on it as to a Spanish edition although someone not as close to the state capitalist position as you—Juan Andrade—tried actually to obtain me a publisher in South America. It is not, after all, a private contribution but the American contribution for the theoretic regroupment of world Marxism.

Now I do hope that both as representing the Spanish revolutionaries and as an individual you will see that nothing interferes with your presence in Milan November 7th which Damen and I had set for the conference and which now looks as if ~~we~~ would also have adherents on the scene in England.

I do not know whether anyone you know in Paris you would want me to see; I intend to be only 3-4 days; I'm not going to look up Socialisme ou Barbarie because they have never responded in any responsible way. You can drop me a note up to 31st in London: Raya Dunayevskaya, c/o American Express, London.

Yours,

Raya

9432