

Dear Olga:

Sept. 21, 1961

What follows are my suggestions for a summary of the Executive Session, which you can subtract or add or edit any way you wish (I enclose also the speech given) and append our joint names.

SUMMATION of Executive Session by Raya
and Olga

The national leadership had never before met itself in executive session, although elements of it had been present in some REB meetings, and the "Dear Colleague" letters of last year anticipate many of the points which had produced a dynamic confrontation once the battle was joined and the enemy had accomplished what we had not achieved:--the abolition of any distinction between objective and subjective. But now that the battle was joined, and positively too the objective situation would not tolerate shilly-shallying of any sort, not even for the "best" of reasons, the National Chairman could present historic tasks in a most concrete and even individual manner.

The decisive factor for the growth of the organization at a time when the hour was late internationally as well as nationally was of a twofold character: (1) Proletarians as leaders, and (2) Relationship of leadership to Chairman not in any routine way nor on any single issue but with that total concentration which somehow historical lay has meant, at one and the same time, that one "represents" the whole and yet the whole does not fall apart under any circumstances. The first and second points are so closely inter-related that they could be said to be parts of the same organism. And yet the weakness of the past period has been that both in editorship of paper and in development of organization there has been no outward expansion to proletarians by proletarians not so much through lack of activity (though there could have been more of that as well) but as through the failure to act as leaders.

The testing of that began with "the case" and while the challenge was met there, it was altogether too short-lived. As the Chairman put it: "To grow up to meet the challenge of the enemy is one thing, and to grow up to leap way in advance is quite another. It is that leap we have failed to make, and the hour grows later by every second we do not plunge ahead. 'Subjectivity' which has absorbed 'objectivity' is neither 'only' for the masses, nor only for the organization when that is 'specified' as organization, but for our daily lives as leaders who at this specific moment in history prepare a pamphlet, or a book, a trip to Africa, or a case, for the growth of the organization and/or for unusual ways of functioning, and in both directions we must meet both the challenge to leadership stemming from its proletarianization and the relationship to the chairman."

Timing is of the essence. Though intellectuals have done better than workers in the past period, the political Letters have not succeeded in starting that new stage in education which would have signified that no political question is discussed outside of its organizational ramifications and no organizational question was "technical" but each a response to the new stage of objective development, especially that signified after the Cuban fiasco. Timing demands more than "agreement"; timing demands creative interpretation. And, above that, timing is proven--by correct timing, over a period of time, and not by "internal" objections, before and/or after which cannot be publicly tested.

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Subordinate to it, but by no means inconsequential, is the question of finances when one doesn't get the "credit" for it since, among the responsibilities of leadership, is taking finances off the shoulders of the membership wherever possible. Thus when we want to have the membership concentrate both on FR pamphlet and the special financing of a full-time person in the office--and both are above the regular contributions--then it would be completely wrong to ask for another fund for trip or book. But the leadership which has the responsibility of keeping in advance of events has the added financial responsibility that goes with it. We have never had any problems at all on this question, and it is raised only because, for the realization of proletarianization of leadership, it is proposed that not merely Inez is asked to go to the office "if" she is fired, but that she quits her job, no matter what, by January. In that way we show our seriousness on the question.

The Chairman concluded with "No doubt because the objective movement demands it, you will all become philosophers--you're in fact already well on the way. But the further concretization of the relationship of theory to practice, of 'notion of new subject' to Africa, on the one hand, and the relationship of American worker to Negro, on the other hand, will be shown in one way, and one way only, and that is that the growing up of leadership, its proletarianization, and the growth of the organization will become real over the next period."

The discussion revealed a great deal of awareness of the seriousness of the objective situation not only in the problems raised but those left untouched. However, there was also a certain criticism of each other which Olga felt was out of place. She stressed that when the battle is joined, when the call of the enemy was so close to home, when this abolition between objective and subjective in the person of one was so great a shock that even nuclear destruction seemed "abstract" by comparison--at least we could do nothing about the latter, but could do a great deal about the former--it is the starting of the new page, on a new level, that is the issue, and nothing else is. For example, it isn't just a simple question of not "burdening" the Chairman with routines, or "freeing" her to do work that is her business, whether that be book or trip, or considering that she is not here, whether she be in Africa or next door. It is not the doing of the routine that is half as bad and burdensome as the frustration that comes from knowing her colleagues haven't measured up as leaders. That is the burden that we and we alone can relieve her of, and therefore measure up to the objective situation and the call of the mass movement, and it must begin right here and now with each meeting his task creatively.

It was on that note that the discussion continued and ended with approval of report, with the conviction, however, that only the growth and development over the next year will be proof of the comprehension and the action.

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Yours,
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