

3 6 5

(59)

REPORT BY RAYA AND DISCUSSION BY REB -- Jan. 6, 1965

ON THE NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECTED TRIP TO JAPAN

RAYA: The projected trip to Japan cannot, of course, be considered either apart from the new book, or the smooth functioning of the REB, and the publication of News & Letters during my absence. Creative responses to the objective situation being of the essence, it is as well that we discuss this under four general headings: 1) What is theory? Or, more precisely put, what is theory not only as we see it, but as roots that sprout among other tendencies who do not always look at the masses as the source of theory. 2) Where are the market places of ideas? 3) How do we execute convention decisions, that is to say, carry out not only these decisions that were put in the form of motions, but carry out the spirit in situations that we could not possibly have foreseen? This, of course, brings us to point 4) How do we elaborate our responses to the actually developing objective situation?

These four points must be discussed within a certain context: the importance of the trip in the actual execution, i.e. writing of the book, since we go there as much to learn from the Japanese Marxist-Humanists, as to expound Marxist-Humanism there. And the money needed to make this possible.

The method of looking for roots of theory elsewhere happens to be especially well illustrated in the case of Japan since our discussion began before we ever heard that there were co-thinkers in Japan. You'll recall that in January or February of 1962, when I was on tour in Milwaukee, Barb and Morgan gave me a copy of New Politics which had a special report on Japan, introduced by Lewis Feuer, who, I need not tell anyone here, is an enemy of ours. Nevertheless, just because it was an on-the-spot report, and the New Left in Japan was speaking for itself, I found it so exciting that I wrote a special Political Letter on it on March 5, 1962, so that is the first document that must be reread now.

We had been trying to get some contacts in Japan ever since 1958 when Marxism and Freedom was first published, but we couldn't. We would follow the press and try to establish contact if we learned of the slightest affinity for our ideas. In January 1962, we had issued a special supplement of News & Letters on China and the Sino-Soviet Conflict, both because Africa Year, 1960, made the whole question of China the prime importance as a possible polarizing force, and because Mao's development was further proof of the validity of the theory of state-capitalism. With this background, we jumped at the chance to try all over again to contact this new left, though we were well aware of their weaknesses. Our letters to Koymama and Shimizu went unanswered, or may never have been received, since Feuer refused to give us their home addresses. On the other hand, there were co-thinkers in Japan, and, although we did not know about them, they tried to contact us, first through the bourgeois publisher, and finally directly to News & Letters; only by then I was already in Africa. Once we finally

3652

made the contact, we got right down to the job of translating Marxism and Freedom into Japanese, and, as we all know by now, the friends there have just published the most artistic edition of all, and have already sold some 700 copies.

What is necessary at this point is to reread all of the letters from Japan, especially the one dated Sept. 5, 1964, describing concisely the forces of the left there, and my letters to them. And, of course, the Introduction I wrote for their new edition. Think of it: just by studying the objective situation in Japan since the 1960 demonstrations, by paying close attention to the spring labor offensive in 1961, and the intellectual stirrings of the various tendencies in Zengakuren, without at that time knowing a soul there, we had written: "It is sufficient to fire the imagination and to believe that it will finally be possible to re-establish international relations in an organized way." It should hardly be necessary to expand on how much more important all this has become now that there are in Japan Marxist-Humanists, and Marxism and Freedom is available as a challenge to all others as well to restate Marxism for our age in a truly comprehensive way and on a world scale. BUT THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR AN IN-PERSON OPEN CONFRONTATION OF VIEWS BOTH FOR OUR DEVELOPMENT AND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JAPANESE MARXIST-HUMANISTS.

The point I have been stressing, however, was to show that we came to attribute this importance to Japan not "subjectively", but because the objective situation in Japan, in Africa, in China, in Russia, in Europe and in the United States, all led to this. It was only after we had been digging and digging that we finally also established actual relations, and knew that, whether the Negro Revolution here was the topic, or the shipyard strike in Scotland; whether we were discussing Trotskyism or Hegel's Absolute Idea, no book could truly be completed now without knowing also the Orient, for which Japan is the key.

Both in the chapter on "The Challenge of Mao Tse-tung" and throughout our convention theses, special philosophical letters as well as every outline and reference to the new book, referred to as Philosophy and Revolution now, but we used to refer to it as "World Ideologies and the Underdeveloped Countries", the emphasis was on a Marxist-Humanist interpretation of the last chapter of Hegel's Science of Logic as having a great illumination for the freedom struggles of today. Before the African trip we pinpointed the specific paragraph on "second subjectivity"; "The transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality and that unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone." There was, however, one negative point in meeting African freedom fighters, and that is that, before they got freedom, the emphasis on socialism stood out, whereas after they had power, the pull of state-capitalist industrialization, East and West was altogether too great.

It became obvious that if we are to study the world situation as it is today, it was of the highest importance that we consider not only the ex-colonies, but the highly industrialized "West", except one of the highest points was in the Orient, specifically Japan, where the mass movement, its political and philosophical development was likewise, by no accident, highest, closest to us.

We began developing the whole last part, which includes that last chapter on the Absolute Idea, but is the whole Doctrine of the Notion, or what we call the objective and subjective means whereby the new society emerges. In a word, it was impossible to write the book unless we discussed in full with our Japanese co-thinkers not only the objective situation, not only the political need to theoretically expose Trotskyism, but also these philosophical questions.

The youth, in particular, was pivotal, both in Africa and in Japan, as well as in the USA. The fact that it has moved recently from Negro youth in South USA to white youth on the UC campus at Berkeley leads to the next point about the marketplace of ideas. When, at the convention, we set as a chief goal to establish both a local and sub-center in New York, it was made imperative by the new edition of Marxism and Freedom, and subjectively and objectively by the developments on the civil rights front as evidenced by the demonstrations in Harlem and Brooklyn. Also, we saw that under the whip of the counter-revolution coming from the Goldwaterites, it was imperative to move faster into the actual class struggles. However, that is only in general.

In the concrete, at this moment, what came up as the most explosive development and the first among college youth on that wide front, was the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. We were never "dogmatists" in the sense of being blind to what was developing instead of what we might have said would be. Now, here was a test for us, and if it weren't for Bess's urging we might have missed it. Naturally I do not mean that we would not cover it; we already have and of course Eugene is a member of it; I mean we would have left the whole responsibility on the shoulders of our few youth, without the whole organization making a new category out of it. Now, on the other hand, I'm writing the Two Worlds on it, and in general -- we will discuss it further when Japan is not the main topic of discussion -- it will become a new focal point because that has, in fact, become the hubbub of intellectual debate, of thought development, not alone in asking for the right to speak, but for speaking on any and all theoretical and practical problems that are called for, not by the university schedule, but by the world situation.

Now these types of tests will always be presented to us, and the point is the alertness with which the REB would respond to them when I am away. It is of the essence that we know exactly what is involved before any vote on the trip to Japan is taken. Denby, for example, told me before we began, that nobody was speaking about FSM in his shop, but that is the type of discussion we, he, should be introducing -- so that the student movement does not get separated from the civil rights movement which really brought it into being; and by telling the workers such facts he can, in turn, make concrete the needed collaboration of labor. The letters I wrote to Eugene on that must become part of the discussion on this whole topic not alone as it specifically developed, but as methodology for the developments-to-be that cannot now be foreseen. And, again, don't forget that Bess, who has been a fountain of ideas, will likewise be with me, away from here.

Now then, how did we set about carrying on the decisions of the convention in regards to the market place of ideas as we saw it at the con-

-4-

vention and decided upon New York sub-center? (Don't forget, also, that while Japan hovered, so to speak, around the convention as a possibility, we couldn't discuss it in full since we had not yet heard from our friends there on the subject, and the Japanese edition as well as the invitation to lecture in that country, came after the convention.) Saul made trips and tried opening new doors to intellectuals, and we laid some basis. Then I went and did succeed in getting M&F reviewed by one of them. It is the most superficial review, if you can call it a "review" at all, but it did appear in the main journal that all intellectuals read and the silence on Marxism and Freedom has been broken. When to this you add the fact that Saul's review here and the possibility he opened for an article by me on Mao's explosion of the bomb, plus a few other things, there is no doubt that a convention decision has begun to be executed. Dick is there, and from the youth he has introduced me to, a new person who is our best hope there for further development has come very close. But the truth is that until Johnny and Inez move there, we will really not be able to get moving in an organized way. And so, while nothing is changed from the convention, the timing of any actual sub-center, if we are seriously contemplating the trip to Japan, has to be changed, for I cannot be both places at the same time. The work there in all other respects would continue.

But we must recognize that the actually developing situation, on a world scale, and in Berkeley as a new center for development of serious new theory on the academic front, means that the execution of convention decisions must always be undertaken not mechanically, but in spirit which may very well call for other points of concentration. And an important key remains the leadership itself, its development. For example, Andy's greater responsibilities in being managing editor once I am not here to be consulted on problems. There is no doubt that everyone will know how to accept and carry out creatively additional responsibilities, but the point is that we must have all these in mind before any vote is taken on the trip.

Finally, there is the money. Every one knows that we are not exactly well off now. Most of the pledges to News & Letters have been met, but we have nowhere nearly met the amount to be collected from the outside, for which we have until March. Nevertheless, it is important that we do not interfere with this and must make completely voluntary the pledges to the \$2000 needed for the Japanese trip -- mainly for fare, since we do hope that the Japanese friends will be able to put us up so that we do not have many hotel bills. Now Bess -- really, it is Louis's money which he left for the book -- sent me \$500, so that is a good start -- and after the discussion here, we will see what else can be done.

\* \* \*

3655

DISCUSSION

JOHN: I'll begin by pledging \$300 for the trip, but the thing that I think we all should be thinking about is the significance of the various topics that the chairman raised. If we begin, for example, with the student movement, we realize how concrete the abstract phrase about the "future belonging to the youth" has become. Here is where organization ties in with philosophy. Before the FSM took place, we had other indications that it was a market place for ideas. We all remember the crowds that Raya drew when she spoke there from 1958 on. Then there were the 1960 demonstrations against the HUAC, and finally the pickets against Goldwater. The FSM is a qualitative change. And we have another example of student awareness in the meeting for Raya at Oberlin and the coming debate there.

The way the Japanese have already sold over 700 copies of M&F is truly an example of the movement of ideas. We owe it to them to reinforce them organizationally and theoretically, or we wouldn't be carrying out our international responsibilities.

The trip has many implications for us here in the United States. First, the way we function here, and second the sub-center in New York. I agree that until Johnny and Inez arrive the work will have to be limited but after they arrive, the work here in Detroit will also suffer and throw new responsibilities on us. We can't just sit and survive -- it is a matter of growing while the chairman is away. That is the responsibility of the REB as I see it. That is the sort of thing we have to think about when we make our decision about the trip.

SAUL: I'm not sure I get the counter-position if one is being made here. There is no conflict between the New York sub-center and the trip to Japan except the question of timing, since we knew at the Convention that the trip to Japan would be made. We have agreed that without the continuity that Johnny and Inez will bring, a sub-center can't be established -- but a market-place-of-ideas is not something that we thought we would establish, it is something that exists in New York whether we are there or not, simply because a monopoly of a sort has been established in N.Y. by the intellectuals and it was in that sense that we referred to it as the "market place of ideas." A year of work went into New York before Raya found the person to review her book. Of course, we cannot simultaneously make N.Y. a sub-center, and give the Japanese trip all its due significance, but I believe that the formulations made it appear as if there have been changes in our plans, while actually only the time-table has been altered. We are executing convention decisions.

Raya must go to Japan for all the reasons mentioned, and some we will not see until the trip is actually made. The REB will function as best it knows how. Nobody can guarantee ahead of time that it will, we must just assume that it will have to. The future will make it concrete. The continuity of the REB work begun in New York must continue. I want to pledge \$200 for the trip.

-6-

INEZ: I was very happy to hear that Bess is going with you to Japan. That was the first question, in fact, that I had wanted to raise. I am always amazed at how many different interpretations are made from the same presentation. I didn't see anything in the presentation that changed our perspectives for New York, or any competition between the New York sub-center and the trip to Japan. So far as I am concerned, New York is still virgin territory; there has been only one person functioning there so far.

I keep remembering one CORE meeting I attended when one of the Negro women kept saying we have to keep a total picture of what we're up against, that we can't just work house-to-house without remembering that the whole city is a slum. It always amazes me how we can have so total a philosophy, and yet always must be on guard against having so narrow a vision that we could have missed Berkeley.

New York is virgin territory not only as a market place of ideas, by the way, as I see it, but as a place to do work in other organizations. When we sought out New York we were right, and it does not detract one bit from the Japanese trip, which is essential. I wish I could make a pledge, but the move to New York will take so much money we had to ask for an extension on our regular pledge.

OLGA: One thing I have learned is that when a new question comes up you can go back to the old bulletins and you're sure to find something you see in an entirely new way now. When I gave the educational here on the Theory and Practice bulletin, I thought that while Parts I and II were very difficult and it would take some time before any of us understood them fully, Part III was pretty easy and certainly I understood very well what the organizational conclusions about "individual responsibility" meant. Now I think that is the part we understand the least; yet that "individual responsibility for the organization" is the only way we will be able to spell out how to function during the chairman's absence. It isn't a matter of worry about what others do or don't do -- or getting mad because someone doesn't do his job, and just doing it for him. (That's the easiest thing in the world for me to do.) It also isn't a question of individual responsibility being separated from the organization, because what each of us does very much affects everyone else and the org'n as a whole. It is to see that it isn't how what others do (or don't) affects me, but that what I do (or don't) affects them. Otherwise, individual responsibility will mean each of us going our separate ways.

The way in which Raya wrote the letter to Bess on Jan. 1 was a lesson in method, so far as I am concerned. It wasn't only that it only took Raya five minutes to catch her "mistake" on the question of the Berkeley article. It was the way she brought out all it meant, and presented it to Bess, and instead of saying "Oh, well, I caught myself right away", showed what it meant for each of us to ask ourselves. Being prepared to function smoothly while the chairman is away doesn't mean that routines won't be followed. Being prepared to react creatively to new events, and at the same time not let go of any of our regular activities -- that is what is involved. I think we must consider Detroit seriously in this discussion also, because with Johnny and Inez leaving for New York almost at the same time that the chairman is going to Japan, we will certainly face many new problems here. During the holidays in Detroit, I feel we were just marking time until we could start the new experiment of going out three weeks out of four. That new experiment, we should not forget, rests on Marxism and Freedom, too. We have never yet made that new edition the key, and yet everytime we went out as a local or as individuals we have sold some. And everything is likewise, therefore, related to the Japanese trip, too. I want to pledge \$100.

3657

ANDY: There are two things I see as important. One is the question of individual responsibility and functioning while the chairman is away, and the other is awareness of historic changes that happen the world over. For example, we knew about the trip to Japan. We've talked about it often. We know its significance. We've talked just as often about the meaning of being managing editor. Yet both these things appear to me tonight in an entirely new light. We have a clearer understanding because when the chairman gave the full report we could see it all in a new comprehensive context. It isn't a question of worrying about issuing News & Letters every month, and "routine functioning". We have done all those things when the chairman has been away before, and we can certainly do it again. The whole point is that we should not do it routinely. These things seem obvious now, but a discussion is always a new creative experience -- and one is always affected by what the others say -- and therefore, something new always suddenly becomes "obvious."

Take the question of individual responsibility, not just in relation to the REE, but to Detroit. We are starting a new series of monthly educational -- yet when Julius called me yesterday and said he would bring three people, and gave me their names so we could send them a notice, I suddenly realized I hadn't invited three people myself. But I will. The point I am trying to emphasize is the question of attitude. I agree with everyone who said there is no change in any convention decisions. On the contrary, this appears to me as a creative expansion of them. I want to pledge \$200 toward the trip -- if you will accept it in \$50 monthly installments.

JOHNNY: The other night I saw a NBC special on the Vietcong. The station got the films through Japan. It made me think how important Japan is, not only for itself, but because it's the doorway to the whole Far East. There is so much ferment in this area --- Indonesia, Malaysia, China. We have never been there before, but with this trip we have a tremendous opportunity to reach the other half of the world. The point is what do we do about it while the chairman is away, and after she returns. I don't think we utilized the African trip as we might have, for example. It isn't enough to have a public meeting on Japan so the chairman can present a talk about it. To have a Marxist-Humanist, one who is chairman, in Japan demands a great deal more than that, and means preparing for it now.

I think it's good that we feel nervous about the chairman's absence because it means we're aware of the responsibilities. We really don't know what we will do until we're thrust into it. What would kill us would be to huddle in a corner and wait until she got back. We must move out and seize opportunities. I must admit that Berkeley surprised me, I didn't see the real significance. But the people who didn't miss it were Bess and Eugene, who were right there on the scene -- so I don't honestly think that "we" missed it really.

There has been a sort of doldrums in the civil rights movement, and we should be able to get some of these youth who want something more. I feel better because I am physically getting ready to get to New York. Sitting here in Detroit, I can't see any reason why we couldn't get 50 people, just like that, when we get there. Of course, when we get to N.Y. it will no doubt look a little bit different to us. The important thing is to consider everything as new, to begin everything as if we were new, a new beginning. This is particularly true of the trip to Japan. It isn't only a matter of using M&F, important as that is, but that the author of

-8-

M&F is now going to Japan. And when she goes, we all go along with her, in an important sense. With this trip we will truly have a world orientation.

DENBY: I have always felt the trip was very important. There are only two questions that really bother me: 1- How do we apply our theory in all the different situations? and 2- How can we raise the money to finance the trip?

I feel strongly that the REB can function while the chairman is away. We have done it before, and we can do it better this time, if we really want to. Also I feel that something is about to break in the objective situation. It is fantastic to hear Roy Wilkins saying Negroes will not demonstrate in '65, but if nothing is done for them, they may demonstrate again in '66. The workers are saying that all he means is he will do what he can to hold them back -- but whether he can do it or not is another question.

From the very beginning I felt the trip was extremely significant. But I think that the society we live in smother us with so many problems that it makes us think in terms that "if we had more people" the situation would seem brighter, and we could do more. We can't let that kind of thinking hold us back from doing what we have to do.

LOUISE: I don't feel the perspective of New York has changed, but the emphasis of what the phrase "market place of ideas" means has changed. I looked at it technically before, I think. But when Raya spoke of Berkely and how workers can talk of it in factories, it meant to me that wherever we are we must create a market-place-of ideas by interpreting differently than anyone else what is going on.

JOHN: I would like to say one more word, because one subject hasn't been dealt with tonight -- and that is the book itself. We have said for some time that the chairman should be given time off to write the book, but I'm not talking about that part of the problem. Fundamentally, the reason it hasn't been started yet is because some of the background is still needed for it. The Japanese trip is what will make it a world-wide book. It isn't only Italy, Africa, but Japan and the Far-East that she needs. The difference will be qualitative when she returns-- and we must realize that when she comes back she is not returning to plunge into organizational work here. She is returning to write the book.

\* \* \*

The following motions were made and passed unanimously:

1. That we approve the trip to Japan for all the reasons mentioned, and especially to establish concrete relations with Japanese Marxist-Humanists.
2. That the financing of the trip be done on purely voluntary basis, and that besides the \$1300 pledged already, the friends be asked to raise the additional \$700 still needed.
3. That the discussion be mimeographed and sent to the locals to discuss.
4. That all locals arrange for a discussion within one month, which will include, besides this bulletin, the Political Letter of March 5, 1962, the letters to and from Japan during the writing of the Preface, and the recent letters to and from Japan, the new Preface.
5. That all friends let Raya know immediately how much they can pledge, although actual monies need not be here until April 1; that all locals and friends sum up their discussions so that Raya has everyone's view-point before she leaves.