

March 2, 1951

Dear J:

We must now tie up the intelligentsia and labor bureaucracy with plan. Thus far we have not done so concretely enough. We spoke of the plan as the enemy, but we did not split the category of planners into a strict relation to the specific epoch for which they planned. Also we spoke of the labor bureaucracy as the same nature as Stalinism, both resulting from the stage of state capitalism, but no internal connection flowed from all this. Not in any truly concrete sense, so I will now to split up that category, planners, and see whether we can get closer to the internal logic.

With the end of classical political economy we have the first planner appearing in Sismondi who tries to stop the march of industry, outdistancing v. Thus ~~and~~ the doubts of bourgeois classicism get embodied in a bourgeois representative. The doubts grow with the "unconscious" development of capitalist production, and petty bourgeois socialism appears, first in Proudhon with his bank aid program, and then Lassalle with his demand for state aid to "cooperative production societies." The opposite of their intentions is thus clearly seen in their program for in truth each tries to be a better bourgeois than the bourgeoisie itself, one by "abolishing" money but all wrapped up in the fetishism of commodities, the other by "extending" cooperation and all wrapped up in the fetishism of the state as some sort of classless arbiter. Proudhon is the last of the representatives of the epoch of competitive capitalism; Lassalle the anticipator of monopoly capitalism (that's really what his cooperative form of labor is), or, more precisely yet, the statification of industry and of life. Both are rejected by the further development of capitalism, and with the transformation of competitive into monopoly capitalism, the bourgeoisie itself become the planners and the results of their planning are: trusts, international cartels, imperialism.

The new petty bourgeoisie--this strata has also been transformed into its opposite, from the *laissez faire* small grocery man into the administrative clerk of the trusts--begins to ask for a saner "policy". But these are much ~~more~~ dangerous than the Proudhons and Lassalles for the very development of capitalism so engulfs them, they do not even know the "vocabulary" of the proletariat, and the latter does not listen to them at all. The real danger lies within scientific socialism. Hilferding the orthodox I mean, not Bernstein the revisionist. Hilferding sees the new stage of capitalism in its financial razzle-dazzle appearance, and becomes enamored of its capacity to "unify" commercial, industrial, and financial interests, than concretely aware of the greater contradictions and antagonisms of the new monopoly stage of capitalism.

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I wish to stress the seeming orthodoxy of Hilferding. No one, absolutely no one, not the firebrand Rosa, not the strict realist Lenin, and I dare say not Hilferding himself knew that what he was doing with his theory of finance capitalism was bring in the first theory of retrogressionism, not theory for as theory it would have been recognized, but the first good strong capitalist whiff of retrogressionism. Even with over four decades as a hindsight platform, and much, hard thinking on the subject I have first now realized what it was that Hilferding was seeing and analyzing (and it took Bukharin's theory of the transition period to bring it home to me) was stability of capitalism. Watch the orthodoxy though: He is proposing no revisionism; automatic fall of capitalism is still expected; and inevitability of socialism in a mechanistic sort of way is also held to tightly. But rather than seeing monopoly as transition into opposite of previous stage, monopoly is treated more like simple large-scale production. That is the key. For if it is not a transition into opposite of the fundamental attribute of capitalism, then capitalism's organization, centralization, monopolisation appearance as the "emergence of social control" and, whereas it is used to show the necessity of socialism", it in fact superseded socialism, or, more precisely, retrogresses back to home base: the equilibrium of capitalist production. Viewing the whole development of trusts and cartels not from within the factory, but from "society", that is the market, Marx's general law of capitalism accumulation, the degradation of the proletariat along with capitalist's accumulation has no meaning for Hilferding, and neither does Marx's postulate "private production without control of private property" make any imprint on Hilferding. And of course labor remains a unity, there is not any inkling of an aristocracy of labor arising out of the monopolisation and degradation and imperialism. You must remember that even with the outbreak of war, but before Lenin did his own analyzing, he introduced Bukharin's "World Economy and Imperialism" and that said pretty much the same thing as Hilferding. All this I want to repeat again and again in order to emphasize the orthodoxy in order to show that once all the formulae are adhered to, the loss of revolutionary perspective not yet in a positive way, but in the negative of awe before the existing, continued capitalism, can be very, very deceiving, and if it was to Lenin, we better watch it all the time.

What in truth emerges from close study of Hilferding (Unfortunately I do not know German & have to do it through secondary sources, and Bukharin; I'm sure I'd find much much more in it if I could get the work in full and tear it apart) is that the new generation of Marxists following Engels's death, placed within growing, centralized production, saw monopoly not as a fetter but rather as an organizing force of production. So that the Second International, which had openly rejected Bernsteinism and gradualness, accepted Hilferdingism, which means tacit acceptance of the capacity of capital to gain a "certain" stability, modify its anarchism as a "constant" feature, and seeing in new stage not a transition to a higher form, but something in itself already higher, although "bad".

Now, the person who made this all clear to me was Bukharin, that logical extension of Hilferding, blown into the theory of counter-revolution right within the first workers' state. It is to him that we must turn, and here too for our generation it is correct to view him, precisely because his is "only" theory and will become full-blown actual revolution with Stalin supplying it an objective base, with hindsight, and keep in mind therefore the 3 actual main stages of capitalist production for the three decades since the publication of Economics of the Transition Period

(1) 1920-30--Taylorism plus Fordism, that is, the discovery of the belt line and with it the necessity for a fascistic order in the factory. It may be "vulgar" to call gangsters part of the intelligentsia, but that is the genuine face of "social control" where the masses themselves do not control. Marx's view of the planned despotism plus the industrial army of managers, foremen, etc has moved from theory to such every day practice that every worker knows it in his bones; he needs no ghost come from the grave to tell him that. (I wish that Grace would work out the dialectic of greater concentration of trusts that precedes belt line system, or the time limit of each single operation.)

(2) 1930-40. General crisis; New Dealism where "everybody" allegedly administers, and Fascism were only the elite do, both in mortal combat with the CIO and general sit-down (which make a true joke of private property) for "social control. Plan, plan, plans: National Five Years: Russia, Germany, Japan; Keynes, New Deal, technocracy, TVA, public works.

(3) 1940-50. Monopolisation has been transformed into its opposite, statification. (What great scope for a modern Moliere, to take those weighty volumes of the TNEC proving monopolisation and how strangling it is, and then on the eve they are finally published in full, prefaced by a call for full mobilisation which shows that monopolisation plus Hitlerism is child's play as compared to American statification.) End of WW II, "end" of fascism and state-private-monopoly rule. Complete state capitalism ~~xxxxxxx~~ reaching its tentacles from Russia, into Eastern Europe, engulfing Britain, seeping into Western Europe and peering out of the U.S. Total, global plans: Marshall, Molotov, Monet, Schuman, Truman's Point 4. Keynes is dead; long live the state plan. The intelligentsia in Russia, the Social Democratic labor bureaucracy elsewhere, all in mortal combat with the Resistance, with Warsaw, with general strikes and colonial revolutions, but one strangles the revolution "for" the masses' own good, and the other for "democracy's" shadow.

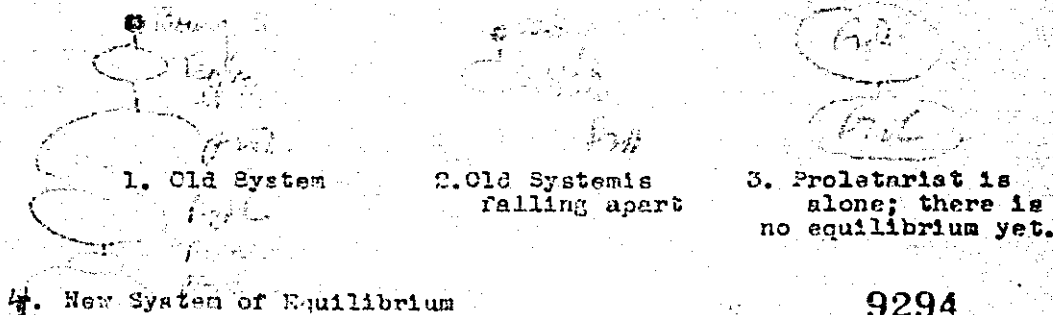
Now against the background of these three decades, watch the details of Bukharin's "General Theory" of the transformation process. The whole point of Bukharin's "General Theory", a compound of his hindsight on finance capitalist state capitalism, and immediate Russian problems, is that in the development of capital: from industrial to finance stage (his division)--a movement from "unorganized" to "organized" capitalism--there arose a "technical intelligentsia." (Hold on to that term--technical intelligentsia--it is Bukharin's new category, the new universal around which everything revolves, not only under "state capitalism" but in the "transition period" with not much chance of its disappearing under

the transition period. In fact, the state is not seen as anything that would wither away until it is a world system and even that nothing concrete is said about any withering away. The masses are seen as completely subordinate to this "technical intelligentsia", or more precisely, the masses are seen not as a developing subject, but as an object of the "development of humanity", or at most, as a very abstract subject that has "power", is "ruling class" but that is something given, something established, while the intelligentsia is concrete, develops, brings about "equilibrium", and all is well with the world once again.)

Now the "technical intelligentsia" was born to replace "the blind laws of the market", and exchange "as it is expressed in the social division of labor". (Bukharin has here turned upside down the relationship between the social division of labor and exchange, but we will leave this be for the moment.) Although hampered by the maximal anarchy of the world economy, this intelligentsia did bring "order" into the national economy and establish "equilibrium". But since it worked "for" finance capital, its "head" was full of bourgeois notions so that when state capitalism was "transformed" (Bukharin never gets near "negation of negation"; his highest point of is "transformation") into the dictatorship of the proletariat, it had to be "reeducated". The transition period caused "disequilibrium" in the economy and a "regroupment (sic!) of social layers" became necessary, and in the first instance, that meant drawing in the intelligentsia into the new system of dictatorship of the proletariat. Since this group's psychology remained bourgeois the dictatorship of the proletariat had to resort to "extra-economic" measures to reeducate it. But with that accomplished, the proletariat need not worry; it is still "the ruling class"; the intelligentsia will work "for" and "equilibrium" will be established.

I am not slandering Bukharin, Jimmie. This is what he actually says not only "in essence", but in detail, and this new universal has so tight a grip on him, that he gives vent to the most barbaric notions. And that not only subtly, over some 200 pages of writing, but is emboldened to present it in the stark nakedness of graph that sums it all up, thus:

"Table V, re Chapters III & IV (The Fall of the Capitalistic System, General Prerequisite of Communist Structure, r)



Now with such a notion this serious theoretician couldn't help but reach the logical conclusion: counter-revolutionary concept which the bourgeoisie—now truly capital without capitalists—thoroughly incapable of establishing "equilibrium" must perforce allow itself to be transformed into its opposite—from economic to political state form, from private managerial to social labor bureaucratic content. Let us follow Bukharin's "General Theory" stage by stage, without skipping a single link: (All of the quotes where only page numbers are cited are from his "Economics of the Transition Period", translation enclosed; other quotes are from "World Economy and Imperialism", where the germ of these ideas first appeared.)

(1) With the very first sentence of the very first chapter of his work Bukharin begins "limited the science of political economy, including Marxist economics, to a science of anarchic commodity production: Theoretically political economy is the science of social economy based on the production of commodities, i.e., the science of an unorganized social economy." (p.7)

Carefully note the word, "social"; throughout he uses "social" where he should use "capitalist" with the inevitable consequence of diluting class concept, so that "technical" intelligentsia, groups, layers, systems and whatever other abstraction comes into his head, naturally fit in the classless term, "social". I need hardly repeat that where Marx used social vs. individual it was where the capitalist is as yet only Mr. Moneybags, that is, before he has entered the labor process and transformed the simple labor process into a process of creating surplus value.

(2) While on the face of it accepting production relations as primary, Bukharin's abstract conception of them as some sort of existing substratum inevitably makes him slip back into the market trap: "Political economy means first of all not a planned economy, a 'teleological unity' which 'rules', but in the main an unorganized system of economy where there is no conscious collective economy and where economic production is subordinated to this market, and where economic laws are the blind laws of the market" (World Economy & Imp., p.16, my emphasis, r)

(3) This he can state without any consciousness on his part that but two pages previously he had accepted the opposite "On the basis of the commodity market we saw that behind the market relations were hidden production relations." Or perhaps it is the "behind" that actually makes him fall in his own content into the Marxist concept of the primacy of production relations. In any case, from his reformulation he makes the groundless jump of accepting a world economy. Not just a world market, which is as far as the precise Marx would go and no further, but a world economic system, thus: "We can THEREFORE define world economy as a system of production relations and exchange corresponding to it on a world scale." (World Eco. & Imperialism, p.14, caps mine, r) So that because production relations are "behind" market relations the world market already means capitalistic production relations ~~within a country~~ extending outward "on a world scale".

(4) The inescapable consequence of all this is a classless concept of technological progress: "Undoubted rapid growth of world economy for the past ten years was called forth by an unusual development of the productive forces of world capitalism. This appears directly as technological progress." (W.E.&Imp., p.18)

(5) From this naturally ~~it~~ enough flowed the acceptance of Hilferding in full, (a) seeing stability, or, to use Bukharin's more euphemistic but less precise expression, equilibrium in the new phase of capitalism's development, and (b) to carry out this transformation of disorganization into ~~an~~ organization, an organizing force—a "technical intelligentsia" denuded of its class character: "Finance capital abolished the anarchy of production within capitalist countries...By the same fact, the exchange tie, expressed in the social division of labor, and the severance of the social-productive organism into independent 'undertakings' is replaced by the technical organization of labor within the organized 'national economy'." (p.10)

(6) At the same time, since his primary division is not a class division but that between an "organized" and an "unorganized" economy, he must reinstate the anarchy into capitalism for only socialism can plan. This he does by bringing in the anarchy ruling world economy: (He uses world economy as all under-consumptionists and market economists always used the market, that is, substituting trade for production relations.)

"Capitalist 'national economy' has been transformed from an irrational into a rational organization, from a subjectless economy into an economic subject. But at the same time the anarchy of capitalist production in general has not been abolished, nor has the competition of capitalist commodity producers...The world economic system is as blind, irrational and 'subjectless' as the previous system of national economy." (p.14)

(7) Then Bukharin moves over to the fall of the capitalist system, and there he sees first of all (a) a fall in productive forces, (b) a simultaneous growth of "organizational forms" (poor Bukharin, the tremendous creative energies of the proletariat reorganizing society mean nothing but "organizational forms", no wonder he sees only chaos in ~~organizational~~ production and organization only institutions!). ~~Nevertheless~~ Nevertheless he remembers his Marxist "studies" and so suddenly concludes that only socialist production relations...but let him speak for himself: "From the point of view of the preservation and development of human society the only way out therefore can be the socialist production relations because only they can create conditions of relatively mobile equilibrium of social productive system." (p.51)

So much for Bukharin's discoveries up to the point of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Let it be said to his great honor that even though for only one brief moment, he did, upon reaching "The General Prerequisites of a Communist Structure", gain a true grasp of Marxism, both ~~it~~ in sensing the fundamental laws resulting from capitalist production, as well as a truly brilliant

glimpse of the absolutely new form: the cooperative form of labor. He first states the two moments of capitalist production--the centralization of capital and the socialisation of labor which become "the basis of new method of production which grew out of the womb of the old one." Then continues: "The cooperative form of labor' about which Marx speaks is embodied in the decisive moment in special relations between workers. Here precisely lies the centre of gravity of the new society." (pp.53-4)

But these truths Bukharin lets slip right out of his grasp because his new universal is not the self-developing proletariat, but the self-developing intelligentsia. So, having paid homage to Marx, he quickly returns to his own theory and "planned organization" and the "technical intelligentsia:

(1) "The existence of planned organization within capitalist countries, torn by capitalist competition; the existence in a definite period of a system of state capitalism is the empiric proof of the 'possibility' of communist structure...The specific problem of communist organization consists not in the fact that in it there is no basis for social labor, but in a new combination of the broken social layers, in the first instance, in the inclusion in the new system of the "technical intelligentsia."" (p.56)

And not satisfied with such a violation of the Marxist concept of the cooperative form of labor, Bukharin continues his concern with "the heads" of the intelligentsia:

(2) "Consequently a prerequisite condition of the very possibility of new social-productive combination must be the falling apart of the ties of the previous type in the heads of this new technical intelligentsia." (-.65)

Furthermore, workers are not to worry about the "formal" (sic!) resemblance to the old productive hierarchy. "Regroupment" (sic!) will take care of that:

(3) "The transformation of the process of creation of surplus value into a process of the planned satisfaction of social needs finds its expression in the regroupment of production relations, despite the formal preservation of the same place in the productive-hierarchical system which as a whole bears principally another character, the character of the dialectic rejection of the capitalist structure and which, to the extent that it destroys the social-caste character of the hierarchy leads to the abolition of the hierarchy in general." (p.67)

And, satisfied with this academic solution of the very real problem of the totally new form of production relations, Bukharin further advises the proletariat to allow "their other organizations" to be fused into the over-all state organization!

(4) "We must pose the question of the general principle of the organizational system of the proletarian apparatus, i.e., about the relations between different aspects (forms) of proletarian organization. It is completely clear that formally what is needed for the working class is the same method that was used by the bourgeoisie in the epoch of state capitalism. This organizational

method lies in the subordination of all proletarian organizations to the over-all organizations, i.e., the state organization of the working class, to the Soviet state of the proletariat. "The statification of the trade unions and factual statification of all mass organizations of the proletariat flows from the very internal logic of the transformation process." (p.71)

Only one thing ought to be added "the very internal logic of the transformation process" is the very internal logic of the counter-revolution!

Nothing, however, breaks the calm of Bukharin and "the very internal logic" that flows from his new universal, and so he reassures us of "the impossibility" (sic!) of the reestablishment of the old production relations: ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ "Given the dissolution of capitalist production relations and once their reestablishment is theoretically proven to be impossible...." It is here that Lenin lost his temper entirely and in his marginal notes to the book wrote:

"'Impossibility' can be 'proven' only practically.
The author does not pose the relationship of theory to practice dialectically."

I'm leaving the rest of the work which deals very precisely with commodity, value, price to the new section of form that I'm writing, Cooperative Form of Labor and Abstract Labor, and in connection with which this letter should be read.

To be read in conjunction
with letter to J on
Eukharin, 3/2/51.

COOPERATIVE FORM OF LABOR
VS. ABSTRACT LABOR

In our present society, where man is but a cog in a machine, the proof that the division between mental and manual labor, that attribute of all class societies, has, under capitalism, reached its apex, is self-evident.

With this truth shining forth amidst increasing tensions, crises and wars, it becomes well-nigh impossible to have the worker fulfill the capitalistic function of machine-made higher labor productivity. The worker's antagonism to the machine has travelled a long way from the time when he simply wished to smash it. Now what he wants to have done with is his very work. He wants to do something entirely different--express all his natural and acquired powers in an activity worthy of him as a human being. He wishes to appropriate the science, heretofore wholly incorporated into the machine while he was turned into its appendage. He feels indeed that in a much greater way than seems apparent to the naked ^{eye} he has acquired that science. His capacity to engage in a variety of activities, change from job to job, tinker with his machine in off hours, create things for his own use on government plus contracts is a good beginning to making the machine an extension of his powers rather than him a slave to the machine. All that needs to be done now is that he and his fellow workers engage in a self-activity so different from his present work as to make the scientists in the cubby-holes outside the plants as unnecessary as is the capitalist inside the factory.

In no other way can a fundamental change in society be achieved. In all other ways capital has retained its domination over labor. Marx was right when he insisted that only when cooperative labor replaced private labor from the ground up will social control become the natural attribute of individuals cooperating in labor and who have become thereby truly social individuals. Otherwise cooperation is a snare and a delusion, that capitalistic caricature of social control called private management of industry. That is to say, it is cooperative labor forced into the value form to which all concrete labors have been reduced by the "planned despotism" of capital. Just as there is no such animal as "abstract labor"--you must be engaged in a concrete activity, mining, tailoring, machine production--so there is no true cooperative labor where the autocratic control over labor sets the pace the workers must follow. It is the process of reduction of your laboring skill which transforms the labor process into a process of extraction of surplus value--that is, unpaid hours of labor. The capitalist's "werewolf's hunger" for unpaid hours of labor dominates over that labor process and also over technology which is constantly called upon to reduce the hours of labor socially necessary to produce commodities to win the battle of competition on a world scale.

Let us take another look at the form of cooperation. Under capitalism it takes the form of value. But value in production means one thing, and in the market something quite different. In the market it means exchange value or money and private property. In production it means the time clock which sees to it that no matter what your concrete skill you produce so much and so much--a whole mass of abstract labor no different from that of your

fellow workers, no matter what your individual, private skills are which fashion concrete commodities. But the capitalist doesn't trust the clock in and of itself to set the pace, so he has a foreman over the belt-line. But suddenly you find that it isn't just one foreman but ~~xxx~~ a hierarchy of control over you. Why? You can do the work, why all this composite of a Frankenstein monster? It is because neither you nor your fellow workers are interested in the work. In other words, it is a question of forcing you to labor and it is because it is forced labor that such a hierarchy is necessary. They are there to see that ~~xxx~~ everything is subordinated to that one function, of extracting from you as much labor as possible. They are not there because it is not just you but many yous who are working, that is not because labor is social, cooperative. They are not there because they work, or even know how very often, but only to exercise that despotic control which forces all your labors into that value form.

Now the capitalist tries to identify his despotic control over labor with the social character of cooperative labor. But that you know is so much poppycock, only it isn't a joke because he has all the cards in his hands and the only thing private belonging to you--your capacity to labor--is of no value outside of the factory, so you continue to sweat it out. But you are not fooled. You know that the planned despotism in the factory arises not out of the cooperative form of labor, but out of the antagonistic relationship between you and he who lords it over you. Marx knew that too, and that is why he so sharply separated the nature of cooperative form of labor from its capitalistic integument or value-form:

1) a) Cooperation, in itself, is a productive power of social labor, a power due to cooperation itself. b) Cooperation

under capitalism, is forced into a value mold of undifferentiated abstract labor which hides not only its concrete character but the division between paid and unpaid labor. Indeed cooperative labor is allowed to function only to the extent that it is possible to produce surplus value or unpaid hours of labor. That is what the capitalist's private property means, the labor of others.

2) ^{a)} Cooperative labor, in itself, allows the laborer to strip off "the fetters of the individual and develop capacities of his species". That is to say not you alone make a commodity but you and your fellow workers. In losing a skill you have also acquired however a new, a social power. b) Cooperative labor, under capitalism, necessitates control by a whole army of foremen, superintendents, straw bosses, big bosses, etc. Planned despotism thus "takes on forms peculiar to itself", the hierarchic structure due first to the capitalist's having been relieved of actual labor and then the labor of experience, and then due to the necessity of ever greater masses of abstract labor. ^{a human} Reducing ~~you~~ to a cog in the machine you begin to realize is no small matter and it is this which requires the monstrous creation of monotony, speed-up, uniformity, listlessness and more speed-up.

3)a) The "peculiar form" of the planned despotism is also due to the fact the laborer has sold his individual, isolated labor power ~~xxx~~ but since there were many such laborers, the capitalists must make cooperators out of them, but cooperators who must function with their living labor the value of the past labor incorporated in the machine but which is in actuality labor of the laborers themselves in alienated form. And just as that past labor no longer belongs to the laborers so their living labor of these cooperators no longer belongs to themselves, having been sold to the capitalist. These cooperators are now appended

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to the special working mechanism also belonging to the capitalist. This is no longer just a machine; it is capital, a social relationship of production established through this instrument, the machine, which has long ago been alienated from the laborer. (b) So that, while cooperation in itself requires social control by masses, under capitalism cooperative labor means capital's management of industry, "which is an attribute of capital as in feudal times the functions of general and judge were attributes of landed property."

4) Finally, the new power that cooperation, in itself, is cannot develop freely and fully under such conditions for while it must fit into the value form, its human capacities are thwarted. The social power of labor which appears as the productive power of capital is indeed a capitalist caricature of this new productive power which will release its energies only when it becomes the new center of gravity of a new social order.

We can view cooperative labor from another angle, the division of labor. (We will leave aside the planned division of labor of Asiatic primitive communities with its administrative caste and unaltered social relations and static production, and concern ourselves only with the division of labor under capitalism) The seeming planless of the social division of labor as it is reflected in society, that is the market, is in truth the direct opposite in the factory where it turns out to be the undisputed authority of the capitalist. While the detail functions of the laborer remains a technical necessity in the manufacturing period, in the movement from manufacture to machinofacture, the machine sweeps away the technical reasons for "the annexation of the

worker to a detail function". But while this undermined the subjective authority of the capitalist, it encrusted the planned despotism with the objectivity of the machine which took over the disciplining of labor.

It is here, says Marx, that dialectical materialism ^{not only} separates itself from vulgar materialism of capitalism, but also from the abstract materialism of natural science, and in history and its process sees the truth; there is no ~~xxxx~~ development of technology outside of this historic process. And so it happens that technology does not mean the freeing of the laborer from his ~~xx~~ function as an appendage of the machine, nor of the lightening of his labor, nor of any "abstract" development of the productive forces other than through the sweat of the worker. The ^{fact} ~~truth~~ therefore is that where the capitalist is there "in person" or not, or whether the technology "in itself" needs the ~~xxxxxx~~ detail laborer or a man fit for a variety of functions, the worker is confronted with an already existing material condition of production. He can do nothing but subordinate himself to it, to this alien force. Management over social labor which in manufacture was "purely subjective" is now "purely objective."

But here, too, is "the absolute contradiction". The nature of modern industry necessitates variations in labor, fluidity, mobility, while, in its capitalistic form, it reproduces the old, ossified division of labor. The latter is the condition of laboring for one separated from his instruments of labor. While the workers revolt moves from his fight against the instrument of labor to his struggle against the capitalistic misuse of that instrument, the capitalist ideologist discovers the "stupidity" of fighting against the machine which gives him power

over nature. In other words, while the worker discovers that, although it first enslaved him, his tools can actually gain him freedom--once the division of mental and manual labor were done away with--, the bourgeois economist tries to spirit away the present enslavement:

"The contradictions and antagonisms inseparable from the capitalist employment of machinery, do not exist, they say, since they do not arise out of machinery, as such, but out of its capitalist employment. Since therefore machinery, considered in itself, shortens the hours of labour, but, when in the service of capital, lengthens them; since in itself it lightens labour but when employed by capital, heightens the intensity of labour; since in itself it is a victory of man over the forces of nature, but in the hands of capital, makes man slave of those forces; since in itself it increases the wealth of the producers, but in the hands of capital, makes them paupers--for all these reasons and others besides, says the bourgeois economist without jore ado, it is clear as noonday that all these contradictions are a mere show of the reality, and machinery considered in itself, that as a matter of fact, they have neither actual nor a theoretical existence (I, p. 442)

But

SINCE the contradictions aren't just "show" but the historic truth and indeed there is no technology outside of this historic development of capitalism. The abolition of the division of labor would mean its bursting out of the old value form and an entirely new mode of labor in an entirely new form appear. The immense of this breaks down entirely the psychology of civil society and the worker balks at productivity of labor, as a capitalistic function of order, monotony, uniformity, intensity which is entirely at variance with the nature of modern industry which needs variations of labor, a fully developed social human individual and shows this antagonism in the anarchy and authority, in the order and catastrophes of society which lives under a Damocles sword: the penalty of death hanging over capitalist production for not having developed the worker's humanity. But rather than "giving in" capitalist production become more autocratic, more hierarchic in structure, more monstrous in content.

April 5, 1951

Dear Cy:

Your description of the experiences in the shop are of great value and will be kept by me for future use. You did not reply whether you got Olga's experiences in her shop.

The relationship between the Negro movement and the building of the First International has never been fully analyzed, and yet it is of the highest importance. The way Marx expresses it in the Preface to Volume I of Capital best sums up both its direct and indirect effects. He writes:

"As in the 18th century, the American war of independence sounded the tocsin for the European middle-class, so in the 19th century, the American civil war sounded it for the European working-class."

In other words, it wasn't a question of massing of Negroes with a placard "We want a First International", which is the only way vulgar people ever see one's aspirations. No, the key was through the civil war. In the fight against slavery, in the particular circumstances historically in which the Negroes found themselves in America in the middle of the last century, they in actuality for greater freedom for the working class and stimulated not only the American working class but the international movement of the workers.

Thus, the English working class, in organizing mass demonstrations against their ruling class's attempt to side with the South, found themselves awakening to a higher stage of their own working class. Although it meant the worsening of their own conditions for their work as textile hands depended upon Southern cotton, the English working class sided with the fight against slavery. The resulting organization of the First International in 1864 established not only the first international organization of the working class with class solidarity across national boundaries, but established also the need for flexible tactics and aliveness to the manifold effects of such a gigantic struggle as the North against the South.

This illustrates the distinction between the so-called Marxists in America and Marx himself. For example, some of the Marxists in America at first were neutral or even opposed to the Civil War, and they tried to hide their concrete do-nothingness under an abstract formula. They said that since they were opposed to wage slavery "both black and white" and since the struggle between North and South would not decide that struggle finally, they would remain bystanders in that fight. Marx said if that were Marxism, he was not a Marxist. He, on the other hand, not only lined up the English working class on the side of the North and was in correspondence with Lincoln, but influenced the Marxists in America to see that each problem must be solved concretely and that sometimes a fight for a concrete thing may appear

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slight, but if it involves great masses of people and a revolutionary method, a proletarian way, of attaining it, then that is decisive and that in itself will either bring on the socialist force directly or indirectly.

Of course the fight against the wage slavery of the workingclass was central to the whole question, but as he put it (again in Capital, this time in the section on the Working Day) p.329): "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded."

Furthermore: "But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was the eight hour agitation, that ran with the seven-leagued boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California."

Finally, he showed that the workers "by their correct instinct" at the General Congress of Labour in Baltimore in 1866 had elaborated the same principle as had the First International for the first principle for freedom was the limit of the working day. The rules of the Working Men's International Association, as the organization that we know as the First International, was officially named (and these were written by Marx) stated:

"That the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopoliser of the means of labour, that is the source of lies, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

"That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means;

"That all efforts aiming at the great end have hitherto failed from the want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country, and from the absence of fraternal bond of union between the working classes of different countries;"

The one person who worked out more concretely the question of the Negro to the labor movement as a whole was Lenin who in his study of the Russian serfdom and pseudo-emancipation in 1861 and the condition of the American Negro share-cropper after Civil War to be of such parallel nature as to incorporate it in his many theses on the National Question. I believe Johnny has the Selected Works of Lenin, and in Vol XII (New Data on the Laws of Development of Capitalism in Agriculture: Part I: Capitalism and Agriculture in the USA) you will find some very penetrating analysis on the question of sharecropper in the South. We built a good part of our Resolution on the Negro on that. If I find a copy of my original article on "Marxism and the Negro" I will enclose it.

I hope this has helped in the particular problem you are interested in. As to Morgan Goodson or any other organizational problems, I cannot possibly interfere because I do not know, and I would follow Johnny in all such matters.

April 27, 1951

Dear J:

Although I still do not see any point to answering the document of Warde & Wright which is neither an answer to our document written prior to the convention, nor to our challenge at the convention that we are interested not in an abstract discussion of state capitalism but in the concrete question of the nature of Stalinism and how to fight it, I do wish to make a few ad hoc remarks. These will naturally not concern themselves with their name calling in the process of which they attribute their designation of us to ourselves as self-avowed revisionists who, poor souls, are "unconscious" of "outmoded" their ideas are for in their desire to, and construction of, "an ideal system" out of a "non-Marxist type of reaction" to the monstrosity of Stalinism have run to the "museum of pre-Marxist antiquities" and come up with "political inertia" and "profound pessimism" (That is a natural for to the Fourth not to believe that Stalinism "under the pressure of the masses" would lead the revolution can show nothing but "profound pessimism"!) and now don't even support Titoist Yugoslavia as everybody else except the Stalinists who nevertheless must also have our support in their struggle against imperialist America which supports Tito) does or should.

Nor am I too interested in their underconsumptionism, although the document reeks with it. For the real point of that underconsumptionism is that, since as revolutionists, it must differ from that of the trade union bureaucracy, it finds itself deep in the quagmire of muddying up the very class content of Marx's economic categories. It was this in fact which made me wish to comment at all, ~~and that is why I am commenting~~ for in working on Bukharin and then glancing at their empty document it struck me with force that the one connecting link of all Marxists (not revisionists, but revolutionary Marxist theoreticians) who have failed to grasp the essence of Marxism for their specific epoch is: single out some basic element in capitalist production which to them has only a technical aspect and then begin to ~~analyze~~ its class content.

Watch this sequence: Let's take Rosa Luxemburg first. The "single" theoretical blunder which made her roll off the Marxist rails was the question of the accumulation of capital--the denial that c/v was the basic law of capitalist development. The minute she denuded that discovery of Marx (In actuality Marx added only three economic categories, constant and variable capital, and labor power; value and surplus value he gave a specific refinement but they were among the discoveries of classical bourgeois economics; same holds true also of class struggle: it is its development to the dictatorship of the proletariat which is new, and Marxian, and not its mere existence.) of its class character and said even as W & W (p.14) that in the "abstract form" it was true of "any and all economic systems", her theory had of necessity to result in the following: 1) the main source of capitalist accumulation was "non-capitalist groups". The fact that by its hair she dragged in the proletariat to overthrow capitalism "long before" it had exhausted itself in non-capitalist lands did not help from 2) misunderstanding entirely the nature of imperialism which embarked upon its adventures not for attaining any "average rate of profit" or because it could not

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"Spent away"

~~Marx~~ "redistribute" its values within the country but because the decline in the rate of profit at home and superprofits abroad, etc. etc. etc. So that this one error of not seeing the specifically capitalistic nature of c/v which Marx so laboriously analyzed led this orthodox Marxist to revise Marx's CAPITAL.

to Now take Bukharin. What were his theoretic premises which led him becoming the theoretician of Stalinism? You can see it in its first bloom in his "Economics of the Transition Period", when he redefines every economic category of Marx's CAPITAL, robbing them of their specifically capitalistic class content, superimposing upon the economic base the subjective reflection or point of view: 1) A commodity was not a commodity when it was "consciously regulated" as it was in a workers state 2) Value was a law of anarchic capitalism although it was "the law of its equilibrium", and hence did not operate during transition period where production was "planned", etc., etc. down the line of the categories, prices, wages, crises, profit. By that time he could conclude with the greatest show of rhetoric that moreover capitalism was inconceivable with the political rule of the proletariat and "since" workers state meant political rule of workers "therefore" these economic categories could not denote capitalism. The unfortunate result of this type of theory upon which to base Trotsky's agitation for statification of the trade unions was to order the proletariat to work as before only harder. "But what," said "non-theoretic" Lenin, if the workers say: I do not want to engage in production in conjunction with such a bureaucratic board of directors".

And what did Bukharin do in the meantime, while substituting consciousness and unconsciousness for economic law, plan for anarchy and "social groupings" for class lines? Why, he was driven to take a second look at state capitalism and finding there too conscious plan plus technical intelligence, he said now that was just find; all we have to do now is to class angle, that is to discipline, it to work "for" the workers.

Now take Warde & Wright (and Murray and the whole Fourth). They "parenthetically" (and without mentioning it is their, not Marx's parenthesis!) put "v" next to laborers and "c" next to means of production when they ~~that~~ these two elements--laborers and means of production--will remain under all systems but the special manner in which the union is accomplished distinguishing one economic ~~era~~ epoch from another. There they stop, instead of identifying, as Marx had done, that that special manner under capitalism is precisely the relationship of c/v. No they declass that specific category and thereby declass the sphere of labor productivity.

They speak of productivity as it were ^{mere} a technological question except "of course" speed-up is bad. Now having shoved

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the worker away from "the abstract plane of productivity" into 5¢ more on the hour, the sweating worker must perforce look at management as if it were a question of "purely functional duties of administration and supervision." Now ~~only~~ once you have done, it is easy to redefine everything in the Russian factory, which they never bother to approach at all, and so they can afford to speak about some "abstract" economy" and reduce--to use an expression of Hegel's--"the wealth of manifold determinations" "to the simplest moments". These are:

Capitalism is private property and the bureaucracy doesn't "own" the means of production--so there is exploitation. Imperialism is export of capital, and Russia must loot still rather than export--so all of Eastern Europe can rest assured there is no imperialist exploitation of them. Etc., etc., etc.

If, however, it was s/v, ah, that would be a different story. Well, what is s/v and why isn't present in Russia? s/v is the degree of exploitation achieved through relationship c/v. Since surplus value or unpaid surplus labor comes only from variable capital (and that can undergo variations in magnitude precisely because in the factory it is not a mere "element of production" but living labor) and since constant capital (means of production in the factory, machines) can do nothing to expand itself by except that in its mass and perfection and uniformity of design it can eat up ever more living labor by its speed and rationalization of labor, then of course its domination over living men is not really such a joke but expresses precisely the perverse nature of the type of production where in dead labor rules over living labor, not living over dead.

In one word, in Marx the development of the labor process from simple cooperation to manufacture is the degradation of the worker from where a new power which has been initiated by many workers working together in one place, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ has been fettered by its becoming a means means for extraction of unpaid hours of labor as set by machine and thus completing the perverse relation of dead over living labor. Enmeshed in it however is the cooperative form of the future--the socialization of labor which, when freed from the domination by the machine, it can reveal a self-activity ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ where not only the productivity will be unmatched but so will the new social man. With Luxemburg, Bukharin, the Fourth, on the other hand, c/v is a mere "expression" as if s/v or the exact degree of exploitation could be divorced from the manner in which it is achieved, or the discussion of "division of national income" could change what is taking place in that factory.

In truth, each stage of capitalist production has posed but two questions: self-activity of the worker vs. the plan over the worker. If at each stage of the crisis of capitalism--whether it was large-scale over petty (Proudhon), or monopoly imperialistic over free competition (Luxemburg), state-capitalism and transition period over planlessness (Bukharin, LT)--you saw not the revolution any intervention of the masses as the solution, but conscious planning--your theory inevitably ended as being anticipatory of the bourgeois solution, whether Luxemburg or Keynes, Bukharin or Stalin plus Attlee, etc. etc. We must note that one point: if you denude Marx's categories of class content, you end with opposite class

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Moreover, at each stage when the self-activity or revolutionary initiative of the masses was posed, the "realists" have pointed to the "utopianism", "idealism" of the proponents of a fundamental solution not in abstract words, but in the concrete "embrace" of what the proletariat was doing on its own. Compare Marx's to Lassalle's analysis of the weavers strike way back in the 1830s all the way down to Lenin's fight against the abstract identity of workers state to workers desires and his mobilization of the workers ~~in the~~ trade unionists to fight the workers state bureaucrats and you will find the same line running through.

Ah, well, enough of that. There is only one other point, I think deserves taking up if we're to discuss abstract theory and that is the national question. Really the gail of talking in such high terms of the national question when neither they nor the Shachtmanites were doing anything at the start of the Chinese civil war but send the peasant masses their "sympathy" plus a thesis on the permanent revolution while we challenged their whole conception. Now that Mao has power, they'll be soon redefining everything (their talk in this bulletin of "development of agriculture" is only a first step) to ~~mak~~ transform China into a "workers state".

If, on the other hand, our Resolution takes up both these major points, then I propose we leave W & W just where they are.

Yrs,



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June 13, 1951

Dear J.

How wonderfully everything is working out for our work on Dialectic! I have just found the letter of Lenin's which places precisely the date of his LEAP. You remember how concerned I was that his Philosophic Notebooks dated 1914 and 1915 & article on Karl Marx, Marxism dated July-Nov. 1914 seem to place that last wonder of the "good" Second—but Second nevertheless—already in the period of his study of the Logic—and yet everything politically, etc. that is the real leap is 1915? Well, here are the facts:

1) It is true he began the study of the Logic while working on the Marx Essay, but

2) The real break came when he reached the Syllogism (Note to Grace: please try to work out pp. 43-50 of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks in strict relationship to the section of the Logic he is working on. Note that on p. 43 his reference to Plekhanov is still complimentary; then he is through with cause and begins with Subjectivity and 6 short pages thereafter he has all these terrific aphorisms on all Marxists didn't understand, on Plekhanov being a Feuerbachian, etc. etc. I hope you'll have it worked for the session on the book)

3) Now I find a letter in the Russian Complete Works dated January 4, 1915. It is addressed to the encyclopaedia Granat which has just accepted his Essay and it says:

"Is it possible still to include some corrections to the part on the dialectic? Perhaps you ~~xxx~~ will drop me a line when precisely it will go to press (sdayetsya v nabor) and when is the final date for presenting corrections. It is precisely with this question that I have been occupied for the last month and a half and I think that I could add something if there were time."

Evidently there was no time. The Encyclopaedia had out the sections on Socialism and Tactics of the Class struggle & published. It was published first in its complete form (that is without the omissions, but with no additions either) in 1925.

Yrs,

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*Beautiful - Why deny it?
This was done by G. L. C. to
September 13, 1957
Redirection of paper
H. L. C.*

Dear Hermann: (Copies to Mark, Phillips, Allison)

~~The miners are out on strike. We are right in there.~~
Nothing could have happened more auspicious both to open up our paper and to have us learn from the workers. It is not being covered by the capitalist press. We could come out with the very first issue as a special issue devoted to the miners and ahead of the Oct. 15th deadline. It follows integrally from our development: 1943 miners strike and the beginning of our fight on the American question; 1946 miners strike and the end of our experience with the WP; 1951 miners strike and a new road is opened.

Orlando and Robbins (of Pittsburgh) are going to West Va. today; Tibbett is following tomorrow. Phillips and Allison have been in touch with Pittsburgh. If the situation looks as if it would develop further, I think that you as the chairman of the Midwest Labor Federation should go down to be there on the spot. In any case, I'm asking the Pittsburgh delegation to see that this weekend gets written up very fully by W. Va and themselves and is immediately sent out. Moreover we bought four tapes and are sending it down to get the miners talking of their problems in their own words. It has all the makings of a really historic event, and we should take full advantage of it.

what can possibly be wrong with this?

I will be in NY this weekend and discuss it fully with the CLC. Let me know and let Mark know what you think immediately. If the situation is urgent, I am asking Orlando to be sure to talk to you on the phone or rather have Phillips do that.

Yours,
Douglass

* * * * *

Sept. 17, 1951

Dear Irv.,

Please submit this in its entirety to the R.S.C. Further treatment of the matter rests entirely with the body.

I am opposed foot and branch to the whole W. Va. business -- totally and completely. I shall state my views in full because all that we have to ~~cut out~~ is present in full force. I am also at work on another letter, which I shall handle in another way as far as procedure is concerned, which will go to the roots of another serious hangover which we have to get rid of. Both these are negative. The new positive elements will appear in the course of this correspondence.

1) The whole political attitude expressed in the memorandum is "small mass party". Completely. The memo says that this issue of the paper will establish our local on a sound basis. What it will do is ruin our local. Our local is established and its basis is sound. This individual, a member, or that individual, or friend, will as last time, move resolutions, help call out the miners and do every single thing needed, as members or friends of the union or the workers. We, as a local, have absolutely no right to appear. We have nothing to establish. It is exactly that which has ruined the others. Our business is to withdraw ourselves as a local. That is what happened the last time. And that was perfect. Exactly what, may I ask, are we trying to establish the local as? We are seeking to make close contact and drown ourselves in a social milieu. We are having our organization tight and disciplined for ourselves, not for anybody else.

2) From this typical WP and SWP mentality comes the procedure proposed on the paper. The memo says that we are going to show what a workers' paper should be. Comrades and friends. What nonsense is this! We have a policy on the paper. In a truly admirable memo by Chester (a copy of which I hope was sent to Ricky with a careful covering letter): that policy, or certain aspects of it appear. I remind you that the paper is for us, 75 copies, and a few for others of our friends who may be interested. That was all. But now we, with an unbuilt organization facing us, and not even the name of the paper, or the content decided, we meet and decide that we are going to show (in the next two weeks) what a workers' paper should be. Show whom? And show them what? What the miners themselves are saying? Surely this is without sense, or the sense rather is pure SWP. We really want to show them. We know. And they didn't. And next to them, we want to show the workers.

From this comes the proposal to send leaders down there to edit and to organize and generally to lead like SWP leaders. That is wrong. They did very well two years ago. They will do better now. The letter describing the events was a first-class piece of work, realistic and yet ready for developments. They should be busy incorporating others down there, sinking their specific organizational identity. In fact we have no such identity, the four or forty-four of us. Let them write. Let them edit. They should have written to Herman (with copy to the center and to Douglass). He should decide what next. Now note this. If you thought he was breaking down on the job, call him, or the secretary might drop him an inquiring line, or W. Va. could say to you: WE want more help. You decided without Herman. That has a history in the SWP. As it is this big organizational drive was going to result mainly in publishing a paper with information and policies for the miners. Who by the way was publishing it? What organization? I am not being polemical. If I wanted to be, I could really make mincmeat of the whole scheme.

If the friends in W. Va. felt the need for publication, let them get their friends and sympathizers, and publish themselves, under any name they like, Jehovah's Witnesses, if they want, except our name, or whatever name

Handwritten note:
This is
THE
original
of "The
is advising
Mauler"

you were going to choose. Every little two by four organization I have ever been associated with is always burning to jump ahead and lead. We are not leading anybody or anything. That is our line, party policy. Change it, but do not play with it. That above all is what we stand for.

As usual with adventure of this kind, they play havoc with the organization. You will excite the friends everywhere and in the end get nothing but disillusionment. This is inevitable. You at the top are doing this. On the other hand by letting the local do its own work, as the thing grows, it naturally incorporates all to help them; if it remains normal, it remains normal.

What Herman thinks I don't know, but if he is mad, or dissatisfied he is entitled to be. I hope he says so. You cannot sit in 16 University Place in an office and direct the class struggle or run out from there periodically to do so.

But what an opportunity to launch the paper! It leaves me cold as a freezing compartment. I am opposed to those dramatics with our membership and our membership and their friends is the only audience I have in mind for the paper. Let W. Va. publish for our people. Let them publish and send round. If they get some of the boys together and through a local publish for the miners, let them send it round, or send copies and ask us to mimeo extracts and inform all of us and our friends. Let them make tapes and send. Let them ask N.Y. or Detroit to arrange a meeting for one or two people to come and talk. But let our paper go its own modest, careful way. If a mighty tubble broke out, (500,000 miners versus John L.) and shook the minifields, I would not budge an inch from our program. We could plunge in, spend our money, exhaust ourselves, publish, editorialize, and generally enjoy ourselves, and when it was all over where would we be? Nowhere. Contrariwise, if we get out the half-dozen basic pamphlets and booklets that say what we are, if we systematically work at the paper and master it; then in 18 months we have a Convention which will place on the agenda: a weekly paper. That will be our organization, with basis and roots and reserves. Then when anything happens this paper takes to the field in our name. Meanwhile the local in W. Va. will continue to sink itself deep and incorporate. But we will be something, with material to show what we are, a press, and an organization knit together not only by these but by a year's functioning together. But today, now, when the umbilical cord is not yet cut, to start throwing our limited resources into this is in my opinion totally wrong. It is not a mistake, anybody can make a serious mistake. It is a political symptom. It is the old leadership of the workers complex, the old leadership from the center complex, all the things we have to root out. Luckily I know it. It will turn up again and again. I have said that it will take us about a year to have things set up in such a way that wherever it appears it can be jumped upon by everybody.

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What to do? A letter should have been written to W. Va. telling them to keep in close touch with Herman, and if they wanted anything to ask for it. Not a damn thing more.

The things that matter are E.G., a) the memo on methods of correspondence by Mark b) the memo by Chester.

What I am looking to see handled soon (perhaps you are doing it, I don't know) is the estimate of the total budget for the next six months say, an estimate of necessary expenditures; class war prisoner fund; secretary's assistant, national headquarters rent.

I would like to see also a letter to locals, asking them to arrange and send in as soon as possible their organizational set-up, e.g. Organizer, executive committee, Treasurer (if any), meetings per week projected; educational; also steps they are taking to raise loans to send large sums to the center as we discussed etc. In organizational procedure they do what they please.

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But the center must know, and other locals too. The locals should get into the habit of not pressing individual friends for money, but taking out loans, sending large sums to the center quickly, and then scrupulously paying off these loans. They must learn to handle these things regularly and freely, and not as in the WP and SWP, a few solemn-faced and mysterious manipulators pretending that they are in reality Chancellors of the Proletarian Exchequer. That is democracy. The center can by its persistent attention to these matters direct the locals.

Lastly (for the time being) there is the paper. The paper should be our special baby, everybody thinking day and night, how to get it going, how to keep it going, and ready to threaten with expulsion anyone who allows typos or slovenly work. That any local should miss its quota is, I consider, impossible.

What procedure you should now follow about W. Va. is your business entirely. You may be opposed to my views and decide to go ahead. That's up to you. But you are wrong, and in my opinion you should not merely change your views, but change it roughly, informing in detail, political detail, all who got the original notice. In my opinion this is a serious question involving what we are breaking with and what we are aiming at. Procedure I shall take up soon.

Irving *Chis*

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every two weeks

LABOR-WOMEN-NEGRO-YOUTH-PHILOSOPHY-CULTURE-EDITORIAL

VOL. I, NO. 1

NOVEMBER 15, 1951

LABOR

MINERS' WILDCAT STRIKE

unnecessary

West Virginia, Oct. 29 -- Wildcat strikes among the miners are probably as frequent as they are among the workers of the larger industrial plants, if not more so. But the strikes are small both in the numbers involved and in the amount of time that they last. An average coal mine may hire around 400 miners. Often such a coal mine is miles from another. Thus, from the very nature of the coal industry, a wildcat strike is seldom a spectacular affair. In two or three days the strike is ended by the appearance of the District with the insistence that grievances be settled through regular grievance machinery. This powerful, centralized bureaucracy makes it next to impossible for a wildcat to sweep beyond its small limits and to last longer than three or four days.

Review

Obviously, then, the wildcat strike that occurred recently in the mines of Pittsburgh Consolidation Coal Company (Consol - popular name) in northern West Virginia was a wildcat of special significance. It covered 13 mines, included 5,000 men, and lasted for close to two weeks. It withstood the combined pressure of Consol, the U.M.W. bureaucracy, and, always hiding in the shadows, the great ghost of the government. It covered a total area of some 40 miles and reached the peak of its expansion in less than two days. (Nor was it ended with a schoolish reminder of the grievance machinery.)

The wildcat came as a surprise to all. No one expected it; nor did anyone foresee the size, purpose, or direction of it. What sparked the strike was a rather crude move on the part of Consol at one of its smaller mines. It laid off many old miners and most of the officers of the union, while continuing to employ men just recently hired. The mine struck. Other locals, hearing of the incident, also struck. At a mass

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meeting they formulated their goals: (1) mine-wide seniority and (2) the re-hiring of the men that had been laid off. Only a small portion of this was achieved. Instead of mine-wide seniority they got mine-wide seniority within a classification, which, in turn, was so worded as to still leave room for Consol to continue its discriminatory policies. Many of the old miners and officers of the one mine were re-hired but - the general agreement on seniority would make it possible for Consol to lay them off again in the future. Thus, the formal aim of the strike was only partly or hardly attained. Viewed in this light, the men had shot a cannon to kill a bird. But the real significance of the strike came not in the few concessions the men gained, but in the manner in which they were able to mobilize themselves against all the forces opposed to them.

The chief strength of the wildcat lay, of course, in the numbers, unanimity, and rapidity with which the men moved. This was unplannable. It might be noted in this connection, that many of the same men, locals, and leaders had been fighting for a year to gain "partial-autonomy". This never got very far. The International simply ignored their appeals. The District rudely labeled it "dual-movement" and "communist" and let it go at that. And the men themselves pursued the battle only half-heartedly. It was all too planned. But the wildcat was not. Nothing but the stirrings of deep currents within the men could have produced it.

Nonetheless, it soon found form. It conquered the whole union machine below the level of the District. All the officers, funds, and organization of these locals were now weapons of the strikers. Thus, it followed almost naturally from this that the presidents of each local constitute the leadership of the strike. This, then, was the strike committee. This was the strike organization. Here the strength of the spontaneous wildcat strike took conscious plan.

This left the District without a base among the strikers. It was isolated and surrounded by an angry force of 5,000 miners. Alone it would have lost the battle completely. It ran, therefore, to the International. What the District had not even tried, now the International did. "Go back to work," it said, "and send your grievances through the regular grievance procedure." The old song; the old, old song. The men refused to go back to work. Well! The International got the idea. It junked the grievance machinery like an old wrecked car. "O.K.," it said more sweetly, "if you go back to work, we'll negotiate your demands for you." A gentleman would have appreciated the sacrifice of the International and would have politely compromised. The miners were not gentlemen. They refused to go back to work. This was too much for the International. It stepped back to catch its breath. (It may have whispered something to its partner.) The District came forward now, sweeter still. "Look fellows, why don't we - your representatives, Consol and I - negotiate your demands? ...while you go back to work." (Of course.) The men rejected this proposal the way they had the others. They refused to go back to work - even with their own strike leaders negotiating for them.

The significance of this mobilization of the miners must be emphasized. The men had done much the same thing in the earlier strikes. When their International representatives had urged them to return to work.

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during the '49 and '50 strikes, they also refused then. But this wildcat strike differed from the others in that it was the first time - in this region at least - that they had rejected their International on a strike initiated and organized by themselves. In the earlier strikes it still seemed that the men were merely implementing the decisions and directions of their top leaders, even though they opposed what their leaders urged. But there was no ambiguity about this strike. The men had started and organized it. Now, like the earlier strikes, they rejected their union leaders. But not merely rejected them. They forced their union leaders to break the union "law", the contract and the grievance procedure. They forced them to recognize the striker's organization. Thus, despite the insignificant seniority concessions that they gained, the strikers revealed their power.

But their mobilization also revealed their weakness. They knew that the chief basis for any success was the maintenance of the strike. They also knew, however, that for full success the strike had to be extended. 5,000 men was not enough against the superior forces of Consol and the union bureaucracy. More, many more would have to be involved. They instinctively realized that only the inclusion of the non-Consol mines would help them. For this a central organization was needed, capable of giving their initial impulse a renewed and organized direction. The other mines were small and isolated. They were not tied together the way the miners of Consol were. A serious and sustained struggle for complete success would have to include them. Here, not only their strength but also their weakness took form. The organization that they had won - the locals and their presidents - was not adapted for the kind of sweeping strike the men wished. The strike leaders saw the fight as primarily a Consol fight within their particular District. They were opposed to extending the strike. Still, the men were patient. Without their leaders and the organization, all would be lost. Rather than alienate their leaders or dividing them by pressing for the extension of the strike, the men chose to wait. Their leaders might yet learn, especially when the strike reached its crisis.

The men's patience proved their undoing. The crisis came. The District made its last offer: representatives of the men, the District, and Consol would negotiate while the men returned to work. Here was the crucial test for their organization and its leaders. Would their leaders now yield to the District's recognition of them or would they reject the District and spread the strike? Had the men really won the union machine? Was it really capable of doing what they wanted it to do? Sensing the danger, the men did what they had not done earlier. They unanimously rejected the District's offer and pressed to extend the strike to other Consol mines beyond both the District and the State of West Virginia. They gave their leaders a clear mandate. Would the strike leaders follow it? No sooner was this mandate given than the leaders capitulated to the District pressure - behind the backs of the men. They accepted the District's offer. What none had been able to do, they did: they sent the men back to work. The organization and leaders that the men won had now turned against the men. The District had re-captured the union machine it had lost. The men returned to work, bitter and angry.

Nov. 23, 1951

Hello:

I will take the bull by the horn by deepening the error in one essential respect but at least clearing the question of tone once and for all; it is of long standing. If the old me must be thrown out--and much of it must--let's at least see fully what it is we're throwing out.

First then the deepening. I did know why your tone was bad. You had just received a letter with a glaring political error written in a non-serious style from one who is so enamored of the constant expansion of ideas that she often loses her political moorings. Precisely because I knew all that I hurried ~~me~~ with a follow-up. Not only that you did not at all surprise me by nevertheless accepting the proposal as a method to be tried; I knew you would; you never have acted otherwise in a serious matter. Nor am I unaware that you too must not be imposed upon after so many years of exile and suppression and you must write freely. Nevertheless I wrote the note and now that you have brought everything else in with which I shall deal ~~later~~ later, I must go to the roots of this tone. You did not; you immediately dropped it to go to more serious matters.

Now then what happens to tone in internal relations as I understand it. Lenin was most meticulous in not bringing in the class divisions into the party, not even in the Will. If, he ~~said~~ said, it was a class division, there is no sense in talking about it at all; the dictatorship would fall, and that was that, but if it was "personal", etc. etc. At a much earlier period he asked that Stalin be expelled for slapping a comrade in jail. It is simply impossible to work out a line if that is the political atmosphere among revolutionaries. (You notice I'm not talking at all about a diplomatic false tone which is what characterized the SWP and which once bothered me and which I thought we got rid of in the old new period.) Tone also enters into relations between leaders and ranks. Once the Old Man ribbed me, continuously, a week. Finally, I told him I understood he once did that to a French secretary and that the man ended up crying, but I was not the crying kind. It ended immediately. And then we began to talk of the Russian Revolution and I pointed out that the greatest things he singles out in his work are (1) soviets as a form of rule as against autocracy, (2) collective instead of kulak, and (3) Vy (You) instead of ty (Thou). Wasn't the third amazing to be placed so high up, and yet wasn't it precisely the way the masses felt. Once I had made him apologize, and now he saw I wasn't quite such a little anarchist as he had thought me to be. In the same line of development, I noted in my first trip to W.Va. before I left for Europe that the one thing, directly alongside of the actual civil war in 1922, the miners would tell you that the greatest victory was the manner in which the boss addressed you, and the way he used to before there was a union.

Why is it that your tone ~~is never~~ is never in your voice, but does creep into your writings. Let me tell you what that ass Shachtman used to say. It proved you weren't as brilliant as you were cracked up to be, said he, but it was only your

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terrific personality. Personality hokey. What happens on the platform, and I am using that broadly as meaning an audience whether that audience is 1 or 1,000, is that you have a genuine genius for communication with the audience. That's why your tone is never bad. Somehow it is lost to some degree in writing. Or I should say more accurately that when you least achieve it your writing becomes Germanic or letter-writing. Your WR for instance achieved least of that communication with the audience; your 1/4 pamphlet most; and first now with Melville are you achieving in your writing style what you always have in your platform style. I mentioned once the difference between your political writing and Melville and you seemed very puzzled. This is what I meant. I bring this all up now because it is important for Roberts' development that you show such confidence in her that no matter how harsh the political slapping the tone is never bad. Not that she complained. Not at all. I did because I feel a new responsibility toward her as the most politically responsible in that committee.

One more word on tone and I'll shut up on that. No one could understand how I could break with LT just one short year after I had been his secretary which position had achieved a certain high point in my "career". The Old Man was first to be surprised and somehow he thought the criticism of Abern was too harsh perhaps for my ears, so he put a bouquet of flowers into one of the pites to the effect that some Abernites are the best, etc.etc. as he knows. Now, that to me is hokey because that is not what I am talking about when I complain about tone of leaders. Then Clark was sent personally to see me just before the break and he began with How can you go with a guy like Abern when the CM, etc.etc. I told him to get. Then a period elapsed in the WP and Shachtman made the same error. He began passing me all sorts of notes about I'm the only one in the Johnsonites worth a damn, that you were an egotist and more and more blarney, right while we were debating some question in the Harlem branch. I did not answer one, but that did not stop him, so I acted quickly and showed him I could be as rude as anybody when politics demanded that type of answer. Right as part of the debate, and loud for all to hear, I said, "Shachtman is tickling the wrong girl." That ended that. No, it isn't tone per se. But tone says something of relations, and I want to know whether at this stage when relations in committee are just being built, I haven't the right so to speak to question your tone, without being accused of wanting to cramp your style.

You really weren't concerned with tone, because you told me how I should have behaved if I thought your tone wasn't good, and also apologized. No, you let out a blast not because of tone, but because you recognized that I was spreading myself thin, and must reorganize myself. In that you are absolutely correct and I am trying to do just that. But in that I am not sure I understand what you mean by my being a woman of which I am conscious enough. You seem to think that that has to do something important to do with my previously bad relations with Roberts. You mentioned also on the tapes that you tried to bring Robinson in to settle us down. I have never seen that letter so I do not know whether I agree or disagree, that is would have agreed or disagreed. No doubt the fact that we are women enters some, but that isn't the question, whether some; it is how crucial is that fact. I'll tell you how I see it in the moments I am most worried: Stalin and Trotsky. Hardly complimentary. Scary

enough to make us both behave. But that is closest in type because it shows two petty bourgeois removed from the masses, one pitting the education, suavity, etc. against the other who shows he is the organizer and that's what counts. (I cannot incidentally write the piece on the Will until I am free to say that the reason that Lenin could not choose one is that both were of the same type: administrative. If the rudeness was a better vehicle for the class enemy at one precise moment in history, it does not mean that the other cannot serve same purpose at another moment. Look, to come down from the heights to our American scene, at Hiss and Chambers; when they both served same master Harvard and politeness and slum rudeness gibed very well; when they served different masters only did individual characteristics suddenly predominate.) O, lord, I better stop here.

The political strain of building the organization--yes, I know it well. I will begin studying myself as I study the others. I will relax and read Lord Ramo if you wish as you do, and have time to think. I must. And I must also do my book. You always anticipate

Yours.



November 27, 1961

Hello,

After a night's sleep I decided to take you up on that challenge after all, without procrastination. It is as well to start with your very last letter which has a very good tone indeed but which reveals a non-serious attitude to the bad tone. That, despite the fact that you ask to be called to order. After quoting me on my right to question your tone without being accused of wanting to cramp your style, here is what you write: "I simply cannot resist this one. I have held my peace so often. Just this once. 'You have every right to question my style.'" Good. But I have every right to accuse you of trying to cramp me. Why not?

I'll tell you why not. You have a special place not only in the organization but in history. I have been, as indeed I should have been, most meticulously conscious of that fact and that's why I took bad tone without complaint for so long. You are the present-day embodiment of M-L. I'm not complimenting you. I'm stating a fact. You must now become as conscious of that role organizationally as you are of it theoretically. If it took me years to get up courage to question your tone, do you suppose anyone else will just up and do that at the drop of a hat? You spoke in one of your recent letters about the dangers of one-man leadership. At the particular moment one aspect concerned you, the viciousness with which some turn against the leader precisely because of that fact. You know, however, what I fear most at this moment? That no one will turn against some poor trait like a bad tone precisely because it is the tone of the undisputed leader. John told me that when the SWP first began to degenerate and the ranks were silent, JFC really got worried and went around begging local leaders to stimulate discussion even if it meant arousing attacks, just so long as there would be some life in that damned party. We need fear no such thing in our party now, but what nonsense is it to compare my cramping your style with the persecution you underwent in the WP and SWP? ~~It is not a fair comparison. The WP and SWP were not organizations. They were enemies who resisted every attempt you made to free Marxism from Trotskyism. I am your follower who is trying hard not to be fully overwhelmed by you now that there is an organization. To compare this type of discipline with that of the other organizations would be worse than to compare the Great Beginning type of discipline with Stakhanovite exploitation.~~ They were enemies who resisted every attempt you made to free Marxism from Trotskyism. I am your follower who is trying hard not to be fully overwhelmed by you now that there is an organization. To compare this type of discipline with that of the other organizations would be worse than to compare the Great Beginning type of discipline with Stakhanovite exploitation.

Your conscious aim to acquire greater freedom, to sharpen up internal discussion and push correspondence into a new layer should all the more discipline the tone. You write, if something is wrong, then I ought to start with the particular letter that provoked my protest "and quote and make the points. Fully. In detail." Why, however, should I quote when you can, if you wished, make better mincemeat out of that letter's tone than I. Just consider such pure Shachtmanesque as "The stimulus of the 'participation' with the workers has obviously been very great." It isn't worthy of one who the very next day wrote "Yet do not think I have prejudged your proposal. I shall study it--

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*You did so by implication, and don't ask me to quote; just look at your letters.

with a view to accepting it. It is the only method to give a new point of view a real chance." I sent the letter out to the NSC and the pamphlet writers, of course, but have you questioned yourself what effect its tone will have on the ranks in general and the secondary leadership in particular. We now have an organization and everything, everything must be viewed with that in mind. How shall it react ~~when~~ when the leader writes to a leader: "Furthermore it is obvious that no one knew exactly what we are doing, or rather how we shall do what we are aiming at." Nothing of the sort was obvious. Her letter expressed it poorly but it was clear from my letter which you received before you ended yours that what was obvious was, not that we knew what nought but we knew too much so to speak. As you yourself put it, with a good tone, "All sorts of far-reaching questions are involved here. You say: I do not want to create new problems. Ho! ho! You are not creating them, sister. You are finding them out."

One of the reasons I have said nothing these many years on tone whenever a bad tone made its appearance was due to the fact that you have always been politically correct and so often the deviation meant me. Under the circumstances complaining about tone would have sounded like self-justification. But now that we have an organization, the question is no longer "personal" and I need not bend backward to prove I'm interred, not in "justice", but in politics. And, above that, the organization which is getting its bearings should also get its tone set right. Tone does contain political overtones and in the establishment of entirely new relations between leaders and ranks that our organization aims at, it is necessary that the tone of the leader be one wants to imitate, not disregard.

Pardon me, if I take my usual plunge into history before I continue with the concrete. Letter writing in the Marxist movement has a history, some to be imitated, some to be disregarded, and some to be avoided like the plague. Lenin is our model. I know of no single instance when his tone in letters to friends was bad. That, not despite of, but precisely because his articles and analysis in letters of alien tendencies was uncompromising. Marx made one error and enemy historians have surely taken advantage of that one. So far as I am concerned he was right even he was "wrong" and Engels would have wanted nothing historically had he acted on impulse and broken off relations. But it is not my opinion that matters here. The point is Engels thought it bad, and Marx thought an explanation was due Engels. LT was neither like M nor L in his letters. Many of his letters are very bad and surely expose his dilatory politics. In relation to his own son they were so bad sometimes that as a result the pamphlet dedicated to Sedoff is all emotion in which politics is enclosed instead of v.v. Finally, to friends his letters were diplomatic, that is factional in the worst sense of the word, slurring over errors, giving out "the line" in advance, etc.etc. Some colossal political blunders resulted from it. Of course I want none of that, and if diplomacy was in your mind when you read me first, so violently, then you were absolutely right. But why should that have been in your mind? I very clearly said I mean none of the old stuff that bothered me; that is out; I mean the new relations.

Lenin remains our model. As I see it, what makes his tone in his letters so good is that he was always consciousness of the seriousness of a class division. Where there was no class division, therefore, his tone was automatically comradely. His correspondence with proletarian revolutionaries reflect the dignity with which he views them and the confidence he has in the proletariat is reflected in confidence in them. I can't emphasize enough how important his principle of not bringing in class divisions into the organization is to the building of a revolutionary organization. It is here where I think the root of your poor tone lies. Where you do not mention class, there nevertheless are overtones that signify such a division. And sometimes you mention it specifically. I do not mean as analysis of grouping or types or tendencies which of course must be analyzed from a class point of view inside as well as outside the organization; I mean extending this analysis to individuals. Here is an example.* "It should be noted," you wrote, "that the class character of this antagonism was not obscured...E says and very correctly that the last time the proletarian element and organizations were left out. Let B exercise her energies with them. There will then be no trouble in P." Would there really have been "no trouble" if B (B alone) "exercised her energies" with the proletariat? If yes, why did this not appear on the tape on a similar subject? Listen to your tape and then read the letter to me on it and study the difference. You will see at once that the difference is the audience; the audience tones down your exaggerations; that profound communications with the audience somehow escapes you and thus fails to discipline the tone when you are with pen in hand. All I tried to say in the note to you was that when we are building new relations, as we are now doing, whispering is more suitable to working out problems than shouting, paper-wise.

This isn't really the first time I spoke to you on this subject or tone. I had the same "anti" feeling when I read some of your personal letters which you quoted in your epistle to JFG. I told you then that if I had been the personal recipient of such personal letters you would never have seen me again to shout at. But that's just it; you don't shout. Audience communication stops any tendency to self-expression.

Why am I so insistent on tone now. I'm sure that although I'm the only who has raised the subject, I'm not the only one who feels that way. I remember the time I took a special trip to Detroit to discuss with him the American Worker pamphlet and your correspondence with me and Roberts from Calif. He was shocked by your tone and surprised that I showed around such correspondence. (No, not showed, analyzed objectively for two full days.) I replied: Well, tone doesn't matter so much. The error does. It was a very serious one; had this been April 1917, think what would have happened. I convinced him. But, my dear Evans, may I admit softly that it wasn't April.

*I leave out the politics altogether. As you know I agreed with that fully and brought it to the PSC for prompt action. Here however what concerns me is not political correctness but tone of presentation.

I will take only one other instance--the worst political error on my part and hence the worst tone in your letter on the occasion of the Pittsburgh explosion. Here is what is amazing about the tone in that one. So over-violent was it, that no one, NO ONE, not even Roberts guessed the full political implications. I once ~~asked~~ asked her and said that I hadn't wished to talk to you about it, but if she thought that it meant the break-up of J-F then I would talk to you. She was horrified at the thought. She said: I'm fully with J in what he wrote and do not wish to discuss it at all. But if you think that he meant to sever the J-F in the J-F T you're crazy. I said, Well, I'll respect your wish not to talk; most certainly I do not wish to interfere with your loyalty to J. But such a tone as his could not possibly mean "only" that I was wrong in attitude to SWP nor in intrusion in personal relations. Since J&F relations are pure politics, a tone like that must mean that I simply did not measure up to the whole body of Johnsonite ideas. I believe she thought I was crazy. Perhaps you do too. But, believe me, I'm not. I speak with a century's development of Marxism in my head and you will find no parallel to this one. If that didn't mean break, it had no right being written that way for the only other thing it could mean was a relationship to a junior delinquent. I just quietly backed out, and while reorganizing myself, saying, Well, when he finally breaks out independently, I'll knock for admission and NO FORCE can keep me from Johnsonism.

I do not think anyone can accuse me of trying to hide errors. I do not believe there can be a harsher judgment of my behavior than my own statement, to the tape for all to hear, that at root of our disagreements was my attempt to combine Johnsonism with Trotskyism. No, dear friend and true leader, it is not that I am trying to play down errors. I just cannot understand how any error, except a clear class division, should get that tone into correspondence. Read Lenin's Will and see if I am not right.

You mentioned in your first letter on tone that when I get tired I become careless. No doubt this is true, and is absolutely impermissible in a leader. The instances about the edge in my own tone at the plenary session that you cite you are absolutely right in; I myself recognized that fact after the event and tried to root it out. But the incident you chose to prove your point that it is not tone but a need for rest that I really want is entirely wrong. I'll tell you what it was--now that all comes out that might as well. When I got back from the coast and I found the letter on tapes, I got a completely hopeless feeling about your ever changing your tone. Yes, I know the letter was written by Roberts, not by you. But I believe she rightly used your authority and, being the extremist she is, developed it to its logical conclusion. A leader is responsible not only for a line but for its implications. And if she could write: Our main concern was security; that evidently was not yours, how could good relations be established and class tone eliminated through a cheery telephone conversation?

It is only now when we have an organization that I lost the hopeless feeling and felt free to open the subject of tone, although I had no idea it would get into all this. I thought you would see it promptly and it would remain a confidential note. But instead you reacted as if I was trying to muzzle you. Whenever did I do that? Why should I even want to with all the devotion I have to your ideas? When did I ever give you cause for the repetitious, persistent insistence that you would speak "without equivocation" as if your leadership, your organization, was making it impossible for you to do so?

I'm not interested in making any cause celebre out of this. At first I thought of consulting Roberts before I wrote, but then I decided that since I started it I better continue to stick my neck out alone. I do not think it will be a problem now. I know that the same sense of organization that made me dare raise the question that this is not a question of cramping your style, but of disciplining the tone in your writing because the new organization and its leaders and ranks, ~~must~~ have need of a tone that corresponds to its aims and new relations. The proletarian note of confidence that always shone out of Lenin's letters will of yours too, I am sure.

Yours, as ever,

I've deliberately left out the question of your style as orator and as writer. To do a serious job on that I would have to reread all of your writings, which is not a bad thing at all and I mean to do it, but it has to be done at leisure.