On Difference Between

Political Tendency and Political Movement

Sept. 20, 1962

In a discussion with John last Sunday, he asked, "What, then, were J's great contributions even in the creative period, 1941-52?" To which I automatically replied, "Politics, but left-wing" sense, that it would have been accepted by Trotsky and Trotskyists at that time. They can explain why we hesitated in the Trotskyist movement's policy to the extent and time mentioned earlier enough of this to get him to continue Trotskyism

A great clearing of my head occurred at that moment not only because it removed the discussion from subjective basis of John essay to an objective plane but also because it signifies that our previous statement, that even state-capitalism, unique "completed by Marxist-Humanism," needs restatement so that not the political tendency but the political movement predominates. Of course we call ourselves Marxist-Humanists and fully appreciate the positive, instead of the negative, co-ordination of our philosophy. But we have never pinpointed the difference between tendency and movement and thus have to have arisen in 1941 when we were "humanitarians" rather than 1955 when we finally did become Marxist-Humanists, or, more precisely yet, unfurled the banner of MARKSA AND FREEDOM. Therefore, I would like you to retrace with me, backwards and forwards, the difference between the political tendency and a political movement:

1) Let me say at once that I now consider it an accident that the 1941 split from SAP found the to-be-JCP as an undifferentiated part of Szechuanism-Junarlism.

2) Nor was it only a "tactical" question (where not hypothetically, as JCP's "American Revolution") that we returned to the SAP in 1947.

3) Nor, finally, that it was not 1962 with a SCHR Resolution split, but 1952 with a miserable "Moral," that we finally left. This again from the basis of ANYTHING AS FUNDAMENTAL AS A POLITICAL TENDENCY INTO ITS OWN ASIAN DEBT UNTIL TODAY, AND IN THE ABSOLUTE IDEA, ANY ISSUE, 1953, less than one month before June 17 last German Revolt.

Here is what these 3 points add up to: we were a political tendency and a tendency, though it tends in a direction separate and apart from the main tree, cannot really branch off as if it were a different tree, with its own roots. No, our new thought was of a pattern that could be Trotskyist, or Trotskyist as either of us two wings between which we nestled fairly comfortably.

It is true Trotsky, when alive, had fought state-capitalist tendencies before ours, and the Trotskyists came full force down upon us with his authority, but it is also true that, to the extent that Trotsky allowed for state capitalism's possible appearance "If," we were not out of line as an absolute opposite. If we had been -- and by SCHR we were beginning to be, which is why they, and not we, had taken the initiative in driving us out of the party -- then the constant talk of the class nature of Stalinism would have meant that we would not tolerate being with those who whitewashed the class enemy.

9629
The proof of our tolerance is not only organizational but philosophical: (1) As far back as 1917 (not to mention '47 when I first translated them directly from the Russian) we published Marx's Early Economic Essays. What did they mean to say? Certainly not socialism, though some assumed it of us. No. It was "Alienation," that we chose to make into a philosophic category—"and we were known to others as ourselves by it—was "Alienated Labor," so much so that we had to begin yelling that "also" characteristic of Marxism was "cooperative labor" so as to keep our proletarianized intellectuals from feeling so "alienated" that they ran out of the factory without making a single friend in it.

(2) J then departed to write his "Nevada Document" or Diacritic Notes or Hegel's SCIENCE OF LOGIC. But the upshot of it was to continue to remain part of Trotskyism because while not the point of the Logic for our era was "error as dynamic of truth" so that Trotskyism still had much to teach us of "truth." To be is 1948.

(3) 1948-49 saw a prodigious correspondence between J, G & myself on the Diacritic, with Lenin's PHILOSOPHIC NOTEBOOKS which I had just translated as the center. To look back 25 months of annoying correspondence before I got anything out of those two, and I used to think it is only because I dared go into their philosophic domain. This is true, but not the whole truth. The greater truth is that they didn't understand Lenin's Notebooks. They did get "transformation into opposite" for its economic content as explained in monopoly capitalism; nothing at all of "absolute idea." Nothing. Nothing. This is why

(4) by 1950 and our greatest collective effort, SSCR, we single out "contradiction" in Hegel and say that is what Lenin grasped first in 1918.

Worse than what we didn't grasp in Lenin or Hegel was where we stopped in our analysis of Trotskyism thought as "Synthetic cognition." Do wonder all those jokes from Trotsky, "You mean LT didn't read the last chapter of the Logic?" If LT didn't accept the state-capitalist theory only because he made a 1917 phenomenon, statified property, into a "fixed category" and wouldn't see the change that had occurred since, then all that is necessary is to make them see "reality", not to reorientize their very method of thought especially not since "synthetic cognition" not only contains correct analysis, but also this analysis of the contradictions in the universe, the world phenomenon, but needs only to jam them to get the unity of the two and get the diacritic whole. This indeed is what we did. There is a quality in Trotskyism, world or permanent revolution we are for; statified property we are. But the former is the greater truth which demands our loyalty still.

IN A WORD, we regained a political tendency to the end and went with us in the split as well. Just empty had we not singled out the "Marxism" of Marxism in 1947, so we had not singled it out in the strike of the miners in 1949. It is true that I presented to JG, with Johny Z. present, the first new view of what my book was to be: (1) its American roots in the strike and JG's Philo-Notebooks as its center, but we were so free from concretizing, or living by it, that in the BSC the whole strike appears only as proof that "women" (dick) were not "suppressed" as they were in CP".

Now then this means that we can shed any illusion that a movement had been founded and that the "founder" (J) had a "co-founder" (J) whom he does not wish to acknowledge, and did so
only twice and only under compulsion, in 1947 when JPT meant he'd have a faction & in 1954 when he hoped to keep her imprisoned as "co-founder"

For the subjectivism, even when it is true, and you will see that objectively other state-capitalist factions arose, which did state capitalism itself, from Lux's anarchismo-syndicalism to Tony Cliff's opportunist LIPism.

The truth is state capitalism is no raison d'être for an independent movement any more than Lenin's Empiricism, by itself, would have been. He could build that with help both from Stalinism and even Hobbes—but for State & Revolution only he and Marx could have been its authors and hence founders of an new movement in thought as the communards and the Russian Soviet creators were in life.

Whether we could have influenced history if, in 1947, we had "caught" the humanism of Marxism, or whether we couldn't in 1954 could it because it was "in the air" yet as the concrete it became in 1956—we'll never know because it isn't possible to rewrite history. But at time we did write it:

Concretely, then, this is how the things developed:

1) In May 1953 I wrote these letters on the Absolute Idea which Grace correctly analyzed as showing, for the first time, that there was not only a movement from theory to practice where practice meant either "verification" of theory or, at very best, "source" of theory, but an active movement whereby practice approached theory so that the two could unite. Moreover, said my letters, the Absolute Idea is not only unity of theory and practice; it is the new society, not just the dialectic of the party as the "knowing" of the proletarian, authentically communist, nor just "forms of revolt", but the new society.

2) In June 1952 came the East German Revolt, not only to put an end to the myth of invincibility of totalitarianism, but to re-establish the human factor as the center of all movement forward. It was the dress rehearsal for Hungary 1956, but we could not see it then not only because we were prophets, but because we were still debating (a) Stalin's death vs. "the new" in the exchange of hamburger recipes at factory benches among a couple of women, (b) preparing to issue a new paper without giving the proletarian-editor-to-be a line, a principle, a perspective, a theory that is ready to abolish the division between theory and practice.

3) In 1954-55 we were forced into a split because of a split because I had understood those 1953 letters and, just as JFC understood SCF and forced a split, so would I presently see that no new movement was founded, not with his acquiescence. It must be frankly admitted we did notice it as such, although our instinct was right both on the immediate of war, politicalization of organization and proletarianization of paper as part and parcel of a theoretical unfolding, and on "utopia" by avoiding the writing of IMT. THE AND FREEDOM was complete

The point I am making is that there was no raison d'être for an independent proletarian movement until after THE AND FREEDOM was complete

Yours,
Sept. 29, 1962

Dear Bess:

I hope you are in the process of commenting on my letter to you on the differences between a political tendency and a political movement. Indeed I must insist that you do not take advantage of the difficulties you have in writing not to answer that letter (and this one which is a continuation of the other) because, in essence, it will form the foundation for our pamphlet, "Who we are and what we Stand for." I have not sent copies to the newer members because first we who have lived through that period must arrive at certain conclusions. Then, when we see where it is we have reached, we will also bring in those members who are working on the basis of what we are now rather than what we were in the 1940's.

The disintegration of Johnsonism, first and most fundamentally, when we broke with it in 1955; and now when he pretends to return to Marxism and Grace goes to everything from peace to Islam is proof of the fact that it had not developed into a total comprehensive theory for our time. But I still am interested in the positive contribution--state-capitalism--and why it could not reach to Marxist-Humanism without breaking from Johnsonism:

1) 1947, when we published the early Essays of Marx but could not see Marxist-Humanism, although it was precisely that which was in dispute in France between Existentialists who had perverted it as "existentialists" and the Catholics who of necessity wished to reduce it to "soul." Why did it only mean "Alienated labor" to us then? It seems to me it was because despite our verbiage on "revolution" it was all rather an abstract or stupidly empirical as when J tried to equate it to Israel.

2) 1948. It disappears into Nevada to work on the absolute Idea but only comes up with "error as the dynamic of truth." Now, outside of the fact that, to Hegel, it was not the, but "a" dynamic of truth and then only it, by virtue of the lessons from error, we were able to say, why did J see only that? He used to say it was nothing more than a rationalization for remaining inside therotabyist movement, and that remains true. But it is not the whole truth. The objective pull is always stronger than the subjective, no matter how strong-willed (or willful, as you wish) the leader. And the objective pull was the preponderance of counter-revolution over revolution when the intuitive and struggles of the masses in post-W. world had now given way to the Marshall Plan.

To J, despite all he said about the inevitability of failure of Marshall Plan to re-establish capitalistic Europe, the counter-revolution stood out so sharply that he chose its evolution (reading it back all the way to French Revolution and Napoleonism) and its future, which is why he chose to concentrate on Ahab and relate Marxism to "subordinate" (so).

3) 1949, with my translation of Lenin's Philosophic notebooks and the correspondence between J. G. and me, J once again makes the counter-revolution preclude so that even when A. reaches her highest point in the analysis of Hegel and what she called the "plan, c into Freedom", she stops short at "Personality" in the Absolute Idea--and by this time it means not just Ahab but J himself.

9632
4) 1950. No wonder, then, that when we reach as far as it is possible to go with the state-capitalist theory without a concrete new philosophic universal --50CR—that, despite all KAP on self-mobilization of masses, the crisis within (!) it sticks out like a sore thumb, and we insist furthermore: one of the most urgent tasks is to trace the evolution of the counter-revolution within the revolution, from liberalism through anarchism, Social Democracy, Lenin counter-revolutionary Mandelism, to Stalinism, its economic and social roots at each stage, its political manifestations, its contradictions and antagonisms.

(Incidentally, i is a shifting liar when, in reproducing this last claim in his book as perfunctory, he says that we said on the party, he is a liar because, for the total opposite theory of party, here is what we wrote there on it, and Plan Leningrad the enemy of its analysis of state-capitalism theory of the party. The party is, in Lenin’s words, based upon the factory but upon the progressive cooperation aspect of the factory, unity, discipline, and organization of the working class, in unalterable opposition to the theory and practice of the elite.)

(He is a shifting liar because he is forever shifting the axis of his undisciplined verbiage from one central point to its opposite without any serious explanation and on the wrong foundation since he tries to use the theory built up for one purpose for an entirely different aim. and thus with the party. A no time in the FP, or SmP were we opposed to "the party." On the contrary, we were forever telling them now to build it correctly instead of the wrong foundations they had, even when we developed the “mobilization” concept, it was not in opposition to “the party”, but only in relation to it. As began, only with BSC, to speak against “the party toListener (and correctly) but even then, as was evident from the constant reiteration of the quotation from Lenin where he shows that only the thin stratum of the Bolsheviks kept the dictatorship from collapsing, it was not against a Leninist party (and taken out of context) or against what state-capitalist hands first, and not in Trotskyism. The "total repudiation" he was to discover only after we broke and his total departure from Marxism, just as he now, in his "Marxism and intellectual", begins to cry about a return to Marxism and the need to "explain" the role of small groups, etc. etc.)

5) 1933. THIS IS THE IREAL BREAK BECAUSE PHILOSOPHICALLY I FINALLY STUMBLED ON THE NEEDED INTERPRETATION OF THE ABSOLUTE IDEA AS THE MATERNALITY AND HUMANITY OF OUR NOC. To break this down, as distinct from the sense he and i had labored on, 11, 1947-52, (HNO): 1) In contrast to the fact that, as he put it on 5/20/49 "I got nothing," from reading Philosophy of Mind, I went straight from Absolute Idea to Absolute Mind and said it was "the new society."

*This is hilarious. Until I wrote this word down just now I had forgotten that that was the phrase in my 1953 letters and their stupidities in "Fact... Reality", and thereafter naming the main column in Correspondence "New Society", must have had its origin there, but, as under Stalinism which claim it is "the new society", so the impotent Johnnieites scream: "the new society is here and all we need to do is record its existence."
b) This was, furthermore, in contradistinction to his equating the absolute idea to "the dialectic of the party." He had written, in fact, that "the party is so such the expression of everything" that it was no longer necessary to concentrate on the logic of Capital, or on the dialectic, "but the whole theory of knowledge" resided in the dialectic of the party, whatever that meant.

c) I was separating myself not only from Johnson, but I separated our axes from that of Lenin himself, saying that where Lenin could stop 2 paragraphs short of Hegel's conclusion of the Absolute, we could not because by 1953: (i) there was a movement from practice to theory even that when this movement was set up as Hegel had foreseen in his Absolute Mind,** we would have historic proof of the totality of freedom by virtue of the fact that it would no longer be a "possession"--to have it by virtue of education, or property, etc.--but an "is"--to be free through development of a new human dimension.

(Therby we were prepared in 1950 "to catch" Humanism.)

Now, no matter what it is J & G plotted after he dissuaded her from her enthusiastic letter on my Letters which she had previously compared to Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks, his rejection of them was no mere subjective reproach. He sent her with a note that I was up in the philosophic heights from which I better descend, "in order to pay attention to the organization, be concrete in its building." What he meant was that, if I build it on the positive aspects, instead of the negatives he had traced in the evolution of the counter-revolution, then "the public" would reject me. The public rejected correspondence all right--but it was because of lack of any clear line, or, more correctly, the multiplicity of lines.

It is the contrast of the periods, 1947-52, vs. 1953-7 (publication of M&F), that will be of the essence in "who we are and what we stand for." What do you think?

Yours,
Ray

**You will recall that I also brought out the parallel between that parenthesis in Hegel with a similar paragraph in Marx's "Accumulation of capital" chapter in CAPITAL where he anticipated Volumes II & III of Capital. Remember also that he never did finish the last chapter, "Classes", of Volume III and that in M&F I show how the American workers are finishing it for him. But at this point the important point is that CAPITAL is incomplete without his "Civil War in France" even as Lenin's "Imperialism" is incomplete without "State and Revolution" and the theory of state-capitalism is incomplete without the philosophy of the Humanism of Marxism.