

REB draft perspectives
1973 - 1974

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DRAFT PERSPECTIVES, 1973-4

Introduction

Some phases of Nixon's counter-revolution have aborted. The Watergate expose of the totalitarian conspiratorial attempts at a single-party police state within the two-party system has given the Movement a little breathing space. Not that anything changed in the exploitative, imperialistic, racist system veering wildly between its state-capitalist and its present phase out as private "free enterprise". Not that there was any diminution in militarization, or that the uncontrolled inflation was controlled, or unemployment as a permanent feature of its mode of production has fundamentally changed. Quite the contrary, as we can see from sexism with such a dehumanized face as the sterilization of Black teenagers. Neo-fascism is working hard at working out some new illusory disguises. Nevertheless, a single look at the "law and order" lawlessness of last year will show the difference between the repressive, terror-filled days following that fantastic Nixon landslide and today's disarray. It is by no accident that Lenin listed disorder within the capitalist class as one prerequisite to a pre-revolutionary situation. Imperative, therefore, becomes the challenge to use every second of the breather gained.

Objectively and subjectively this puts the Movement to the test. In reaffirming last year's Perspectives on the mythology of a pentagonal world, the first need is to show that the shocking effect of the 180° turnabout in Nixonian policy--his trip to China--was, far from being an overnight brainstorm, the culmination of a process that was created, not by him, but by the Sino-Soviet conflict. It took some thirteen years of maturation before ever U.S. imperialism took steps to use the Sino-Soviet conflict for its imperialist aims. The disaster of the Vietnam War which produced the mass anti-war movement in the U.S. forced Nixon to look for a way to avoid being a "one-term president". Mao and Brezhnev, (each of whom faced great internal crises at home) were all too ready to oblige. Thus it was that Nixon began his election campaign for "four more years"--in China. This is not to say that so historic a reversal of U.S. policy, one that Nixon and the China Lobby worked unfledglingly for 20 years to impose on the U.S., had only the aim of re-election. It is true, of course, that what never, never changes is that the enemy is at home.

Inseparable from it, however, is global policy, and that aim for single world power changed its tactics dramatically with the flying trip to Peking. The capitalists never forget the overriding fact of the class war at home any more than world ambitions of Pax Americana.

Nixon's intellectual footman, Dr. Henry Kissinger, has always infused 20th-century globalism into his attraction to Metternich's infamous "concert of nations" concept. Take the 1969 reprint of his 1957 book, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy. It states unashamedly: "We can't permit the balance of power to be overturned for the sake of allied unity or the approbation of the uncommitted." Thus, upon China's initiative--with secrecy that tickled the imagination of our 20th-century cowboy's learned mentality (see Orinana Fallaci's interview with Kissinger, reprinted in "The New Republic".) -- Nixon-Kissinger were happy to tilt U.S. policy towards Yayah Kahn's neo-fascistic Pakistan, keep reign on his extreme right wing by convincing them that not only was he opening new world doors to U.S. imperialism, but, above all, controlling the Black Revolution and youth anti-war movement and winning the election. No holds were barred to assure that that be a fact. What is forgotten now that the press gained the Pulitzer Prize for the Watergate expose is that the press, too, helped Nixon get elected--and we don't mean only the press that editorially supported Nixon's election. (The New York Times' James Reston, for example, wrote McGovern "doesn't deserve to win.")

It is necessary to take another look at the world Nixon wrought here and abroad, not only inseparable from his "philosophical underpinnings", but, above all, inseparable from their absolute opposite--philosophy and revolution.

I. The Phase-out in Economics and in Watergate; the Phase-in in Global Politics

Phase 4 should have been entitled "How to Bring on a Recession." Like the planned unemployment when the Nixon Administration first faced unemployment and the falling profit rate it was determined to shoot upward, it has now removed price controls so that uncontrollable inflation can go hog wild. Among other things, this forces the poverty-stricken Blacks to face the very question of survival altogether, the poor whites to spend more, and

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even the middle class to save and borrow less, not to mention the slow-down in production.

Does Nixon expect us to have suffered a total loss of memory when, in his plunge to the state-capitalistic Phase 2, his Economic Report read: "By the end of 1972, American anti-inflation policy had become the marvel of the rest of the world...Largely because of this change, the rest of the world is willing to hold increasing amounts of dollars." Since then, the dollar has had to be devalued twice; wholesale prices rose 25% annually, profits and food costs skyrocketed and unemployment remained at an "average" of 5%, though it was actually over 8% in industrial cities, and twice that amount among Blacks, especially youth. Now rush to individual free enterprise and uncontrolled multi-national corporations and you are assured that the booming profits will hasten recession in 1974. Already we have a considerable lowering of production and no hold on wild inflation.

As against the labor bureaucracy that was playing around with management over "30 and out" and still continues to do so, the proletariat broke out into wildcatting, first and above all, over the inhuman conditions of labor, and secondly, for a decent wage to stop running a continuous losing race against runaway inflation. The very UAW bureaucracy--whose class-collaborationism did not stop even at the point of odious informing on who were the "radicals" at Chrysler plants, but went the whole hog to the class enemy when it called upon the police to eject workers from the factories they occupied--had, at the same time, to admit the unsafe conditions that would now have to be given a high-priority rating. Whatever cover-up the labor bureaucracy will desire for its class-collaborationism and its sure betrayal at contract-signing time, nothing can hide the fact that it is the prop for the whole exploitative system. The stench of Watergate may not be on them, but that is only because Nixon never invited them that high up. The point is that the lying forensic style of the President characterizes the labor bureaucracy as well. They are indeed the last barrier to labor's control over its working conditions. But it is clearer to see the profound corruption inherent in patriotism as the last refuge of the scoundrel in the Watergate Hearings.

There is no need to go into detail in the analysis of Watergate, which was already been dealt with in "The Politics of Counter-Revolution: Water-

gate and the 'Year of Europe'" (News & Letters, June-July, 1973). The "Year of Watergate" with its profound corruption, endless flow of money, enemy lists, bugging of the Oval Office so that anyone who entered that inner sanctum was unknowingly and with malice aforethought taped, clearly put the "Year of Europe" in the shade. It will not end when the Watergate Hearings end. It will remain a continuing sore with its ambience over international as well as national developments. As we said in the lead article:

Nixon had never given up his vision of "the American century" which lasted but a few years in the euphoria of the immediate post-World War II universe when all the world lay prostrate and America alone had the A-bomb. Nixon, being a most ambitious man, determined "to make history" his own retrograde way, is ready to turn the clock of history back. He is a man of the Taft-Hartley era, who wants to make sure the Black Revolution of the 1960's will not only be stopped in its tracks, but be rolled back forever.

Hence, his "Southern Strategy," Which is why the Watergates and all election chicanery cannot be disentangled from his concept of "national security" and "global responsibilities."

The latest technological horror in the global "perspectives" (!) is the "battlefield nuclear weapon" the U.S. wishes to impose on Europe, specifically West Germany. Such a dehumanized way of fighting inhuman wars is what Dr. Strangelove Kissinger has the gall to call "the philosophical underpinnings of a common defense concept." On the more immediate front, Nixon wishes this "common defense concept" linked to the trade advantages he wants from the Common Market. Nevertheless, so great is the nuclear and economic might of U.S. imperialism, so fearful are the European ruling classes of a "repetition of 1968", that, despite West Germany's fear of and Western Europe's resistance to Pax Americana, the International Monetary Fund has helped shore up the dollar; the devaluations have made U.S. goods so attractive abroad that this has gained a surplus in foreign trade. No doubt some sort of trip, though no "summit", will be convened to allow for "new principles" that can be passed off for a "New Atlantic Pact" before the "Year of Europe" ends.

Or will they "move" 1974 into 1975 to continue with France's delusion that she is "middleman" when not only U.S.-Russia are conniving sans her benefit, but West Germany is definitely not bowing to the lesser economic

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power? Nixon thinks that things will go more his way than Europe is willing to admit come September 5 when the international monetary and trade meeting takes place in Tokyo. In any case, where the two super-powers listen at all, it is China, not Western Europe or Japan, who is heard. Though she is in every way in as big a crisis, it is not only "in the long run" that none can disregard 700 million human beings. At this very moment she holds the ace in Cambodia which means the whole Indochina peninsula and the "presence" of both the U.S. and North Vietnam.

Whether or not ambitious Kissinger fulfills his dreams of replacing Rogers as Secretary of State, it's his "internationalism" which Nixon is using to set policy. Whether or not the "Nixon Doctrine" of making Asian kill Asian continues to operate in Southeast Asia depends not so much on U.S. might as on the Sino-Soviet conflict, plus the Prince who cast his eyes aside when his own country was first bombed, and now labors to make sure there will be no unity in the Indochina peninsula. Put more concretely, Sihanouk is actually flirting with the U.S.--Chou En-lai made sure his telegram to Sen. Mansfield promising "peace with honor" was no mere show. Sihanouk is as anxious as Mao to have an "American presence"* there! What each calls the struggle against "Russian hegemony" actually means a struggle against a North Vietnamese "domination" in any unified Indochina peninsula. To close one's eyes to the sinister moves by Mao's China is to help U.S. imperialism remain in Southeast Asia, in Europe, and throughout the world everywhere that China-Russia cast their eyes for "equal" world domination.

The world crises, the intra-imperialistic fighting, whether called private capitalism or state-capitalism, the two-party or the single-party state, the overripeness of its decay, demands that we prepare for uprooting the system before the multiplicity of crises the world over retrogresses humanity to a stage of barbarism.

* For that matter, Chou told a similar thing to the Japanese ruling politicians: that he "understood" their treaty with the U.S.; that it was necessary to remain under the U.S. nuclear umbrella (see The Manchester Guardian, 2/14/73). And long before then, at the very moment he touts a "revolutionary" line in East Europe, he tells West Europe, West Germany especially, that an "American presence" is needed.

II. Philosophy and Revolution as Characteristic of the Age and Decentralized Organization

For twenty long years now, the masses, from below, in East Europe, in Latin America and Africa, in the U.S. and Asia, indeed everywhere, have fought unceasingly, though not everywhere at once, to uproot the social order. Everywhere--whether as when it first appeared against Russian totalitarianism in East Germany with the slogan "Broad and Freedom"; or in Africa against western imperialism under the slogan "Pan-Africanism"; or in the U.S. both in the Black Revolution and the anti-Vietnam War Movement--the new was the fact that they wished not to separate but to unite revolution with a philosophy of liberation. This massive movement from practice to theory met no movement from theory to practice--not in the "West". Not only that. The theoretic void continued to be so all-pervasive that they prided themselves for not working out a new relationship of practice to theory which they felt sure could be caught "en route". Not having achieved a unity of thought and action, the giant forces of the counter-revolution once again succeeded in retaining their retrograde rule. The revolutions in the West aborted. The old "vanguardist" monopolization of thought led to more than the ossification of thought within existing Communism; it was born "old" within the so-called "New Left". Thus, the outright theoretic void has persisted among the opposites--vanguardists and anarcho-communists--alike.

Philosophy was left to the bourgeoisie as its exclusive realm. The in-joke against "Hegelians" took the place of theoretical preparation for revolution. Yet, unless one begins philosophically at least where Lenin left off, more than historic continuity is lost. An unbridgable gulf is dug to the new for one's age. Take Lenin's central point for his period--transformation into opposite. The dialectic does not stop there. From that struggle of opposites comes the imperative for our age--the negation of the negation, second negativity--materially in the overthrow of the old, an old which includes "new" state-capitalism, and philosophically, in rooting ourselves totally in the Absolute as new beginning, that is, absolutely new relations in production, in the Movement, on "the day after" the revolution succeeds in overthrowing capitalism, private and state.

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It is no accident that not only did Marx "the youth" come from the Left Hegelians but, above all, that after he discovered a whole new continent of thought--Historical Materialism--he "accidentally" reread Hegel's Logic as he continued with the writing of the Grundrisse in 1857, which until then, as he put it, had the shapelessness of "sauerkraut and carrots". This was so not only as "method for presentation".* Rather the method of his inquiry became the method of working out all the implications of Essence vs. Appearance, to the point where it reached the absolute opposites of capitalist accumulation vs. the new passions and new forces. That was not until after a new dialectic arose from workers' struggles for the shortening of the working day, until the Civil War, the First International, climaxed by the Paris Commune and the second edition of Capital, 1872. In a word, the Marxian dialectic emerged anew in the struggles from below, climaxed in the spontaneous proletarian revolution, the Paris Commune.

The innumerable attempts to separate Marx from Hegel after Marx's and Engel's deaths marked the life of the Second International. As the world well knows by now, the mighty organization collapsed like a house of cards once World War I broke out and the German Social Democracy voted war credits to the Kaiser. But one, and only one, revolutionary leader--Lenin--decided it was insufficient only to fight the betrayers. He, and he alone, decided to get to the bottom of his own mode of thought which had foreseen none of this. Lenin's return to Hegel was for no scholastic reason. What prompted the "return" was the visceral, dialectic sensing of the counter-revolution within the revolution.

Where Marx's original discovery--Historical Materialism--led, in the 1860's, to the recreation of the dialectic of freely associated labor which alone is capable of overthrowing the old and stripping the fetishism from commodities; where Lenin's philosophical ambivalence saw, too late, not only Stalin's perfidy but that even the most beloved theoretician did not "fully understand the dialectic", we must begin now with a totality of view, an inseparability of philosophy and revolution. None have done this,

* Indeed, that is not the method of presentation he used for Critique of Political Economy, much less for Capital. (See my critique of Nicolaus' grotesque Maoist distortions of what Marx said, in his Preface to the Grundrisse, Pelican edition.)

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not only no Stalinists or Maoists or Trotskyists, but also none of the "New Left".

Not only Lenin's ambivalence in philosophy has been ignored while his seeming one-ness in organization has been touted and distorted endlessly. It is true he left but the merest inklings of "checking the Party by the non-Party masses." What is worse, he had NOT himself moved away from vanguardism. And it is that millstone around our necks which has brought to grief also those who do not believe in "the party to lead", but use it as an escape from responsibility, intellectual and organizational, i.e., sustained activity in the Movement. The result is that although they certainly do not consider the Party with a capital "P" the form of functioning, they fail also in theory. Without philosophy, they cannot but practice elitism. The fact that it is "only" empirical makes it all the worse. The crucial point on organization--the committee or council form is certainly "superior" to the party form--is not answered when one has no unifying force to give action its direction. And for that, you cannot do without a philosophy, a comprehensive unifying perspective of thought and action. This is what is meant by Philosophy and Revolution as characteristic of our age and as organization builder.

Unfortunately, far from being an "answer", from being a program, our formulation is a task, a very hard task, a task that must be practiced day in and day out, with oneself as well as with others, in activities as different as a wildcat, WL "theoretical" discussion, and a philosophical action group's daily life.

As foundation for all our activity is the amending of the Constitution. It is a historical first, the only time ever when the integral relation between philosophy and revolution, philosophy and organization, has been spelled out. The draft for that could be the first 2 sentences of the paragraph Eugene proposed and the paragraph Raya presented (REB minutes 7/17/73 plus Convention call.) Here it is, with page references naturally being to our Constitution:

The last 2 sentences of paragraph one, page 3, are revised to read: Marxism and Freedom and Philosophy and Revolution are our theoretical foundations. However, they are not a "program". They are a contri-

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bution to the theoretical preparation for revolution without which no revolutionary grouping or program can match the challenge of our era.

Just before this, immediately following "in their own words through News & Letters", would be added:

What Marxism and Freedom, with its dialectical form of presentation of history and theory as emanating from the movement from practice, did do is lay the foundation for the articulation of the unity of philosophy and revolution. Philosophy and Revolution, in articulating the integrality of philosophy and revolution as the characteristic of the age, and tracing it through historically, caught the link of continuity with the Humanism of Marx, that philosophy of liberation which merges the dialectics of elemental revolt and its Reason. The new historic passions and forces set in motion in the 1960's have put a mark of urgency on the need of integrality also of philosophy and organization. As against "the party to lead" concept, such integrality of dialectics and organization reflects the revolutionary maturity of the age and its passion for a philosophy of liberation.

It is true that the formulation Philosophy and Revolution as organization builder was a great achievement in the sense of having filled in the blank space of what do you put "in place of" the party to lead. But since this "filling in" is not a blueprint, it not only has a class enemy, but many opponents within the Movement (not to mention all state powers, whether as mighty as Russia and China, or on a much lesser level and thus still parading as Communist). In a word, it is not an end, but only a beginning, a beginning that will test all of us.

III. Tasks

First and foremost in this year of Philosophy and Revolution is spreading wide, selling Philosophy and Revolution, not as salespersons, but as founders of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. as well as projectors of world concepts of revolution: proletarian, peasant, Black, youth, Women's Liberation, national and international--all the "new passions and forces" that are Reason for reconstruction of society on totally new human foun-

dations. Only by projecting the unity of philosophy and revolution as organization builder can we counteract elitism--"the party to lead"-- and at the same time elicit from below that elemental revolt motivated by the passionate search for a philosophy of liberation which has governed their action because it is their unifying force, that which gives action its direction.

On the same level, indeed inseparable from it because that is the true proof that we have executed the first task, is the growth of News & Letters Committees, its proletarianization--which not only means getting worker members but also means proletarianizing ourselves--its multi-faceted activities, its ever-expanding paper as the forum for all voices of revolt, both at the point of production and in the continuing, basic anti-war movement, and the unique combination of worker and intellectual in the working out of theory based on the movement from practice.

Nothing shows better the integrality of this movement both to our theory and our practice than the issue of News & Letters (August-September) now going to press. The wildcatting in auto made us tear up at once all our "plans" for a lead article on the economy and auto negotiations. Instead, we have a wildcatter speaking for himself not only against capitalism, i.e., the conditions of labor in the factory, but against the labor bureaucracy, that last barrier to workers' control of production. Now comes the real test: whether we, in turn, can so concretize our philosophy as to make some workers draw conclusions on an organizational level which moves from anti-labor bureaucracy to a philosophy of liberation with the organizational form of News & Letters Committees.

Toward that end we must make sure that each local has a full-time person as organizer. Where, for whatever reasons, an organizer cannot be full-time, the point must be that one person, in another capacity, devotes full time to the organization, even where he or she concentrates either on Philosophy and Revolution or youth or women or Black.

Thirdly is the assignment, though that is only for execution in 1975, that we prepare a new pamphlet, this time on the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution, centering on the committees of correspondence. As

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Marx put it, the first successful national revolution sounded the tocsin for the social French Revolution. And what is most cogent for our day is that it was no party, but the Committees of Correspondence that proved to be the "engines of revolution".

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