June 5, 1984

Dear Youth:

Please note that the three quotations below are all from our own writings and cover the whole of the 30 years of the existence of Marxist-Humanism. This is done not in chronological order. Rather it skips from the first period of the 1950s, which extends to the 1960s, and then skips to the 1980s. The 1970s, moreover, are quoted not from Philosophy and Revolution but from a talk about that work, given to a scholarly, non-Marxist organization, the Hegel Society of America. Each historic period, as it relates to Youth, has its own reason for being where it is, as you will see.

"We feel that the youth are a most precious source of our development. We recognize that even though the youth are not directly involved in production, they are the ones whose ideas in the finest sense of the word combines with opposition to existing adult society in so unique a way that it literally brings the workers as builders of the new society."

--1958 Amendment to Constitution of MHC, adopted 1956

"That which Hegel judged to be the synthesis of the 'Self-Thinking Idea' and the 'Self-Bringing-Forth of Liberty', Marxist-Humanism holds, is what Marx had called the new society... it is on this basis that we are asking those who agree with our principles to join us and take organizational responsibility for projecting Marxist-Humanism because, in truth, philosophy itself does not reach its full articulation until it has discovered the right organizational form."

--Combination of para. added to p. 195 of Rosa Luxembourg's Defence and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution and 1982 Perspectives of MHC

Far from the unity of the Theoretical and Practical Idea being an ultimate, or pinnacle, or a hierarchy, the Absolute Idea is a new beginning... This is not exactly a summons to the barricades, but Hegel is asking us to have our ears as well as our categories so attuned to the 'Spirit's unifying'... that we rise to the challenge of working out... a totally new relationship of philosophy to actuality and action as befits a 'birth-time of history.' This is what makes Hegel a contemporary."

--My 1974 Paper to the Hegel Society of America, included in Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy

The reason for taking up a whole page with quotations arises, not because I'm trying to have quotations supply the answer which only a comprehensive outlook can provide, nor because I'm looking for some single "root cause". Rather, the reason is that each must be considered as reflecting the whole body of ideas. What I do then is to single out what needs concretization for the specific time and the particular problem. The methodology, the dialectics of development in both philosophy (Self-Determination of the Idea) and praxis, is what must meet the historic test. The 30 years of hard labor it took to answer the call of each specific decade, as it both summed up and was rooted in the continent of thought and of revolution that the founder of all of us, Marx, discovered, created the ground for anticipating the future. It is this, when measured against the objective situation, that reveals the future, not "prophetically" but as the future implicit in the present, that is to say, as it logically, dialectically flows from the present.

I. THE 'WHY' BEHIND THE SINGING OUT OF YOUTH AS REVOLUTIONARY FORCE IN THE MID-1950S TO THE MID-1960s

The first quotation from the MHC Constitution, which singled out youth as a special category in our first decade of unique, philosophically-independent existence that was to become organizational in the mid-1950s led to the merging of two very, very different periods -- one from the reactionary McCarthy period that was designated by the tired radicals as "end of ideology"; and the other initiating the turbulent, revolutionary period of the 1960s. Hold in mind, also, that it was precisely when the so-called "best generation" with "no ideology" reigned that it was not only the tired radicals, but the scholarly-revolutionaries like Marcuse, who also declared the age to be one of "One Dimensional Man". We, on the other hand, hit out against such a fantastic and totally pessamistic concept. Instead, we declared that it was Marcuse's thought that was one-dimensional. The new generation that rejected the world they did not make, on the contrary, signalled a new age of revolutions.* It is necessary never to separate internationalism from nationalism. Had Marcuse (who certainly considered himself an internationalist) practiced internationalism.

*Read my review of One-Dimensional Man in the Oberlin College student publication, The Activist, Fall 1964. Substantial excerpts were reprinted in News & Letters, March 1980.
is, instead of considering the Hungarian Revolution just a national-
ist opposition to Russia, he could have seen what was in those totali-
tarian countries of East Europe -- the youth initiating the revolu-
tion in Hungary. Indeed, some were mere children -- only 11 and 12-
year olds -- who threw the Molotov cocktails at the very rulers who
had taught them in the Communist schools how to make them.

Now reread that paragraph from the Constitution and tarry at
the following words -- "source", "idealism", "combined with opposi-
tion". Here I must stop to explain the history, the ongoing history,
as well as the philosophy, needed to fully understand language. As
against the political-economic use of the word "source" as something
just material, Anilcar Cabral* used it in a unique way. He refused
to separate it from the live Subject -- revolutionaries; he merged
source with Subject; he stressed that the youth -- children, actu-
ally -- had passed out leaflets to the Portuguese soldiers asking
why they were fighting African freedom fighters instead of fighting
their fascist oppressors. Remember also that both Cabral and
Eduardo Mondlane singled out women as well as youth. (See Mondlane's
The Struggle for Mozambique; Penguin Books, 1969, which has a beauti-
ful picture of the women's delegation at the FRELIMO Congress.) It's
in that unique way that I used the word "source" in our Constitution
when I wrote "the youth are a most precious source" of our develop-
ment.

As for the word "idealism", it is all too often used as if
it meant only bourgeois ideological thought, and as if it were the
absolute opposite of "materialism". We, however, added to that word,
"idealism, combined with opposition to existing adult society..."
brings then alongside the workers as builders of a new society.

Again, bear in mind the historic period in which this was said --

* "When the 'return to the source' goes beyond the individual and is
expressed through 'groups' or 'movements,' the contradiction is trans-
formed into struggle (secret or overt), and is a prelude to the pre-
independence movement or of the struggle for liberation from the
foreign yoke. So the 'return to the source' is of no historical im-
portance unless it brings not only real involvement in the struggle
for independence, but also complete and absolute identification
with the hopes of the mass of the people." (Anilcar Cabral in Return to

the Korean War, McCarthyism. It was the period also when Marx's Hu-
mmanism first appeared and that period "objectively" was hardly a pro-
itigious period for our birth. Marcone, for example, was then working
on what became his one Dimensional Man, which at first he called
"the new technological reality". He was rejecting: our interpreta-
tion both of the youth and the proletariat, specifically Workers
Battle Automation. So it wasn't only the category of youth as revolu-
tionary force but the youth and the proletariat, and we were sing-
ing out youth at a very specific, historic period, showing that the
future was inherent in the present. The future, indeed, came very
soon, as the 1960s came to be, for which we had the philosophic
ground in Marxism and Freedom.

The whole question of the late 1950s extending all the way
to 1968 is the duality within the revolutionary movement, especially
the youth who ejected just activity. We, on the contrary, showed
that not to be isolated from past as history and as thought. This first
has to be rearticulated, not as super-original as Existentialism
or Deism or even just as Hegel describes alienation, but as Marx
and only Marx restated alienation as that which characterizes
capitalism. Second negativity, on the other hand, is the revolution-
ary element in the dialectic which he spelled out and saw in the
praxis of the masses.

The greatness of our early youth, tiny as it was, was the proof
of this dialectic methodology that led to the singling out of
youth as a revolutionary category. It wrote the brightest chapter
then because the newness of Marxist-Humanism was spelled out as a
challenge to all others. This led to the issuance of The Young Marx-
ian Humanist. It was issued on the most reactionary campus, UCLA,
and at once produced a battle of ideas, not only with the Administra-
tion but with bourgeois thought as a whole. For example, it led The
Humanist to claim that they had the right to the title, "proving" it
by their "copyright". Eugene illuminated the uniqueness of our title,
stresssing it was Marxist-Humanist, and insisting that two very dif-
derent worlds, indeed, existed in each country. No need here to go
into what followed with Eugene's activity in going down to Mississ-
ippi and teaching American Civilization on Trial in the Freedom...
our youth had

Schools there. That was the type of pride/ at a time when our body of ideas existed only in Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today, which traced through 200 years of history and showed how it all began in the age of revolutions -- the industrial, the American, the French, and the intellectual revolution in philosophy, i.e., the Hegelian dialectic -- all of which laid the ground for the new revolutionary philosophy of Marx's Humanism.

II. WHAT IS NEW IN THE 1980s THAT CREATED THE CATEGORY OF POST-MARXIST MARXISM?

Now jump to the 1980s quotation. The essence there -- and for us now that we have completed the trilogy of revolution with

Reesa Lublinburg. Women's liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, which embodied us to use the formulation "body of ideas" and "trilogy of revolution" -- is this: Not only have the objective and subjective merged, and not only have both been existing in the organizational form called News and Letters Committees, but this organizational form is now directly related to Marx's philosophy of "revolution in permanence" as its ground. The youth especially must realize (that is, practice) what we quote from the 1982 Perspectives: "philosophy itself does not reach its full articulation until it has discovered the right organizational form."

It is that organizational form, News and Letters Committees, which is the test of whether you fully understand what the "body of ideas" called Marxist-Humanism is. To discuss this year's expression of it is surely not an administratively matter (for example, who will do the column?). Rather, it is a question of: What ideas, what challenges are to be projected in the column? How will our work in Latin-American support committees or the anti-nuke movement be expressed differently from other years when the uniqueness of Marxist-Humanism got subordinated to activity sang philosophy? Why can't the critique of the committees we work with, which we express at our own meetings, not be expressed directly to those committees, not in an elitist manner but as ideas for them to consider? In a word, how could the body of ideas be expressed so challengingly by the early youth, when just one book expressed Marxist-Humanism, and we find it so difficult now, when we have the whole trilogy of revolution in our hands? And, above all, how could self-development become so separated from the Universal, or what is even worse, made the equivalent of the Universal? Isn't it because the organizational form of Marxist-Humanism, of philosophy of revolution in permanence, isn't made primary in our own minds? Why should there be any hesitation in asking for subs to NAL?

Since you didn't seem to be overly preoccupied with such tasks last year, permit me to quote the final paragraph of my letter of Aug. 13, 1983: "When we talk about 'thought-divers' we can see that Marx was the greatest of all. That's what I'm really appealing to the youth to do. Becoming a thought diver and an activist in this period demands nothing short of practicing the challenge to all post-Marxists, and thereby creating such new ground for organization, such concretization of Marx's revolution in permanence, as to find a new way to let the actual revolution be."

III. THE 1970S: RETURN TO THE PHILOSOPHIC SOURCE

In large measure, the compulsion I felt to return to the philosophic source explains not only the reason for the non-chronological way I presented the quotations at the beginning of this letter, but also the reason I felt the same compulsion to do that at the last class on the trilogy of revolution, and all over again, concentrate on Chapter One of Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao. Note one other peculiarity of my quotations, and that is, instead of quoting from the magnificent Philosophy and Revolution, I quoted from a talk I gave about that work, specifically the first chapter, particularly on Hegel's final chapter of Science of Logic, the Absolute Idea -- a talk in which I went through the whole 27 paragraphs without leaving out a single one, while adding not only the three final syllogisms (para. 575, 576, 577) from the Philosophy of Mind, but engaging great contemporary Hegel scholars in the battle of ideas.

This talk was delivered to a scholarly, specialized, very non-Marxist organization like the Hegel Society of America. In order here to show how to project Marxist-Humanism, even to a hostile audience on a non-Marxist topic such as Hegel's Absolute Idea, I there
stressed my view that Hegel's abstraction, "Spirit's urgency", gains concreteness by his deep historic sense, making it equivalent to "the birth-time of history," and to me the birth-time of history was revolutionary. The reason I emphasize that it was a non-Marxist audience that I was addressing was not, as you see, in order to have an excuse to keep far away from revolutionary language. Quite the contrary. I was most concrete in referring both to our age and to Lenin, who, I stressed, was "the most revolutionary of all materialists," showing how, nevertheless, "Absolute Negativity became Lenin's philosophic preparation for revolution" (p. 167, in Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy*). I dived into the challenge to those Hegel scholars even more directly when it came to speaking of our own age: "To this writer, Hegel's genius is lodged in the fact that his 'voyage of discovery' became an endless process of discovery for us. The 'us' includes both Marx's new continent of thought of materialist dialectics, and Hegel scholars, as well as the movement from practice... This writer has followed very closely this movement of revolt ever since June 17, 1953, and saw in it a quest for universality... a new point of departure in the Idea and in the movement from practice." (p. 172)

As I faced both the president of the HSA, Prof. Louis Dupre, and the most well-known of today's Hegel scholars, Prof. Findlay, I took to task also the most erudite intellectual dialectician, Adorno: "...the real tragedy of Adorno (and the Frankfurt School) is the tragedy of a one-dimensionality of thought which results when you give it a subject, when one does not listen to the voices from below... when one returns to the ivory tower and reduces his purpose to the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophic disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines.' The next step was irresistible, the substitution of a permanent critique not only for absolute negativity, but also of permanent revolution itself." (p. 173)

Please also reread (and very slowly) the new 1982 Introduction I wrote for Philosophy and Revolution, where I answered George Armstrong Kelly, who in his Retreat from Eleusis challenged me on Absolute Method. The reason, I must repeat, that I cite all these references, is to stress that there are many fundamentals that just can-

* Though not identical, substantially the same essay is what we have printed in our pamphlet New Essays as "Dialectics of Liberation in Thought and in Activity: Absolute Negativity as New Beginning."