

Marxist-Humanist Archives Exhibit  
and Lecture sponsored by Wayne State  
Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs

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**NEWS & LETTERS**  
Human Power is its own end — Marx

10218

## Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and Marx's World Humanist Concepts

by Raya Dunayevskaya  
Founder of Marxist-Humanism  
in the United States

*Editor's Note: Below we print excerpts of Raya Dunayevskaya's talk "Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and Marx's World Humanist Concepts" delivered on March 21, 1985, at the opening of the Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs exhibit on "The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection — Marxist-Humanism, 1941 To Today: Its Origin and Development in the U.S."*

### I. Introduction: Archives and Archivists

Good evening. Thank you, Dr. Mason.

This is not a mere courtesy thanks. Rather, it is the measure of how the Archives as a whole, as well as tonight's talk on the Dialectics of Revolution, are related to my Collection being at Wayne State University...The decision to choose Wayne State University, as against the Wisconsin Historical Society, was based on the fundamentally different attitudes each had toward the concept of what Archives are...

The question was how could an archivist know what the participants in most of the events perceived the dialectics of revolution to be? In this Marxist-Humanist Collection, the dialectics of revolution range from the 1905 Russian Revolution and its ramifications in the 1906-1911 Revolution in Iran; to the November 1917 Russian Revolution and its international impact; to the beheaded 1919 German Revolution; as well as to the revolutions in our own era. And dialectics relate not just to those revolutions that were successful, but to the many revolutions that were aborted.

MY CHOICE OF Wayne State University was due not alone to the fact that the Wayne State University Labor Archives let me speak for myself, but that they had both a full appreciation of the fact that archives were not limited to the past and would, therefore, consider additions to the Collection, as well as a recognition of the significance of archives in general.

In that spirit, thank you, Dr. Mason.

### II. The Excitement of Becoming Trotsky's secretary and the Break with Trotskyism

I am not writing the history of the past in the future tense. I have no intention of analyzing an historic perso-



Raya Dunayevskaya with Dr. Philip Mason, WSU Archives Director

nage like Leon Trotsky only as I see him after my break from Trotskyism. I have always strongly opposed any re-writing of history. I do not deny that I certainly considered it the highest moment of my own development up to that time to have become Trotsky's secretary and to have been a guard and translator as well.

*[At this point Dunayevskaya read an excerpt from a report she had written at the time of her work with Trotsky in Coyoacan, Mexico in 1937-38. It described the daily routine and the "meticulous, objective research". Trotsky demanded during the infamous Moscow Frame-Up Trial charges. She then continued with her story.]*

All the labors could not, however, keep convinced Trotskyists from raising questions as to the nature of a Russia which staged such a frame-up of Trotsky, Bukharin and, indeed, all of those known as "the General Staff of the Revolution," with these monstrous accusations.

Trotsky's contention was that while the frame-up did show that the workers' state had "degenerated," nothing could change the fact that it had arisen out of a Russian Revolution which had abolished private property. To Trotsky, nationalized property "meant" that Russia

remained a workers' state, though "degenerate."...

I FELT THE NEED to prove my conviction that what had occurred was a total transformation into opposite, that Russia had turned from a workers' state into a state-capitalist society.

It took three years before I finished my study of the three Five-Year Plans from original sources, set in the context of a new world stage of capitalism. The Great Depression had collapsed private capitalism, and had led to statification. Originally, the study began with a section called "Labor and Society"; but the Workers Party, in accepting the economic study for publication though they were bureaucratic collectivists, refused to accept "Labor and Society"...

I had joined with CLR James, who had also come to a state-capitalist position and had written a lengthy political Resolution for submission to the Workers Party. This State-Capitalist Tendency came to be known as the Johnson-Forest Tendency.

WHAT I HAD NOT been aware of at the time was that the piece, "Labor and Society" — the one rejected by the Workers Party when they accepted my economic analysis — actually contained what would also cause, nearly a decade later, the break between Johnson and Forest, and the new creation of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism. The philosophy that the Workers Party rejected was based on Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays which, at the time I quoted from it, I knew only as Marx's single article, "Alienated Labor."

When, in the 1950 Miners' General Strike, I again used Marx's Humanist Essays — and my own activity showed the beginning of Marxist-Humanism — CLR James also recoiled from Marx's Humanism. This first became clear in the final section of the 1960 Tendency document, "State-Capitalism and World Revolution", written under his direction. There, Humanism was dismissed as religious and/or Existentialist.

It was not until three years later — May 12 and May 20, 1953 — that I first broke through on the Absolute Idea in my letters to Grace Lee. I maintained that the Absolute Idea was not an abstraction or some sort of call for a God, but that it contained within it a movement from practice as well as from theory. This led to the founding of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.

It is time now to turn to the founding of the Marxist-Humanist paper, News & Letters.

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### III. The Marxist-Humanist Newspaper, *News & Letters*; Its Worker-Editor, Charles Denby; His Autobiography, *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*; and the Pamphlets, *Workers Battle Automation and American Civilization on Trial*.

The decisions, made simultaneously at the very first convention of News and Letters Committees, were to have a Black production worker as editor of its paper, and to assign the National Chairwoman, Raya Dunayevskaya, to complete the first major philosophic — and not only economic-political — work, Marxism and Freedom, on which she had been working for several years.



Audience at Dunayevskaya lecture...

**THE CONCEPT OF** having theory and practice together dictated our refusal to put theoretical articles only in a theoretical journal. Our point was that the intellectual should not only read, but write, for a workers' newspaper like *News & Letters*; that is, that intellectuals would talk to a working-class audience which has a great deal to contribute to the intellectual if the intellectual knows how to listen to the new voices from below. The goal became the new principle of combining workers and intellectuals — neither of whom would be stopped by a McCarthy retrogression. That was the ground for our Marxist-Humanist newspaper, *News & Letters*, when it was established in 1955.

Now listen to Charles Denby's last letter to me just a few months before his death in 1963 — the Marx Centenary year:

"We finally have in our hands the whole 'trilogy of revolution' — that is, Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution, and Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. Anyone can see and read what Marxist-Humanism has represented since our first Constitutional Convention. Now we can say to everyone, 'Here is Marx's philosophy of liberation and we know that it is the path to freedom'."

Issue Number One of *News & Letters* came out in honor of the East German revolt. 1955 was also the year that the Montgomery Bus Boycott erupted and signalled the birth of the Black Revolution. My life and Charles Denby's truly became one — that of Marxist-Humanism.

Part One of his autobiography was written before Denby's own development as an editor. In Part Two of *Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal* he sums up the events of a full quarter century of the existence of Marxist-Humanism which had meant such a new stage in his own life.

IN 1961 HE WAS not only the editor but the author of a pamphlet called *Workers Battle Automation* where we heard the voices not only of workers from many industries, but also of youth, a doctor, and a computer-technician...

On the American scene, we spelled out the Black Dimension so concretely that it ranged over the entire history of the United States. We called it *American Civilization on Trial*. It expresses not only the needs of the year 1963, when it was first published, or even 1970 when Denby appended his "Black Caucuses in the Unions." Rather, it reaches back to the beginnings of the Black Dimension in the U.S. as well as forward to the 1980s.

Today's newspaper carries news of still another massacre by the apartheid regime against the majority Black population. What happened 25 years ago today, in Sharpeville, became a category that was deepened in 1976 in Soweto, and took to the world stage again today.

All of these voices we have recorded as the events happened. Indeed, in the 1960s, when Sharpeville became that dimension of African, American, and world revolution, I was in Ghana and aligned with Sobukwe, who was arrested and sent to prison with Mandela.

### IV. The Trilogy of Revolution — *Marxism and Freedom; Philosophy and Revolution; Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. The Unchaining of the Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and Marx's World Humanist Concepts.

What is significant to us here, in Marx's transformation of Hegel's revolution in philosophy into Marx's philosophy of revolution, is how it was extended in his last decade. It led us to call the 1880s a "trail to the 1980s." Marx deepened and concretized what he had originally called a "New Humanism" throughout his life. After 40 years of labor in the field of economics, which

culminated in the 1872-75 French edition of *Capital*, in the same decade in which he wrote his *Ethnological Notebooks*, Marx hewed out a new moment. It is seen in his critique of the Russian Populist Mikhailovsky; in Marx's draft letters to the Russian revolutionary Marxist, Vera Zasulich; and in nothing less important than the Introduction to the Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto* — where he predicted that revolution could begin first in the backward "East" rather than in the technologically advanced West. He singled out Russia as that "East." That was 1881! No wonder we call this the "trail to the 1980s."

Strictly philosophically, our first unchaining of the dialectic began with my breakthrough in the May 12th and 20th, 1953, *Letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea*. We have recently traced the breakthrough in its embryonic appearance in the three preceding years: 1950-53; it is true that the breakthrough in the 1953 *Letters* showed that within the Absolute Idea itself is contained the movement from practice as well as from theory.

**BUT THE 1950 STRIKE** was the real manifestation. It is therefore imperative to combine what Hegel called "the Self-Thinking Idea" with what was present in the spontaneous movements of the Miners' General Strike, that which we later called the "Self-Bringing Forth of Freedom." It should not here be necessary to explain the obvious, but such explanation is "required" against the vulgar materialists to assure them that, of course we know it is not the Idea that thinks; it is people who think. What must be added, however, is that the dialectic logic of the Idea moves in the direction of what was implicit in the movement from practice.

By the mid-1950s, the category I had worked out as the movement from practice provided the structure for my major philosophic work — *Marxism and Freedom*, from 1776 until Today. That was the first of what we now call the "trilogy of revolution." It illuminated the fact that the movement from practice was itself a form of theory.

It is this concept of philosophy as being rooted in the movement from practice which creates a challenge for



theoreticians to work out a new stage of cognition. It created the structure of Marxism and Freedom, where we first concretized those American roots of Marxism — from Abolitionism to the then ongoing Montgomery Bus Boycott which opened the Black Revolution. In that work, the world Humanist concepts were also spelled out, not alone in the United States, but in the very first mass revolts from under Communist totalitarianism in East Europe — East Germany, 1953; Poland, 1955; Hungary, 1956.

IN THE 1960s we began recording the new voices of a new generation of revolutionaries, and in 1968 had to face the aborted near-revolution in France, which made imperative our return to Hegel on an altogether new level. What was needed was a working out of the Hegelian dialectic, this time in and for itself, as well as how it was grappled with by Marx and Lenin. This resulted in the second unchaining of the Hegelian dialectic for our age as the dialectics of revolution. We examined, as



in McGregor Conference Center well, the Alternatives: Trotsky, Mao, and the outsider looking in, Sartre.

1973 saw the publication of *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao*. I there extended the concretization of Absolute Idea not just as a totality — the unity of theory and practice — but as the development of Absolute Idea as New Beginning.

The first chapter of *Philosophy and Revolution* was entitled "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning: The Ceaseless Movement of Ideas and of History." Here I argued that seeing Absolute Idea as a unity of theory and practice, as totality, is where the task first begins. Absolute Idea as New Beginning challenges all generations to concretely work out such a new beginning for their own age.

We see the development of theory in Frantz Fanon, who, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, likewise called his philosophy "a New Humanism."

THE 1970s ALSO SAW the emergence of a new revolutionary force: Women's Liberation, which had grown from an idea whose time had come, to become a Movement. Its uniqueness expressed itself in their refusal to put off for "the day after the revolution" the questions they demanded answers to. The so-called Marxists at first would not even bother to listen to the women who proclaimed that "male chauvinism" was by

no means restricted to capitalism. It not only appeared before capitalism, but is present right now and has reappeared after the revolution. It must be faced here and now. The women insisted that the Left must face the male chauvinism within that movement, and must recognize the need to grapple with this question before, during, in, and after the revolution.

It became the impulse for the third major philosophic work, Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, which completed what we call the "trilogy of revolution." Here is how I therefore summarized today's Women's Liberationists' demands:

"Don't tell us about discrimination everywhere else; and don't tell us it comes only from class oppression; look at yourselves. You will have to understand that our bodies belong to us and to no one else — and that includes lovers, husbands, and yes, fathers.

"Our bodies have heads, and they too belong to us and us alone. And while we are reclaiming our bodies and our heads, we will also reclaim the night. No one except ourselves, as women, will get our freedom for us. For that we need full autonomy."

For me, it became necessary here to also focus on one of the inadequacies of the Women's Liberation Movement; its disregard of Rosa Luxemburg. Indeed, this was a stimulus for my new work, though my scope was by no means limited to unearthing Luxemburg's heretofore unknown feminist dimension.

WHEN I BEGAN my study, it was just on Luxemburg — and the intended climax was to have been the year 1910. This was the year when her flash of genius, in grappling with the new phenomenon of Imperialism, resulted in her break with Karl Kautsky, the leader of the German Social Democracy. This was some four years before the outbreak of World War I and the Second International's betrayal. It was four years before any male Marxist, Lenin included, saw the coming betrayal.

And yet, suddenly, even this seemed to me to be inadequate, because Luxemburg remained a member of the German Social Democracy as if her break with Kautsky was "personal."

I felt the need for a decisive philosophic grappling, which I worked out as Part III of the so-called Luxemburg book: "Karl Marx: from Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of Revolution in Permanence."

As against Luxemburg's half-way dialectic, Marx's multilinearism of human development, of paths to revolution, as they related to so-called backward countries, to Women's Liberation, and to nationalist opposition — all made me question not only Luxemburg but all post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels, whose unilinearism permeated the whole German Social Democracy: Post-Marx Marxism, to me, became a pejorative.

ENGELS' UNILINEARISM was glaringly revealed in the very first work he wrote after the death of Marx

— *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels claimed it was a "bequest" of Marx, but it expressed anything but Marx's view either on the Man/Woman relationship or on the relationship between advanced and backward societies. Nor was there similarity between Engels' view of primitive communism and Marx's...

For a moment, let us now turn away from all these philosophic-sociological-political-economic developments, to a story from my personal life. The incident I'm diverting to happened when I was 13 years old and had been but a single year in the United States. I was leading a strike against the school principal. Her name, I still remember — Tobin. And she exacted corporal punishment for so little an infraction as coming five minutes late. Also, she forced all to memorize Shylock's speech, where he demands his pound of flesh. (I am telling this story with hindsight of course, but my memory was refreshed by the Chicago Tribune story of that day, which had carried a sensational article and picture of the strike.)

I am doing so to illustrate the difference between an idea in embryo and in full development; between process and result, as well as the whole question of a child's perception, when great revolutions occur and for how long these impressions last.

The story took place in 1924 in the Cregier public school in a Chicago ghetto. I credited my supposed bravery to the Russian Revolution of November, 1917, which had burst upon the scene six years previously and had left an indelible impression on me of great doings, like equality and comradeship. I was an illiterate child then, living in the Ukraine, who had refused, two years previous to 1917, to engage in khabar (bribery) in order to be among the one percent of Jews who gained the "privilege" of being able to sit in the back of the school room.

NOW LOOK AT an altogether different historic period, a different life, and there, too, we will see what a child's perception is, when born during great turning points in history.

When I returned back to the U.S. from being with Trotsky in exile in 1938, the one who made a great impression on me was the famous French syndicalist, Alfred Rosmer. In 1919, he had switched to communism and then in 1937-38, had become head of the International Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky. He was returning to France via New York and I thought I would show off its beauties by taking him on a ferry ride to Staten Island.

As we reached Staten Island, Rosmer said: "Oh, yes, I know, I was born here." Naturally, I thought he was pulling my leg, but no, he was serious and proceeded to prove it by telling me the story of his early life. It turned out that his parents were Paris Communards from 1871 who, after its defeat, escaped to the United States. His mother was pregnant and gave birth to him

on Staten Island. He simply was never interested in claiming American citizenship. France and the Paris Commune never left his memory, not because he was

there, but because of all the stories he heard from his parents.

This only released in my mind still another remembrance — this time from when I was 15 years old, and Eugene V. Debs was making his very last appearance at Ashland Auditorium in Chicago. It was 1925. He was so eloquent a speaker that he made you feel the presence of any person he mentioned in his life. He was very proud of the fact that he had known the great Abolitionist, Wendell Phillips. It was Wendell Phillips who, after the Civil War, made a transition from Abolitionism to Socialism. It is he who had said: "Scratch a New Yorker and you'll find a Communist."

TWO POINTS ARE involved in this remembrance of things past: One is that embedded in embryo in the past is the presence of the next step, whether or not one is fully conscious of it. Two is that presence of the future inherent in the "here and now" characterizes also the first instinctual reaction which is philosophically called "first negation." What makes you move to the second negation creates a new humus for future development.

Marx's magnificent, original, historic unchaining of the dialectic was the creation of such a new humus. This unchaining began, of course, with his refusal to consider that Hegel's Notion was related only to thought.

Once Marx discovered a new continent of thought and of revolution, the task he assigned to himself was that of uniting Philosophy and Reality. The proof of that unity came from uncovering the hidden Subject — the driving forces of the revolutions-to-be — the Proletariat — and at the same time focus on the Man/Woman relationship, as alienated and alienating, which must be totally uprooted as the way to full human relationships.

Marx had rejected Feuerbachian abstract materialism, not alone because it failed to see the social relationship. He opposed Feuerbach as well for rejecting the revolutionary Hegelian principle of "negation of the negation," a principle Marx cited again even in his technical *Mathematical Manuscripts of 1881-82*.

Instead, his concept of revolution-in-permanence contended that only after the historic transcendence by the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, would there first begin the development of a new human society and a new Man/Woman relationship.

Now listen to Marx in his last decade, writing on his relationship to Hegel — which he left with his papers for Engels for Volume II of *Capital*, but which Engels left out:

"My relationship with Hegel is very simple. I am a disciple of Hegel, and the presumptuous chatter of the epigones who think they have buried this great thinker appear frankly ridiculous to me. Nevertheless, I have

taken the liberty of adopting...a critical attitude, disencumbering his dialectic of its mysticism and thus putting it through a profound change..."

BETWEEN MARX AND OUR AGE only Lenin seriously returned to Marx's roots in Hegel. But while Lenin commented profoundly and brilliantly on the whole of *Science of Logic* — including the Doctrine of the Notion, where he embraced and concretized Hegel's principle that "Cognition not only reflects the world, but creates it" — he nevertheless concretized only the single dialectical principle of transformation into opposite...

Unfortunately, other questions, especially the one on Organization, Lenin left untouched within the vanguardist confines of his 1902-03, *What Is To Be Done?*

Our age has focused on the dialectics of revolution as the determinant. Nothing, including Organization, the Party, can find any escape route from that determinant. Even the Absolute Method itself is but the road to the Absolute Idea, Absolute Mind. When the Self-Thinking Idea comes with the Self-Bringing Forth of Freedom we will have actual total freedom.

THOUGH I HAVE but a few moments before concluding, I do wish to give you a brief view of my new book that will soon be off the press: *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*.

The first thing I noticed in re-reading that 35-year compilation of articles — with a focus on a single revolutionary force as Reason, Women's Liberation — is that the Dialectics of Revolution is characteristic of all the four forces we singled out in the United States — Labor, Black, Youth, as well as Women. All are moments of revolution, and nobody can know before the event itself who will be the one in the concrete, particular revolution.

This determined my 1985 Introduction and Overview to the new book, which culminated in what we call the "Trail to the 1980s"...This is true not just as a summation, but rather as a new beginning. Just as Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence" made it clear that the revolution does not end with the overthrow of the old but must continue to the new, so you begin to feel this presence of the future in the present. This is the time when every man, woman and child feels this newness precisely because it is now rooted in such new beginning.

And here is how I am ending my new, fourth book:

"With Marx's first founding of his new continent of thought and of revolution, he wrote: 'To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie.' The truth of this statement has never been more immediate and urgent than in our nuclear world, over which hangs the threat to the very survival of civilization as we have known it."

March 10 - March 21, 1985

## Raya Dunayevskaya's living archives

by Eugene Walker  
Managing Editor, News & Letters

Detroit, Mich.—Wayne State University's McGregor Conference Center was jammed the evening of March 21 with close to 200 listeners—Black autoworkers, young university students and professors, women's liberationists, activists from Detroit as well as across the country and indeed, revolutionaries from the Middle East and from Europe—to hear the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the United States, Raya Dunayevskaya, speak on "Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and World Humanist Concepts." The talk, sponsored by Wayne State University Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, coincided with the opening of a most magnificent exhibition of the Marxist-Humanist Archives of Raya Dunayevskaya. The Director of the WSU Archives, Dr. Philip Mason, who chaired the evening's events, Assistant Director Dr. Warner Pfing and Margery Long, the coordinator who was responsible for the preparation and arrangement of the exhibit materials, along with other staff members of the Walter Reuther Library where the Archives are housed, arranged a truly memorable evening. The exhibit itself will remain in place throughout the Spring to allow activists and scholars to visit and study.

### LIVING & REVOLUTIONARY

Ms. Dunayevskaya's Archives, which now number close to 9,000 pages, are highlighted in the exhibit by photographs of her life as a revolutionary within the worldwide freedom movement, stretching from the 1920s to today, as well as selected key documents from her collection. Her Archives were first established at Wayne State in 1969 under the title "Marxist-Humanism from 1941 to Today." Marxist-Humanism meant a singling out and tracing of the American and Humanist roots of Marx's thought and the practicing—in the post-World War II period—of the dialectics of revolution both in

America and worldwide. Dunayevskaya first developed this as a body of ideas in the 1950s. Her Archives have been brought up to date twice since she originally established them. This most recent addition from 1981-85 includes as well exhibit material which shows her activities and writings from the 1920s.

It was the intertwining of Dunayevskaya's talk to the standing-room-only audience, together with their joining her in the exhibition hall for a reception and a tour through the panels and cases of her Archives, a presentation by Raya of new donations both from the earliest and latest periods, and much animated conversation among the audience, which gave such a vibrancy to the whole evening.

We felt the concept of Archives as living, revolutionary and today, and not alone as past, in listening to Raya as she spoke on her "definition" of archives:

*I consider that the one who authors the collection should be the one to trace the dialectics of the particular accumulated documents... How could an archivist know what the participants in most of the events perceive the dialectics of revolution to be?*

Those dialectics of revolution for Raya began as early as her childhood days. Her lecture told the story of a Chicago ghetto where she had come to live after immigration from Russia and where, as a young teenager, she helped to lead a strike of fellow school children against the anti-Semitic principal who meted out corporal punishment for the slightest infraction.

Later when I was in the exhibit hall I was impressed by a panel called "The Early Years" and saw a picture and news story of that strike in a 1924 issue of the Chicago Tribune and read, "Many of the strikers came on roller skates."

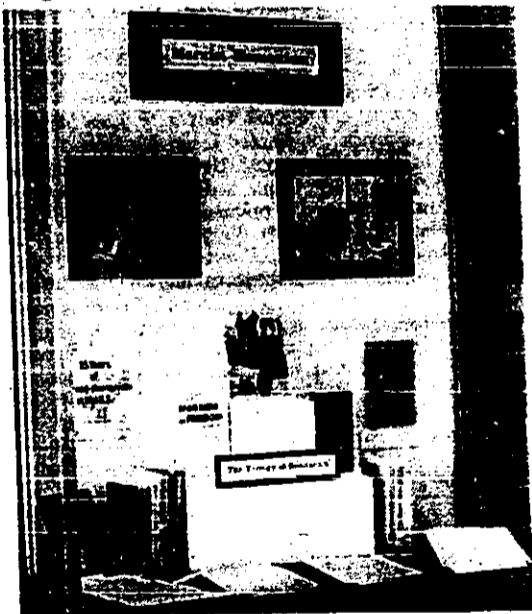
In her talk Raya spoke of her time with Trotsky in exile in Mexico, both its greatness to her, and the actual physical trauma of speechlessness that overcame her when, two years later, she felt she must break with Trotsky's continued defense of Russia as a workers' state at the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact.

The day after her lecture I returned to the exhibit hall, where one must really allow half a day for study of the displays, and found myself in front of a case, "With Trotsky in Mexico." It is filled with pictures and documents from Coyoacan, Mexico, 1938. A picture shows Leon and Natalia Trotsky with Raya and several others of the exile entourage. They are in a field of beautiful trees and flowers, and yet, for the War Commissar of the great Russian Revolution of two decades earlier, it, and indeed Diego Rivera's house and garden where they were living in exile, must have as well been a prison. The case also contains letters from Trotsky to Raya.

### PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION

Perhaps the most striking case for me at the exhibit is the one entitled simply "Marxist-Humanism." It is full of editions of *Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution*, and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation*, and *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*—English, Japanese, Italian, French, German, Spanish. But then my eyes fell upon several typescript manuscripts that lie in front of this "trilogy of revolution": the 1941 manuscript of "Labor and Society," a typescript of Raya's 1949 translation of "Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks on Hegel's Science of Logic," a third manuscript of her "Letter on Hegel's Absolute Idea" of May 12, 1953.

My mind went back to the lecture I had heard the evening before where Dunayevskaya spoke of the decade that followed her break with Trotsky: how her study of the Russian economy in 1941 had in "Labor and Society" already found the Humanism of Marx's 1840s writings and thus a philosophic alternative to Russian state-capitalism, even though at that time she was not fully conscious of



—News & Letters photo

it; how her 1949-50 translations of Lenin on Hegel had prepared her for her own direct digging into Hegel; and how this philosophic work had been occurring right in the midst of her involvement in that most concrete, great Miners' General Strike of 1949-50. Here was this intertwining between Raya's deep philosophic probing and those waterbed events of a miners' general strike against the automated production of the continuous miner.

Her talk had then moved to 1953 and her own philosophic breakthrough on Hegel's Absolute Idea in the letters of May 12 and 20, 1953, only weeks after Stalin's death and only weeks before the first great revolt against Russian totalitarian state-capitalism, the East German revolt of June 17, 1953.

In this same exhibit case "Marxist-Humanism," there are not only these fundamental manuscripts that had, over three decades, helped give birth to Dunayevskaya's "trilogy of revolution," but, if you move your eyes still higher in the display case, you see two beautiful pictures: one is of two workers tearing up pavement stones from the streets and hurling them at an advancing tank. It is June 17, 1953, and you are in East Berlin. The other, which is also on the front of the News and Letters pamphlet, *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.*, is a mass meeting of miners. You are in the midst of coal country in 1950 and the miners have rejected demands that they end their wildcat strike.

The pictures—miners on strike in the U.S., workers in revolt in East Germany—the trilogy of revolution—*Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution*, and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation*, and *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*—the philosophic manuscripts Raya was working out and translating in the 1940s and '50s—all brought back to my mind the words of her talk:

*The whole question of cognition and actuality, like the gulf between thinking and doing, touches on the relationship of philosophy and revolution.*

The period of 1949-53, as expressed in her talk and in

this exhibit case, contains the birth of Marxist-Humanism and the striving to work out the single dialectic of thinking and doing, of philosophy and revolution.

### PRACTICALITY OF PHILOSOPHY

One exhibit case puzzled me at first. It is entitled simply "Philosophers" and contains, first, a marvelous exchange of letters on the Absolute Idea between Raya and Herbert Marcuse. His is a short one denying the necessity of a return to Absolute Idea for our age. Her answer is a creative explosion: six pages on the dialectics of the Absolute Idea. Other letters in the case are from Erich Fromm, from the Hegel translator A.V. Miller and from the historian E.H. Carr. Then in the upper right hand corner of the case there are the following documents: a striking drawing of a coal miner being swallowed in "Dust, deadly dust," a copy of Charles Denby's pamphlet, *Workers Battle Automation*, and a translation of that pamphlet into Japanese. All in a case called "Philosophers."

My mind again returned to the lecture of the evening before, to when Raya chose to speak both about the Marxist-Humanist newspaper, *News & Letters*, whose masthead logo is *Theory/Practice*, and about its worker-editor Charles Denby. After she had showed how Denby had elicited the stories for *Workers Battle Automation* from both workers and youth, and even a doctor, she read Denby's favorite quote from Hegel: "Enlightenment upsets the household arrangement, which spirit carries out in the house of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of here and now." To Denby, this proved the "practicality" of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism.

The founding of *News & Letters* was based precisely on the new form of self-activity of workers and other forces of revolution, which Raya had worked out philosophically as a movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. In her talk she argued that intellectuals should not only listen to the thoughts of workers, but also write within the discipline of a workers' newspaper. So the "philosophers," workers in their attitude and action toward automation and thinkers who strive to create theory unseparated from revolutionary dialectics in reality and in thought, are not in two different worlds.

What was true of workers' action and thought being interwoven into the fabric of Marxist-Humanist philoso-

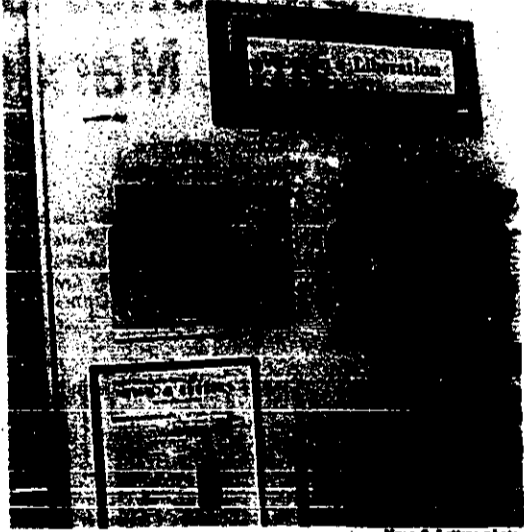
phy was also true of other forces of revolution—the Black Dimension, women's liberation and youth, as well as the international dimension. One saw this in the panels of these forces in the exhibit. Thus the one on "Youth in Revolt" looked at how Marxist-Humanism had sought out and made explicit the link between the Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution, as well as showing the writings of young Marxist-Humanists such as *The Marxist-Humanist* issued on the UCLA campus in the mid-1960s and *From the Pen* issued at Wayne State in the 1970s.

The "Women's Liberation" panel gave a brief glimpse of Raya's activity and writings on this subject. It includes a beautiful picture of Natalia Trotsky and Raya which riveted my eyes. In her talk the evening before she was able to briefly give a sweep of her involvement within women's liberation when she spoke of her new work, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, and gave a flavor of this 35-year collection of her essays which will be published by Humanities Press this Spring.

#### BLACK AND INTERNATIONAL

What was pervasive in all parts of the exhibit and not alone in the panels entitled "International Relations" and "Black Dimension in the U.S. and Africa" were these two crucial aspects of Dunayevskaya's conception of dialectics of revolution. The Black Dimension is found again and again as Marxist-Humanism developed over a 40-year period and practiced its philosophy. Raya's essay "Negroes in the Revolution," written in the 1940s when so much of the Left ignored the Black Question, was on display along with the original Black and labor study of the 1960s, *American Civilization on Trial*, that was produced by the National Editorial Board of *News & Letters*, whose chairwoman is Raya Dunayevskaya.

You felt the international dimension to Raya's thought and activity in her talk, which swept you from



In the exhibit hall. Picture in background is Raya with Natalia Trotsky in Mexico, 1938.

Marx's Paris to the Paris Commune, to the Russian Revolution, to Iran's 1908-11 revolution, to Mexico, to the revolt in South Africa that very day, March 21, 1965, with which she began her talk. Archives for Marxist-Humanists are indeed today, revolutionary, living.

In the exhibit you saw the number of translations of Raya's and Marxist-Humanism's work into languages of the world—an underground translation into Chinese, Spanish editions of many of her works, French, Japanese, Italian, German, Serbo-Croatian—together with pictures from her trips to speak in Japan and in West Africa. It was an internationalism in the participation in struggles worldwide, and it was a solidarity of not only revolutionary actions but a working out together of revolutionary ideas.

In addition to the talk and the exhibit, the reception following the talk was itself an exciting event. Dr. Mason had invited the audience to continue discussion by coming to the exhibit hall and reception and speaking informally. More than half the audience followed. Here Raya had a chance to introduce new points which she could not take up in her one-hour talk. In turning over the latest volume of her Archives, "Dialectics of Revolution: American Roots and World Humanist Concepts, 1961-65," she was able to present as her latest writing a beautifully bound copy of the page proofs of her new work, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, just finished this year. The artistic book binding had been done by the Marxist-Humanist Terry Moon.

Along with the book, she made the WSU Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs a special present of a full size photocopy of an early issue of *The Negro Champion*, a Black revolutionary newspaper she worked on in the late 1920s.

Finally, Raya had a chance to introduce to the audience the widow of Charles Denby as a writer in her own right. She immediately identified herself as "Christine," the author of her own chapters in Denby's *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*.

The reception continued with much informal discussion from an audience whose multidimensional make-up—worker and intellectuals, women's liberationists and youth, Black production workers and white students, from the U.S. and abroad—helped to put a living, revolutionary stamp on the Marxist-Humanist Archives and on the evening's events.



**Black World**

**Origins  
of Black  
Marxism**



by Lou Turner

The decade following the Russian Revolution saw the race riots of the "Red Summer of 1919" signal the emergence of the "New Negro" and the world historic rise of the Garvey movement, while Lenin and American Marxists formulated the first Marxist thesis on the "Negro Question". It was the birth of Black Marxism.

Nothing better exposes, however, the attitude of racist neglect on the part of American historians, on the one hand, and the suppression by American Communist ideologues, on the other, toward that historical and theoretically new moment, when the dimensions of Black and Red fused into a single revolutionary dialectic, than the recent opening of an exhibit of archival documents from the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection at the Wayne State University Labor Archives in Detroit.

**BLACK AND RED AT TURNING POINT**

What struck me, as I toured the exhibit, was how a single display of documents from Dunayevskaya's Archives so profoundly illuminated the multi-dimensionality of the fusion of Black and Red, that our understanding of everything from Black literature to revolution, from the West Indies to South Africa, from the movement of peasantry to Black proletariat in the 1920s and '30s may have to be re-examined.

However, it was at the reception following her lecture opening the exhibit, that Raya Dunayevskaya presented Dr. Philip Mason of the Reuther Library with one of the most extraordinary documents from American Black and Marxist history, a recently discovered 1926 copy of the Negro Champion, the organ of the American Negro Labor Congress.

As a young woman in Chicago, Dunayevskaya had attended the first-ever gathering of Black workers and Marxists at the founding convention



## BLACK WORLD

(continued from page 1)

of the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC), in October, 1925, and had followed the "unorthodox line" of working daily from 1925 to 1927 at the editorial office of the *Negro Champion* under the editorship of Lovett Fort-Whiteman.

Though Lovett Fort-Whiteman was an early founder of "Black Marxism" in the U.S., first associating with A. Philip Randolph's *Messenger* as one of its editors, and then as the first editor of the *Negro Champion* and as national organizer for the American Negro Labor Congress, he has been rendered invisible by radical and Black labor historians, as well as Communist ideologues.

### LOVETT FORT-WHITEMAN AND NEGRO CHAMPION

In order to understand why Fort-Whiteman and the *Negro Champion* met such a fate, it is necessary to see what they represented. In the founding year of the ANLC and the *Negro Champion*, and three years after Claude McKay had addressed the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, Lovett Fort-Whiteman continued McKay's critique of the American Marxists: "The slow growth of Marxism among Negroes has been wholly due to the inability both of the social democrats and the Communists to approach the Negro on his own mental grounds, and to interpret his peculiar social situation in terms of the class struggle."

From the U.S. Congressional "Red Files" is taken this account from the December, 1925 *Negro Champion* on the founding convention of the ANLC: "The Congress opened Sunday evening, October 25 (running for 6 days) at the Metropolitan Community Center, 3118 Giles Avenue...Decorations, due to the energy and tact of the Chicago local committee of action, fittingly and distinctively complied with the spirit of the first national meeting of Negro workers ever convened in the Western world...Thunderous applause greeted Lovett Fort-Whiteman, national organizer of the (American) Negro Labor Congress, when he stepped upon the platform to reply to the speakers of the evening on behalf of the national

## Origins of Black Marxism

committee of the Congress."

In 1928, the year after her association with the *Negro Champion* under the editorship of Lovett Fort-Whiteman and the paper's managing editor Irving Dunjee, Raya Dunayevskaya was expelled from the Young Workers League for "Trotskyist deviationism" (not accidentally, it had also been Dunayevskaya who had made the motion that "white chauvinism" within the YWL should be grounds for expulsion). By then, Stalin had ordered the Workers (Communist) Party to move from



working-class Chicago to "intellectual" New York City. The *Negro Champion*, which also moved to New York, had not only changed editorial hands, but the political shift in the Communist line on the "Negro Question" that marked Stalin's coming to power set in motion the ideological terror which ultimately spelled out the tragic end of its first editor, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, murdered in Stalin's mass purges.

The leadership of the American Communist Party, especially those Black Stalinists who would come to head the Party's "Negro work" in the 1930s carried out the ideological and organizational liquidation of the historically new beginning established by those early Black Marxists associated with Lovett Fort-Whiteman, the ANLC and the *Negro Champion* in the Chicago period.

It is for that reason that I want to conclude with an appeal for the recovery of all issues of the *Negro Champion*, from the Chicago period, 1925-28, and any information pertaining to its first editor, Lovett Fort-Whiteman. It is only then that we will finally be able to fully read one of the most critical, missing pages in Afro-American and Marxist history and thought.

## Readers' Views

## from the Archives lecture audience

In going through the Raya Dunayevskaya exhibit, I felt that here was an individual's life which was universal. I had always heard Dunayevskaya say that the only biography she is interested in is the biography of an idea. But the exhibit included documents from her youth in the 1920s, even before she became a philosopher of revolution. The reason became clear to me when she spoke in her lecture on herself as a youth being tremendously influenced by the Russian Revolution, and on how the American revolutionary movement came alive to her when she heard of Eugene V. Debs speak on Wendell Phillips.

I think that just as she never forgot those historic events and people and decided to follow through on the idea of freedom, the youth who heard her speak in Detroit on March 21 will never forget that historic event.

Young woman  
Chicago

One of the staff at the Labor Archives was looking over the audience. I asked him, Is this the usual type of crowd you get here? He said, No, usually it's nearly all white and from the university. I think they were shocked at all the workers, Black and white, who came. I saw friends from the shops I hadn't seen in many years, but they had to come to this one meeting.

UAW activist  
Detroit

While I was visiting Detroit I saw an article in the Detroit Free Press about the opening of an exhibit on "Raya Du-

nayevskaya, Marxist-Humanist." I said: "This is for me." I am a dean of a small country school in Mississippi, and I wanted to attend because I consider myself a socialist, along the lines of Latin America's liberation theology. In Mississippi you find many problems, yet few people call themselves socialists.

I had been impressed with Charles Denby's book before this trip, and now this. Raya Dunayevskaya's views on Marxism are like a jewel of thought, I am looking forward to reading the literature I bought.

Black minister  
Mississippi

One aspect of the exhibit really impressed me. I couldn't get over how the labels describing each item linked Raya's life with American history. I had not known (though I've known her works for 20 years) that in the 1920s she distributed a shop paper in Chicago at the McCormick works, International Harvester. The label brought out the fact that those same works were the place where the famous Haymarket events of 1886 began.

Civil rights veteran  
New York

This is the second time I have heard Dunayevskaya. She is such an eloquent speaker. As an anthropologist, trying to write on rural India (it is my home country also), what really attracted me to the lecture wasn't her eloquence, but the fact that I feel the need for a theoretical base for my work. I don't want to write only empirical studies even

though they are what the university wants. I find the theories devised about the Third World bankrupt and reeking with contempt for the supposed backwardness of the masses. Your view of Marx and the Third World is really quite refreshing. I would hope that at least a few anthropologists will test Dunayevskaya's line of reasoning on Marx and non-industrial societies. It deserves such a test.

Anthropologist  
Canada

You want to bet that the UAW leadership in Solidarity House is going to yell when they see an exhibit called "Raya Dunayevskaya: Marxist-Humanist philosopher" up in the "Walter Reuther Library" (that's the official name of the Archives building)? I'm a UAW member and I should know. Bieber and all his vice-presidents hate radicals, unless they can control them.

Ford Local 606 member  
Dearborn, Mich.

One of the discussions I had during the reception after the opening of the Dunayevskaya exhibit was with a Black Ford Rouge worker. What he told me represented such an exciting new development in the Free South Africa Movement in the U.S. that one could see why he came to Dunayevskaya's lecture on the "Dialectics of Revolution."

Black rank-and-file workers, along with white workers, have organized a solidarity march in support of Black South African workers. The march and rally is to take place on March 28 on Miller Road at the Overpass, in Dear-

born, the scene of several historic labor struggles in the 1930s and '40s.

Lou Turner  
Chicago

I was so interested in Raya Dunayevskaya's lecture, especially where she talked about women's liberation. As an Archives student myself, I worked on one woman's liberationist's archives. When Raya spoke about the "new voices" of women's liberation, I thought about how women were not satisfied with just supporting the peace movement. They were saying "We won't wait for our liberation."

One point I would like to talk more about is Raya's charge that today's women's liberation writers don't take either Marx or revolution seriously. Is this true?

Student  
Detroit

Raya Dunayevskaya began her lecture by speaking about the 26th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre and about the revolt that is taking place this very day in South Africa. You could feel history being made, and you could sense a powerful reciprocity between a hall filled with Blacks, whites and Asians; autoworkers, professors and students in Detroit, and the young Black revolutionaries in South Africa halfway around the world. It made you understand how the "personal" events in one person's life and thought (when it is a person like Dunayevskaya) can also be historic events.

Appreciative  
New York