

Youth and the dialectics of revolution today

by Ida Fuller, youth columnist

This past month, I have been receiving direct reports of the new youth protests on campuses nationwide. At Columbia University, the site of a continuous sit-in pushing for divestment of university funds in South Africa, students have renamed their administration building Mandela Hall. At the University of California in Berkeley, what the media do not report is that student sitters-in have renamed Sproul Hall as Stephen Biko Hall.

At the University of Colorado, student demonstrators have kicked out CIA recruiters, and at Northwestern University in Chicago, we prevented a Contra leader from speaking. I wonder how many other universities have had similar protests which we do not yet have direct reports about? In all, what stands out is a new spirit among youth just entering college, who are searching for freedom ideas and a new society. A spirit which I could also see in the number and variety of youth who, on April 18, attended a lecture by Raya Dunayevskaya at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and heard her stress how Marxist-Humanism had made a category of youth as a force of revolution in the 1960s, when they were dismissed as the beat generation.

SEARCH FOR FREEDOM IDEAS

It is precisely because of the urgency of this search for freedom ideas that this month I felt especially lucky to have received an advance copy of Raya Dunayevskaya's new book, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*. In this 35-year collection of essays which at first seems related only to women's liberation, I discovered that Dunayevskaya traces what she calls "the birth of a whole new generation of revolutionaries" in the post-World War II period, analyzes the Dialectics of Revolution as it relates to youth, and reaches for the future who are the youth.

What struck me in reading the "Introduction and Overview" was that Dunayevskaya singles out the post-World War II period as a new epoch because "I had been feeling that the whole post-World War II generation had been raising totally new questions."

Thus in Part I: *Women, Labor and the Black Dimension*, as well as in the "Introduction and Overview," Dunayevskaya singles out two historic events as the prelude to the birth of "a whole new generation of revolutionaries" in the 1960s:

In 1956, it was the student youth of the Hungarian Revolution who touched off a revolt which involved Workers' Councils and raised the banner of Marx's Humanism against the rule of Communist totalitarianism. Dunayevskaya extends the new stage which the Hungarian Revolution opened to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, when it was Black youth who followed through on Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man, and helped start a bus boycott. This movement was totally self-organized, with its greatest feature being its practice of new-human relations and its own working existence.

Seeing the connection between the Hungarian Revolution and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (which to this day is a category that only Dunayevskaya has made) and their anticipation of the 1960s Black Revolution, the 1964 Free Speech Movement and the 1965 Anti-Vietnam War teach-ins, gave me a whole new view of what our historic task and specificity as the post-World War II generation of youth is.

In Part II: *Revolutionaries All*, after discovering Dunayevskaya's appreciation for the contributions of the new generation of revolutionaries, I found it most sobering to read her critique of our pitfalls, manifested most openly in the near-revolution in France, 1968. In excerpts from the last chapter of Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*, entitled "New Passions and New Forces: The Black Dimension, The Anti-Vietnam War Youth, Rank-and-File Labor, Women's Liberation," this is the opening sentence: "So empirical-minded is the American youth, Black included, that even revolutionaries who have separated themselves from Communism of the Russian and the Chinese varieties have fully and uncritically embraced Castro." (p. 111)

ATTITUDE TOWARD MARXISM

We are faced with the sobering reality that the youth's attitude toward Marxism as just another ideology or their acceptance of degraded versions of Marxism has had terrible results: a truncated concept of revolution. Dunayevskaya critiques the uncritical enthusiasm of many youth for Regis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution*, a work praised by Castro, which expounds guerrilla warfare as the universal pathway to revolution and preaches total acceptance of the guerrilla leader as "leader Maximum" who does not tolerate ideological differences.

Now it is true that today we might not be following Regis Debray. But shouldn't we ask ourselves if we have other manifestations of being empirical-minded that are handcuffing us? Isn't the separation that we make between our Solidarity Committees and the needed solidarity of ideas a manifestation of empiricism?

Today's youth movement, so centered around solidarity, has such a sensitivity to internationalism that I'm sure a young activist reader would be excited by Part III: *Sexism, Politics and Revolution—Japan, Portugal, Poland, China, Latin America, the U.S.—Is There an Organizational Answer?* Not only because this part covers the world, but also because it does not limit its analysis of international youth movements to their anti-U.S. imperialism aspect. Rather it delves into a critical solidarity with their ideas.

Anti-nuclear activists would be excited to read Dunayevskaya's report of her lecture tour in Japan in 1966, because it allows us to witness a massive anti-nuclear movement with roots in rank-and-file labor, whose youth are openly and proudly Marxist; genuine Marxists who are not apologists for any state powers and are adamantly opposed to their native rulers as well. It is the youth of the Zengakuren who have broken with the Japanese Communist Party and have returned to

Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays.

Nevertheless what shocks the reader is that it is the same youth translators of Marx's Humanist Essays who still do not encourage women to speak as thinkers of revolution at their meetings. In the "Introduction and Overview" Dunayevskaya expresses this critique by catching its philosophic roots: "This group was the first to translate and publish, in Japanese, Marx's 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, in which the Man/Woman relationship is so central. Yet not only did they disregard that point in Marx's Essays, but they acted as if the concept of Alienated Labor meant only class relations." (p. 7)

MARXISM VS. COMMUNISM

When I first started to review this book, I set myself a two-fold task: 1. How can we as American youth avoid falling into Reaganism's trap of false ideology which equates Marxism with Communism? 2. What does Dunayevskaya mean by calling the 1880s the trail to the 1980s, and what does she mean by the second part of the title she gives to this book, "Reaching for the Future"?

It was in Part IV: *The Trail to the 1980s: The Missing Link—Philosophy—in the Relationship of Revolution to Organization* that I first began to grasp what Dunayevskaya means by "Reaching for the Future." Part IV begins with a "Radio Interview on the Family, Love Relationships and the New Society" in which Dunayevskaya raises Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence" as the need for a total uprooting, including that of the family. This involves knowing that "the revolution in permanence refers to you too" and that, "until we end the division between mental and manual labor... we will not really have a new man, a new woman, a new child, a new society." (p. 181)

It is also here that Dunayevskaya deepens our view of the young Marx by tracing the origins of Marx's "new continent of thought" back to 1841 where we meet Marx as a college student.

But whether it is the question of uprooting the bourgeois family or taking us back to Marx in 1841, or in the 1880s, the whole point is that for Marx, "revolution in permanence" was not any perpetual motion machine but a revolution that would not stop with a mere overthrow of the old society, but rather concern itself with the creation of the new. That is what "Reaching for the Future" means and that is what no one can do "for" us. Rather, we have to work it out ourselves.

This made me think of why, in 1968, the Constitution of News & Letters Committees singled out youth as "the ones whose idealism in the finest sense of the word combines with opposition to existing adult society in so unique a way that it literally brings them alongside the workers as builders of the new society."

It is this challenge which compels youth not to accept vulgarized interpretations of Marxism, but seriously examine Dunayevskaya's work. I would like to invite a discussion by youth on these questions. Do please order *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* and read it for yourselves.