

1986-87: New illuminations on the philosophic expression of Marxist-Humanism

by Raya Dunayevskaya
I am turning over "Theory/Practice" this issue to my colleague Eugene Walker—R.D.

This past year Raya Dunayevskaya has been in the process of writing a new book tentatively entitled *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The 'Party' and Forms of Organization Born Out of Spontaneity*. This work has given new illumination to the Marxist-Humanist body of ideas. It is bringing to the fore the manner whereby the Ideas of Marxist-Humanism is renewed and developed through a working out of new philosophic perceptions of Hegel, Marx and Lenin.

At the same time, these new writings—sometimes in the form of letters to intellectuals, sometimes in informal notes she has entitled "Talking to Myself" or "Random Thoughts"—have helped those of us who are involved in putting out a biweekly Marxist-Humanist newspaper in thinking about how we view objective events and how these events become reflected within our paper, *News & Letters*, as part of a Marxist-Humanist body of ideas. Here, I would like to share some of my thoughts on these new writings with the readers of *News & Letters*.

PHILOSOPHIC EXPRESSION AND OBJECTIVE EVENTS IN MARXIST-HUMANIST WRITINGS

Any summation/anticipation of objective events of revolution/counter-revolution through philosophic labors is, of course, by no means any sort of one-to-one correspondence. As Marx noted, the practice of philosophy is itself theoretical. New philosophic expressions within the body of Marxist-Humanist ideas may, at first glance, seem far removed from the ongoing rush of current events. And yet, the working out of particular Marxist-Humanist concepts at given historic moments has case illumination of the objective events of an era.

Thirty years ago this May, Raya Dunayevskaya, after completing the manuscript for *Marxism and Freedom*, penned her Introduction to that first edition. Looking back over three decades in the biography of an Idea—Marxist-Humanism—that had first been set forth in book form at that time, we can see the impact of this work on an audience of enormous range. Eastern European revolutionaries as in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, who were searching for intellectual weapons to fight Stalinism; African revolutionaries, in rural Gambia and elsewhere, who were exploring pathways to be free not only of colonialism and neo-colonialism, but newly im-

posed single-party states; Japanese Leftists trying to find a non-Stalinist, non-Maoist context for presenting Marxism anew; Argentinian Marxists discovering the Humanism of Marxism as a needed indigenous dimension to Latin American revolutions—all found their way to this book *Marxism and Freedom*, whose first edition numbered only a scant 5,000.

And here in America Marxism and Freedom was taken up among coal miners in West Virginia, among civil rights workers in the South during the 1960s, among New Left youth on campuses from Columbia and the University of Michigan to UC-Berkeley, among Black and white autoworkers in Detroit, among newly emerging groups of women's liberationists. And not least, Marxism and Freedom began to shape the work of the Marxist-Humanist group, News and Letters Committees.

This first major Marxist-Humanist work became the basis for our work within News and Letters Committees both as activists and as theoreticians. It as well became the ground upon which we related to readers of *News & Letters*, who did not consider themselves Marxist-Humanists, but were writing in to our paper. In a word, what we projected in the years following the publication of *Marxism and Freedom*, and what our readers felt an affinity to, was the conception that masses were not only revolutionary force but were revolutionary Reason as well. This projection of Marx's New Humanism for our day contrasted sharply with the totalitarian state-capitalist practices that had passed for Marxism within Stalinist Russia, and which had obfuscated revolutionary thought and action globally for close to three decades.

Philosophy and Revolution formulated a Marxist-Humanist conception of Hegel's Absolutes, viewed not as static ends, but as revolutionary, philosophic, new beginnings. This book was published in 1973 as more than a decade of revolutionary activities and challenges to state power drew to a close. The ending of this era came as much from the failure of revolutionary activism without a philosophy of revolution as from the actuality of state-power repression.

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, written in the early 1980s, created the category of post-Marx Marxists as a pejorative, beginning with Marx's closest collaborator, Engels. Its publication came on the eve, not alone of new intellectual debris thrown on top of Marx's Marxism by non-Marxists and Marxists alike during the 1980 Marx Cen-

tenary Year conferences and symposia, but of the bloody decapitating of the Grenada revolution from within by one so-called Marxist faction, thus providing the excuse for Reagan's counter-revolutionary invasion.

The most recent Marxist-Humanist book, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future* (1986), concretizes dialectics for a particular subject of revolution. It does this by situating Women's Liberation very specifically within our epoch both as to a new state of production, Automation, and a new stage of cognition, beginning as a movement from practice, from masses in motion.

In each of the above works Dunayevskaya has presented "unorthodox" views of the thought of Hegel, of Marx, of Lenin, ones which have provoked a variety of responses from Hegel/Marx/Lenin scholars-intellectuals and revolutionaries alike. For more than four decades she has entered into a most profound "dialogue" with each of these thinkers as the manner by which she comes to grips with today's ongoing reality.

Now once again, as she is undertaking a new study for our day on Dialectics of Organization, Dialectics of Philosophy, she has begun her labors by digging into the ideas of each of them. Let us look at her new "dialogues," though of necessity in a very brief and tentative way.

NEW PERCEPTIONS ON LENIN

Dunayevskaya has begun a new study of Lenin which encompasses a critique of Lenin at his very highest point—his Philosophic Notebooks on Hegel's Science of Logic. This is a stunning vantage point for her critique when you realize that it has been Dunayevskaya who has pioneered and developed the most comprehensive view of Lenin as philosopher based precisely on these Philosophic Notebooks. In no sense does her vantage point mean a renunciation of those Philosophic Notebooks. Rather it means a further probing within.

In order to grasp her new point of departure today let us trace briefly her view of Lenin as philosopher as it has developed over some 40 years. In 1948-49 she translated Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks into English

(continued on page 7)

1. Those who wish to follow Dunayevskaya's recent writings both on new perceptions on Lenin and on Hegel should consult "The Year of Only 6 Months," Report of the Expanded Resident Editorial Board Meeting, Jan. 3, 1987, which contains as well an exchange of correspondence between Raya Dunayevskaya and Non-Marxist Hegelian scholars. Order form: NAL for \$9.

(continued from page 5)

(Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, microfilm #1492). They formed the basis for a philosophic correspondence between Dunayevskaya and the two other leaders of the state-capitalist tendency, C.L.R. James and Grace Lee (microfilm #1595 and #3234). In 1953 came her Letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea. Here she has a "dialogue" with Lenin on his breaking off his Notebooks on Hegel before he fully goes through the Absolute Idea.

However, in her *Marxism and Freedom* (1959), the focus is not on any shortcut in Lenin's encounter with Hegel; rather, it is on "Lenin and the Dialectic: A Mind in Action," where she presents Lenin's encounter with Hegel's dialectic as the ground for what she terms the Great Divide in Marxism. In *Philosophy and Revolution*, her chapter on Lenin is entitled "The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin." The discussion of philosophic ambivalence is not about Lenin's commentary in the Notebooks, but about his failure to publish them and discuss them publicly, his ambivalence towards his own work.

But now, in working out a book on *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy*, Dunayevskaya has felt the necessity to work out the philosophic source of Lenin's failure to reorganize his organizational conceptions. In her view it is no longer sufficient to work out the political reasons for his organizational attitude. (See Chapter XI of *Marxism and Freedom*, "Forms of Organization: The Relationship of the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the Vanguard Party.")

Her new perception encompasses the fact that Lenin's ambivalence rested not so much on the question of the extension or "application" of his *Philosophic Notebooks* to "organization," as it rested on the fact that Lenin's *Notebooks* in and of themselves ended in a shortcut. He magnificently extended a hand in practice, but never fully immersed himself in the dialectic when the dialectic was the chapter on Absolute Idea in the *Science of Logic*. Instead, Lenin remains on the threshold of the Absolute in the Idea of Cognition, and restricts his comments on the Absolute to how Hegel presented it in such abbreviated form in the *Smaller Logic* of the *Encyclopedia* rather than in the *Science of Logic*. And yet it is precisely that Absolute Idea which Dunayevskaya argues holds the key for the relation between philosophy and revolutionary activity, including organization in our era when Absolute Idea is seen as New Beginning. (See especially "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning," Ch. 1 of *Philosophy and Revolution*.)

Here is how she formulates the thrust of her work-in-progress in one of her "Talking to Myself" notes: "What I'm driving at is that, unless we work out the dialectic in philosophy itself, the dialectic of organization, whether it be from the vanguard party or that born from spontaneity, would be just different forms of organization, instead of an organization that is so inseparable

from its philosophic ground that form and content are one." (Oct. 6, 1986)

DIALECTICS OF PHILOSOPHY; DIALECTICS OF ORGANIZATION; IN HEGEL, IN MARX

The working out of "the dialectic of philosophy itself" in relation to "dialectics of organization" has compelled a return by Dunayevskaya to the writings of Hegel. In particular she has chosen to concentrate on his final writings—both the Third Attitude to Objectivity included in the *Smaller Logic* and the final three sections of *Philosophy of Mind* added only in 1830-31, just before Hegel's death.

Here is how she recently phrased the cruciality of this period of Hegel's life-work: "Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*—which Lenin didn't touch at all, especially its final three syllogisms—and all the prefaces, introductions, attitudes to objectivity of the *Smaller Logic*, were written after the *Science of Logic* had already been completed and Hegel was re-examining his whole life's work. Thus, the 1830-31 writings of Hegel are as critical as those of Marx's last decade."

Space will not permit us here to follow into the new work that Dunayevskaya has begun on Hegel as well as on Marx's concept of organization, particularly under the impact of the Paris Commune. Instead, I want to end where I began: with the new illumination on the philosophic expression of Marxist-Humanism that comes from new digging into the work of Hegel, Marx and Lenin. As well the illumination extends to the kind of political-theoretical-philosophic journalism we are undertaking with a biweekly *News & Letters*. Post-Marx Marxists are forever talking and writing of leadership, leadership, the Party, the Party, the Party, within their journals, as if that were the magic formula for facing the crisis within post-Marx Marxism and the insoluble contradictions of capitalist class society.

But any serious grappling with questions of organization—whether of a Marxist group, or the self-organizing of masses in motion—cannot escape from working out the dialectics of philosophy, the revolutionary philosophy that Marx created anew out of the Hegelian dialectic, and which is again the task of our age. Any shortcuts from this task will end in diversions from the revolutionary uprooting needed. The pathway toward new human relations, including organization, lies in working out and concretizing the dialectics of a philosophy of revolution.

—Eugene Walker

2. Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on Hegel are quite extensive. Among the major ones to consult are *Summaries of Hegel's Major Writings: Notes on Phenomenology; on Science of Logic; on Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* (Microfilm #2365-2847); *Letters on the Absolute Idea* (#1797-1812); and "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning," Chapter 1 of *Philosophy and Revolution*.

3. For an earlier study of Marx on Organization, see "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization," Chapter XI of Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.