



WOMAN

AS REASON
AND AS FORCE
OF REVOLUTION

WRITINGS OF

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

ON

WOMEN'S
LIBERATION

Women's Liberation -
News and Letters Committees

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by Neda

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INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate, in 1981, the tenth anniversary of our formation as autonomous Women's Liberation-News and Letters Committees, we are proud to publish this selection of writings by Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism in America.

At our beginnings as a women's liberation committee, we considered that our special contribution to the Women's Liberation movement could be summed up in three words: Black, worker, philosophy. Thus, we have emphasized listening to the ideas of Black and working class women, not as any "narrowing" of the Movement, but as the only way to broaden its perspective. In our ten years of existence, we have participated in activities from battles of women workers against low pay, unsafe working conditions, and sexual harassment, to welfare rights protests, to marches to "Take Back the Night." Because we have always felt that taking back control of our own bodies has meant as well taking back our own minds, we have never separated our activity in the movement from working out a theory of liberation, a theory rooted in the struggles of Black and proletarian women, and within Marx's philosophy of revolution.

In 1970, before we were even organized as an independent committee, we published Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices, where we recorded the thoughts of Black women factory and hospital workers alongside those of women clericals and young activists in the Women's Liberation Movement. We continued the unity of revolutionary action and thought with our publications Working Women For Freedom (1976), and Revolutionary Feminism (1978).

The need for fully working out a philosophy of revolution that will give our action a direction towards creating a new society has never been more immediate and urgent than now. We have witnessed a decade of tremendous activity in every corner of the globe, yet women today face a reactionary rollback of those gains we did manage to win. Even the upheavals of revolutions in the past decade has not yet brought forth the full liberation of women and men.

Indeed, it was a young Iranian woman revolutionary, Neda, who was the first to collect and publish, in Farsi, this selection of writings by Raya Dunayevskaya. She felt the need, despite the great activity of the Iranian women not only in getting rid of the Shah but in being the first to march against Khomeini's new repression, for a full expression of a philosophy of revolution to help move the Iranian Revolution beyond the crossroads. It is within the fullness of revolution that a philosophy of liberation becomes most concrete. We reproduce as Appendix Neda's Introduction to the Farsi pamphlet, published for International Women's Day, 1980, as we publish this pamphlet for International Women's Day, 1981.

Raya Dunayevskaya, during a lifetime of activity in the revolutionary movement, has developed the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism as rooted in America in labor, the Black dimension, women's liberation and youth, and the global concept of the inseparability of philosophy and revolution as the dialectics of liberation. The author of Marxism and Freedom and Philosophy and Revolution, she is now completing a new major work on Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution.

The tasks for the 1980s remain ours to work out. We ask you to join us in helping to create the needed pathway to a world of freedom and self-development for all.

Women's Liberation-News and Letters Committees
for March 8, 1981, International Women's Day

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WOMEN AS THINKERS AND AS REVOLUTIONARIES*

(The article below is excerpted from two lectures: "Today's Women Theorists," given in Detroit, at the WSU-U of M Cultural Center, September, 1975; and "Rosa Luxemburg," given at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, May, 1976.)

Good evening. Let's go adventuring, first in women's activities that have not been recognized as revolutions, such as the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y., in 1848, and the Aba "riots" in Nigeria, 1929, and then take the plunge into three revolutions: Russia, February 1917; Germany, January 1919; and the ongoing revolution in Portugal now. In each case we will become a witness to women's creativity as a liberating force.

I. Mass Creativity and the Black Dimension

Creativity is so very characteristic of masses in motion, that you tell a story of the past and have it sound like something just happening before your eyes. Or you can describe a happening of today, and have it sound as something that will first happen tomorrow. The temptation is also great to start the story of women's creativity neither at its beginning, nor at the end, that is, today, but somewhere in the middle. This is not due to any sort of Existentialist obsession with "extreme situations." Rather it is rooted in the truth that women's struggles have created totally new situations, hidden from history and still unrecognized as philosophic ground. What today we call Women's Liberation as an idea whose time has come, are movements from practice, from below, that have been accumulating through the ages.

Take the so-called Aba "riots" in Eastern Nigeria in 1929, some 30 years before anyone thought seriously of Africa, much less African women, as a new development of world freedom. It was in that inauspicious year that the market women in Eastern Nigeria were suddenly taxed by the occupying British Empire. This was done with the consent of the African chiefs. The anger of the women, however, was unbounded and therefore, though the men, the educated ones, would not help the illiterate women resist the imposition of the tax, the women decided, themselves, to revolt.

The self-organization of the women established a totally new form of struggle which transcended all tribal divisions -- Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa, as well as the smaller tribes. So united, powerful, and violent was the opposition of the women to the edicts, to their own chiefs, as well as to the British imperial rule, that it became impossible to contain the revolt. Shots were fired into the crowd, and only when 40 women lay dead and many more injured, was so-called "order" restored. Even then, however, it was achieved only after the tax was revoked, with British rulers claiming that they had been unaware of African "traditions" that the women not be taxed.

The attitude towards women's struggles seems always to play down women's

* From Working Women for Freedom, Women's Liberation--News and Letters Committees, 1976

actions as not meriting the description "revolutionary." For that matter, even up to our day, has any historian, or even revolutionary, seen that historic act as ground from which a great leap into freedom as well as leadership was achieved in the 1960s? Nor can the neglect be explained only by the fact that the event occurred in far-off Africa, back at the outbreak of the Great Depression.

Take the Women's Rights Convention in this country in 1848, at Seneca Falls, N.Y., a fact often enough recorded by women historians of today. All underestimate the Black dimension which inspired the white, middle-class, educated women to strike out on their own. Sojourner Truth and sometimes also Harriet Tubman are dutifully mentioned, condescendingly admitting their bravery -- and of course their suffering as slaves -- but never as Reason which drove the educated to face reality: that the Black women were the orators, generals, and, yes, thinkers, whereas they, the middle-class intellectuals, were but subordinates.

For that matter, have we asked ourselves, as we proudly repeat Women's Liberation is an idea whose time has come, such simple questions, as: (1) How does it happen that our very names, "freed from patriarchy," do not measure up to Sojourner Truth's, whose whole philosophy of liberation is included in her name? (2) Have we even today, as we inveigh against "male domination," compared it to Sojourner Truth's separation from Frederick Douglass after the Civil War for being "short-minded" because he did not wish to burden the struggle for passage of the 14th Amendment by demanding also the right of women to vote? And (3) have today's women theorists built on that movement from below, not only as force, but as Reason? Nor have any analyzed it within the context of that year of revolutions, 1848.

Let's take a second look at that year, 1848. Was the first Women's Rights Convention really totally unrelated to the revolutions that covered the length and breadth of Europe? Isn't it a fact, though hardly recorded, that the women of the French Revolution of that year published a daily paper, La Voix des Femmes (which is something the women of today have yet to create)?

Other than Marx's genius, what was in the air that led to Marx's discovery of a whole new continent of thought? Can we today afford to let the ruling ideology keep us hemmed into American pragmatism? Shouldn't we, as women, at least be aware of the fact that the year Marx first broke with bourgeois society and worked out a philosophy of liberation which he called "a new Humanism" -- 1843 -- was also the year when a woman, Flora Tristan, proclaimed the need for an international of men and women that would put an end to the division of mental and manual labor?

Young Flora Tristan died that year in the London plague. In Germany, the young Marx continued to develop a whole body of works, a theory of proletarian revolution, a whole philosophy of human liberation, deeply rooted both in the class struggles and in that most fundamental relationship, Man/Woman. Marx helped organize women's movements, not only for better wages, but totally different conditions of labor; not only for the right to vote, but for full freedom. Eighty full pages on women and child labor went into Capital, Vol. I, not only as description and resistance, but, as Marx expressed it when he drew the whole work to a conclusion, "the new passions and new forces" that would produce the "negation of the negation," that is to say, become the "grave diggers" of capitalism, creating a whole new

society where "the development of human power is its own end."

Some 100 years after Flora Tristan's declaration for an international organization of working men and women; after Marx's discovery of a whole new continent of thought; after the first Women's Rights Convention, in New York; and after the greatest revolution in Marx's lifetime -- the Paris Commune -- in which The Women Incendiaries surely acted as both force and Reason, isn't it time to work out a philosophy so urgently needed by the Women's Liberation Movement which does not, does not, limit the question of women's liberation to an expose of "the Man" and thereby becomes practically no more than a bystander to Marx's philosophy of liberation on the excuse that it is "male defined,"² as Sheila Rowbotham puts it.

Marx practiced what he preached, again both in the class struggle, and on the question of women as Reason as well as force. Thus, in the Workingmen's International Association, Madame Law was a member of its leadership, the General Council. Thus, he encouraged Dmitrieva to go to Paris and there establish the women's section of the First International. Along with the French women like the great Louise Michel, Dmitrieva became central to the whole Committee for the Defense of Paris and Care of the Wounded in the Paris Commune. There was no break in Marx's philosophy of liberation from the time the young Marx called his philosophy a "new Humanism," and declared Man/Woman to be the most fundamental human relationship, to the Marx of the Paris Commune when he declared the greatest achievement to be "its own working existence." Of course, Marx answered the questions of his day, not ours, but can we afford, as women's liberationists of today, to be without a total philosophy, because the greatest philosophy for uprooting the exploitative old and creating ground for the new was formulated by "a man"?

II. Russia, February 1917; Germany, January 1919; and Rosa Luxemburg

Now let's turn to the 20th century and see, firstly, what we can learn from women as masses in motion, initiating nothing short of the overthrow of the reactionary Russian colossus, Tsarism -- the dramatic, creative, empire-shaking five days in February, 1917; and, secondly, let's turn to the 1919 German Revolution, and its greatest theoretician, Rosa Luxemburg.

That first day, Feb. 23, in Russia, appeared simple enough as a celebration of International Women's Day by the textile workers in Petrograd. But was it that simple, when they insisted it become a strike, despite a raging world war in which their country was doing very badly? Was it that simple when all revolutionary parties -- Bolsheviks, Left Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries, Anarchists -- were telling them that they were courting a massacre, and they shouldn't go out on strike? Was that first day of the revolution, when 50,000 women marched despite all advice against it, a "male-defined" revolution? Was the letter they addressed to the metal workers, which the metal workers honored by joining the strike -- and 50,000 grew to 90,000: men and women, housewives as well as factory workers -- a proof of the fact that they didn't really "know" what they were doing? When the Bolsheviks did join the women textile workers and the strike turned into political opposition to the imperialist war and the Cossacks did open fire, it was too late to save the Russian empire. By then the soldiers also joined the masses in revolt, and "spontaneously" the whole

1. See The Women Incendiaries by Edith Thomas. This work on women in the Paris Commune is a must for all women's liberationists. It is the most detailed and creative analysis of the revolution of 1871.

2. Sheila Rowbotham, Women, Resistance and Revolution, p. 11.

rotten empire toppled.

It is true that those five historic days that crumbled the might of Tsarism led, in turn, to the Revolution of Oct. 25, and that certainly was led by the Bolshevik Party. That, however, can no more detract from what the women workers initiated on Feb. 23, than the October one can be blamed for its transformation into opposite under Stalin a decade later.

What had happened in action, what had happened in thought, what had happened in consciousness of the mass participants -- all this is ground on which we build today. Or should be. But even if some still insist on playing down women both as masses in motion and as leadership, let them consider the German Revolution, January, 1919, led by Rosa Luxemburg. None questioned that she was the leader.

From 1899 when she fought the first appearance of reformism in the Marxist movement, through the 1905 Revolution in which she was both a participant and out of which she drew her famous theory of the Mass Strike; from 1910-13 when she broke with Karl Kautsky -- four years in advance of Lenin's designation of Kautsky as not only opportunist but betrayer of the proletariat -- and when she first developed her anti-imperialist struggles and writings, not only as political militant but carving out her greatest and most original theoretical work, Accumulation of Capital; to the 1919 Revolution, she made no division between her theory and her practice.

Take her Reform or Revolution? against Bernstein, who demanded that "the dialectical scaffolding" be removed from Marx's "materialism."

"When he," she is talking of Bernstein, "directs his keenest arrows against our dialectical system, he is really attacking the specific mode of thought employed by the conscious proletariat in its struggle for liberation. . . . It is an attempt to shatter the intellectual arm with the aid of which the proletariat, while materially under the yoke of the bourgeoisie, is yet enabled to triumph over the bourgeoisie. For it is our dialectical system that shows the working class the transitory character of its yoke, proving to the workers the inevitability of their victory, and has already realized the revolution in the domain of thought."

The next great historic event -- the Russian Revolution of 1905 -- again reveals her as theorist and activist participant who did not stop at oratory but, with gun in hand, made the proprietor-printer print a workers' leaflet. What she singled out, however, from the great experience; what she made ground for other revolutions; what she created as a theory also for the relationship of spontaneity to party, was The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Union:

"The revolution is not an open field maneuver of the proletariat, even if the proletariat with social democracy at its head plays the leading role, but it is a struggle in the middle of incessant movement; the creaking, crumbling and displacement of all social foundations. In short, the element of spontaneity plays such a supreme role in the mass strikes in Russia, not because the Russian proletariat is 'unschooled,' but because revolutions are not subject to schoolmastering."

It is this concept and this activity and this perspective that led, in 1907, to Luxemburg's joining with Lenin and Trotsky to amend the

resolution at the Stuttgart meeting of the International that declared socialist opposition to war and the imperative need to transform it into revolution.

At the time when Luxemburg recognized the non-revolutionary character of Karl Kautsky, when all other Marxists, Lenin included, were still acknowledging him as the greatest theoretician of the Second International, she embarked on the most hectic point of activity outside of a revolution itself.

She felt very strongly that the German Social Democracy had been hardly more than a bystander instead of militant fighter against Germany's imperialist adventures. It was this, and not mere "organizational" questions, which made her return to her original analysis of mass strike which had always meant to her that "the masses will be the active chorus, and the leaders only 'speaking parts,' the interpreters of the will of the masses."

Luxemburg was not only involved in lecturing and developing an anti-imperialist struggle over the Morocco crisis which would, in turn, lead her to her greatest theoretical work, Accumulation of Capital³, but she also turned to work on the woman question, which heretofore she had left entirely to Clara Zetkin, who was editing the greatest German women's magazine, Die Gleichheit, from 1891 to 1917.

The magazine's circulation rose from 9,500 in 1903 to 112,000 in 1913. Indeed, by the outbreak of the war, the female membership in the German Social Democracy was no less than 170,000. It is clear that, as great a theoretician as Rosa Luxemburg was, and as great an organizer as Clara Zetkin was, they were not exceptions to the alleged apathy of German women. On the contrary, it would be more correct to say that there wouldn't have been as massive and important a revolution in Germany were there not that many women involved in the revolution. Naturally none could compare with Rosa Luxemburg as theoretician. That is certainly true of genius whether that be woman or man. As one of the very few persons who had written on the subject put it, were it not for proletarian women, "there might have been no revolution in Germany."⁵

3. I happen to disagree seriously with her theory in Accumulation of Capital, because I consider it a deviation from Marx. This cannot however detract from the important contribution it made in the struggle against imperialism in her day. See "State-Capitalism and Marx's Humanism in Philosophy and Revolution," (News and Letters, 1967.)

4. See Rosa Luxemburg's speech on "Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle" at the Stuttgart Second Social Democratic Women's Rally, May 12, 1912, included in Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg (Monthly Review, N.Y.).

5. A good beginning on this subject has been made by William A. Peltz in his unpublished thesis, "The Role of Proletarian Women in the German Revolution, 1918-19," presented at the Conference on the History of Women, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minn., Oct. 24-25, 1975.

Despite all the misrepresentation of her position on the Russian Revolution, she had hailed it as the greatest proletarian revolution ever, insisting that the Russian Bolsheviks alone had dared and dared again. It was exactly for such a daring act that she was preparing herself from her jail cell, from which she was not freed until Nov. 9, 1918, when the German masses in revolt had driven the Kaiser from the throne. Anyone who tried to use her criticism of the Russian Revolution as the German Revolution unfolded got from her the following: where did you learn the ABCs of revolution? Is it not from the Russians? Who taught you the slogan, "all power to the soldiers, workers, and peasants"? Isn't it the Russians? This is the dialectics of revolution; that is what Spartakus wants, this is the road we are taking now.

Rosa Luxemburg lived only two and a half months after being let out of jail. Two and a half months in which the upsurge of the masses led to the establishment first of the Spartakus League and then the independent Communist Party in Germany. Two and a half months in which to call for all power to the soldiers' and workers' councils. And then the counter-revolution caught up with her, shot her, bashed in her head, and threw her body into the Landwehr Canal.

Does the beheading of the German Revolution -- Liebknecht and Jogiches were murdered along with Luxemburg -- mean that we're not to learn from a revolution because it was "unsuccessful"?

Has the Women's Liberation Movement nothing to learn from Rosa Luxemburg just because she hasn't written "directly" on the "Woman Question"? Outside the fact that the latter doesn't happen to be true, should not the corpus of her works become the real test of woman as revolutionary and as thinker and as someone who has a great deal to tell us as women's liberationists of today? Are we to throw all that into the dustbin of history because she had not written on the "Woman Question"?

III. An Ongoing Revolution and Today's Women Theorists

The plunge into revolutions is being undertaken because they not only are exciting events of the early 20th century, but will also illuminate the problems of our day. We need to examine, if only briefly, today's ongoing Portuguese Revolution to see the historic continuity of working class women in motion as shapers of history. As far back as two decades ago, when the totally new movement from below began with the outbreak of the East European revolt against Russian totalitarianism, signaling a new world stage of struggle for freedom from under totalitarianism, and no one was paying attention to the fascist regime in Portugal, there were struggles of workers, of women, of peasants.

The first woman to die in Portugal, in the mid-1950s, in the fight for the eight-hour day was Caterina Eufemia. It is she who was to become the symbol for the women's movement -- NDM -- that was organized in the underground. For that matter, she became also the symbol for the struggle for women's rights of the new MLM, which was organized by intellectuals and middle-class women, when the "Three Marias"⁶ were freed from jail.

6. The original title of the work for which Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa were imprisoned was New Portuguese Letters, published in 1972.

The undercurrents of revolt had actually been germinating long before 1974. When no others were paying attention to Portugal as the youth rebellion around the world reached a high point in 1968, there was, in fact, an outbreak of revolts in Portugal by students who were fighting not only for academic freedom, but against being drafted for the Portuguese imperialist wars in Africa. The two high points that were reached in all these undercurrents of revolt came from within the army in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola, and from within Portugal itself.

Within the country itself there was a whole series of wildcats in 1973. Women became especially important in 1973 when a labor shortage sent them into textiles and electronics, and directly into the fight against multinationals. It is in textiles and electronics and shipyards where the grass roots workers' movement first erupted, and where none questioned the militancy of women workers. But they were asking not only for a fundamental change in labor conditions, but for different relations at home, as well as raising totally new questions of revolution and new human relations.

With the overthrow of the fascist Castano regime in April 1974, there were outbreaks of all sorts of wildcats, freeing the revolution itself from the neo-fascist "leadership" of Spínola, and creating the foundation also of a new Women's Liberation Movement. Women's participation became critical as three movements -- the rebellion within the army, and the wildcats of industrial workers covering the length and breadth of the country, as well as the peasant occupation of the land -- coalesced. It was no accident that one of the revolutionary political movements that arose, PRP/BR, was headed by a woman, Isabel do Carmo.

As can be seen, the question of revolutionary creativity is not just that of an individual, not even when she's as great as Rosa Luxemburg, and certainly not that of artists or scientists. Now then, let us see whether the movement from practice was the stuff out of which the women theorists of today, whether they be in the U.S., England, or any other technologically advanced country, built their theories.

With the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement in the mid-1960s, when a whole new generation of revolutionaries was born out of the Black Revolution, the anti-Vietnam war movement, and the world-wide national liberation struggles, we had the rise also of women theorists. The new in the struggles of the mid-1960s, when it came to the Women's Liberation Movement, was the women's refusal to wait for the day after "the Revolution" for their total freedom. They refused to narrow their struggles to fight for equal wages or, for that matter, any other economic demands. They raised all sorts of new questions, from sexuality

7. The leaflets of the FRELIMO in Mozambique, the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau, and MPLA in Angola may not match the fraternisation leaflets that the Bolsheviks wrote in 1917, but they certainly were an entirely new ground for fighting in Portugal, 1974. In urging the Portuguese soldiers to go home and make their own revolution, the national liberation forces were raising questions, including the role of women, that the "advanced" Portuguese had not even heard. See The Struggle for Mozambique by Eduardo Mondlane and Return to the Source by Amílcar Cabral.

to opposition both to patriarchy and the ingrained division between mental and manual labor. For what they aspired to was nothing short of the wholeness of the person.

The women theorists have done considerable work in exposing male chauvinism in history, and in the Movement itself. It was certainly of the essence to make such relatively undiscussable subjects as sexuality possible, not à la Freud, but against Freud. Works like Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* exposed the male chauvinism of great writers of our day, from D.H. Lawrence to Norman Mailer. Others took issue with all forms of patriarchy. The weak point was that none of them were in any serious way related to working class women, their activities, their thoughts, their aspirations. The one exception was Sheila Rowbotham's *Women, Resistance and Revolution*.

In dealing with 300 years of women's struggles, in concentrating on labor struggles and revolutions, and openly espousing socialism, and in bringing in the question of male chauvinism not as something only capitalistic, but very much pervasive within the Movement itself, she focused on the validity of an independent women's movement. Unfortunately, so preoccupied was she with "the new" that she neither dug deeply into philosophic roots, nor so much as mentioned one of the greatest revolutionary theoreticians, Rosa Luxemburg. Whatever the reason -- whether it was because Rosa didn't write voluminously on the "Woman Question," or Rosa Luxemburg's works and activities are not, to her mind, relevant to today's women's tasks, or whatever -- she thereby actually degraded women's revolutionary role. Indeed, flying in the face of history, she writes as if all revolutions were "male-defined." This only leads her to a vanguardist conclusion that women, even when doing nothing short of initiating a great revolution that toppled Tsarism, lacked "consciousness." That is still one other form of considering women "backward." In a word, no matter how "consciously" one favors an independent women's movement, one doesn't really consider them capable of "getting there" -- unless led by a "Vanguard Party." Vanguardism, elitism cannot but impede the Women's Liberation Movement of today from working out a new relationship of spontaneity to organization, theory to practice, philosophy to revolution. It is but one more form of separating thinking from doing, especially as it relates to women as thinkers and as revolutionaries.

Working class women have a very special reason for their passionate interest in revolutions, not simply because they're exciting events, but because they show working class women in motion as shapers of history. The dialectical relationship of spontaneity to organization is of the essence to all of us as we face today's crises. It is not only Portugal which is under the whip of the counter-revolution that began Nov. 25, 1975. The global struggle for power between capitalist imperialism and state-capitalist societies calling themselves Communist, all nuclearly armed, has put a question mark over the very survival of humanity.

Creativity that can really tear things up at their roots and genuinely start something new, humanly new, can only come from mass creativity. It is only then when it is totally revolutionary, is not hemmed in by the concept and practice of the "Party to lead," and it is only then it can once and for all end aborted and unfinished revolutions.

Be it something as "simple" as the question of women's struggle for equality in the very midst of all the myriad crises, or the deep recession and racism in the U.S., what women are hungering for is working out the relationship of their creativity to a philosophy of liberation. We surely do not need yet one more form of elitism. What we do need is a unity of philosophy and revolution. Without it, we will not be able to get out from under the whip of the counter-revolution.

excerpts from PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION*

.... Contrast this view of a leader with the view of a black woman from the ranks of the Women's Liberation movement:

I'm not thoroughly convinced that Black Liberation, the way it's being spelled out, will really and truly mean my liberation. I'm not so sure that when it comes time "to put down my gun," that I won't have a broom shoved in my hands, as so many of my Cuban sisters have.

.... When that black Women's Liberationist expressed a fear that when it comes to putting down the gun, she may once again have a broom shoved into her hands, she was expressing one of the most anti-elitist new forces and new passions that had come on the historic stage and were raising altogether new questions. It is true that, on the whole, these were questions addressed to the private capitalistic world, specifically the U.S. But the women were saying: "We will no longer be objects -- mindless sex objects, or robots that keep house, or cheap manual labor you can call in when there are no men available and discard when there are." These women were also demanding their heads back, and it is this which surprised none more than the New Left, since though born out of the New Left, it was the New Left men whom Women's Liberation opposed. The same women who had participated in every phase of the freedom movements refused to continue being the typists, the mimeographers, the "ladies' auxiliaries" to the Left. They demanded an end to the separation of mental and manual labor, not only as a "goal," not only against capitalist society, but as an immediate need of the Left itself, especially regarding women. Nor were they afraid to attack the male chauvinism in the black movement as well. Black and white women joined together to do battle with the arrogance of a Stokely Carmichael, who had said that "the only position for women in the movement is prone."

So uncompromising as well as adamant was their attack on elitism and authoritarianism that the very structure of the new Women's Liberation groups, the small groups that sprang up everywhere, were an effort to find a form that would allow for the self-development of the individual woman. They disregarded the established women's groups because they too were structured and too concerned with the middle-class professional women. They wished to release all women -- most of all black, working-class, Chicano, Indian.

Whether it was a question of the right to abortion, or equal pay, or having control over their own lives, the single word was NOW. Freedom

* Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao, New York: Delacorte Press, 1973. These excerpts are from Chapter 9, "New Passions and New Forces", pp. 275, 278-281. The quote from the Black Women's Liberationist follows a quote from Angela Davis, uncritical of the Cuban experience.

meant now, today, not tomorrow, much less the day after. "Now" meant not waiting for the day of the revolution, much less excluding from the political struggle the question of the relationship of man to woman. Women no longer considered that question a merely private matter, for that was only the standard way of making women feel isolated and helpless. The very fact that freedom was in the air meant that she no longer was alone, that there were thousands forming a movement, a force. Individuality and collectivity became inseparable from the mass demonstrations in August 1970. And for the first time also, history was not past but in the making. And now that they were making it, there was no feeling that they were lost in a collectivity, but rather that each was individualized through this historic process.

Thus, in spite of adverse publicity about "ugly girls burning bras" and whatever other nonsense the male chauvinists played up in order to make the movement look silly, more and more women kept joining it. Different kinds of women who had never joined anything before became activists -- and thinkers. In addition to those who called themselves members of the movement, thousands more expressed the same ideas, from the welfare mothers' organizations to the new drives to unionize women's industries and fight the discrimination sanctioned by existing unions. And the many voices expressing the ideas of Women's Liberation were the result not of women reading Kate Millett's Sexual Politics or the hundreds of less serious works on the subject, but of the hunger for new roles in society and new relationships for them here and now.

Instead of grasping the link of continuity of today's strivings with that which Marx saw emerging, or of listening to new voices, today's "Marxists" themselves are the best examples of Marx's concept of ideology as false consciousness. They look upon themselves as the leaders, or at least the politicians, who can offer "a rational reassessment of feminist ideology" and look down upon today's new women rebels as apolitical, as if that meant they had nothing to say worth listening to and that there were no objective validity to the movement. It is true that with the mass demonstrations by women, especially in New York in 1970, all parties want to use them. That precisely is the trouble.

The uniqueness of today's Women's Liberation movement is that it dares to challenge what is, including the male chauvinism not only under capitalism but within the revolutionary movement itself. To fear to expose this male chauvinism leads to helplessness. To face reality, and to face it not through sheer voluntarism, but with full awareness of all the forces lined up against us, is the one way to assure the coalescence with other revolutionary forces, especially labor, which is so strategically placed in production and has its own black dimension. But the fact that it will not be possible fully to overcome male chauvinism as long as class society exists does not invalidate the movement any more than any struggle for freedom is invalidated. On the contrary, the very fact that there is a widespread Women's Liberation movement proves that it is an idea whose time has come and that it is an integral part of the very organism of liberation

THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT AS REASON AND AS REVOLUTIONARY FORCE*

Deep in the Siberian mine,
Keep your patience proud;
The bitter toil shall not be lost.
The rebel thought unbowed...
The heavy-hanging chains will fall;
The walls will crumble at a word;
And Freedom greet you in the light,
And brothers give you back the sword.

As unrelated as this poem by Pushkin about the Decemberist revolt of 1825 may seem to be to the Women's Liberation Movement of our day, the very fact that, in 1953, the political prisoners in the forced labor camps in Vorkuta used it as their freedom song illustrates both the universality and the individuality of liberation struggles. Clearly, the poem celebrated not only a fight against Tsarism. What the 20th century Freedom Fighters aspired to, in fighting also against Communism, was not a return to the old, but a reaching out for a totally new dimension.

It was this aspiration, not only for a particular type of freedom, but for total liberation, that enunciated a new stage of the consciousness of freedom. It is in this sense that the American woman has suddenly begun speaking of her enslavement. All the talk about the American women as "the freest in the world" has not, and will not, stop their feeling chained, their concept of liberation as something a great deal more than simply not being a chattel slave, and having the vote. Their point is that so long as they are objects (even where that means an object of love), they are not truly free. They refuse to stand up and shout "hurrah" for such type of "love". They demand to be whole human beings.

Ever since the myth of Eve giving Adam the apple was created, women have been presented as devils or as angels, but definitely not as human beings. Only one philosopher, Hegel, related the myth, not to sin, but to knowledge. No doubt the concept of knowledge is an improvement on the concept of sin, but that hardly takes issue with why women is blamed for the expulsion from Paradise. In literature, we seem to have been found guilty ever since. The portrayal of women in our day as either dumb blonds or devils keeps up to date the male chauvinist myth.

Let us begin with Greece, not only as the birthplace of Western Civilization, but the birthplace of the tragic drama. Take the Oresteia, the greatest trilogy in dramatic literature. Until fairly recently, I seem to have seen nothing male chauvinistic about Athena's speech. I am sure I am not the only one. The pursuit of the furies, after Orestes murdered his mother for having murdered his father, is so unrelenting that the audience is happy when Athena pronounces him not guilty:

*From Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices,
News and Letters Committees, 1970

So for Orestes shall this vote be cast.
No mother gave me birth, and in all things
Save marriage I, my father's child indeed,
With all my heart commend the masculine.
Wherefore I shall not hold of higher worth
A woman who was killed because she killed
Her wedded lord and master of her home.
Upon an equal vote Orestes wins.

Literature and History: The Black Dimension

All history being contemporary history, we cannot help but look at the same drama with eyes of today, with the consciousness of today's Women's Liberation Movement. This time, when I watched the drama -- in Ypsilanti where we tried to recreate the Greek tragedies and comedies in a (more or less) genuine Greek theatre with a Greek director and Judith Anderson as Clytemnestra -- I was saying to myself: Well, what do you know, here is Athena telling us that since she sprang full-grown from the forehead of Zeus, it seems that a mother is nothing but a receptacle for the seed of the man and that, therefore, Orestes has not really committed the greatest crime on earth in murdering his mother. Though the words are spoken by a woman, it is a typically male chauvinistic speech. What I am trying to say is that this awareness is what the Women's Liberation Movement of today has brought to today's feminism.

Whether we are talking of the women characters in Greek tragedy -- Clytemnestra, Medea, Electra -- or whether we look at Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth or that horrible creature in *King Lear* -- Goneril -- or we come down to the 20th century, be it Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* or Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Flies*, dramatists seem to be doing nothing but updating these characters. The whole point is that literature, even at its greatest, reflects the male-dominated society under which we live, which, in turn, affects all of us, women included. We will not escape male chauvinistic speeches coming out of our mouths until we tear this alienated society up by its roots.

As against the myths of either pre-history or literature, the history of the struggles of women for freedom show women in a very different light. This is especially clear in the US, where the black dimension became a catalyst for liberation long before the Women's Liberation movement of today. It arose during the Abolitionist movement, when the Sojourner Truths and the Harriet Tubmans were speakers, "generals", leaders, while the white women were still mainly the ones who arranged the picnics, raised the money and in every way were subordinate to the male Abolitionist leaders. When the white middle-class women saw the Black women being and acting as leaders of the Underground Railway, the white women decided to be more than handmaidens. The "Suffragette" movement arose out of the Abolitionist Movement.

For some peculiar reason, at their very first convention in 1848, the women still felt a man should function as chairman of their meetings. They soon found out that, though the Abolitionist Movement was by far the most advanced movement of the time, it nevertheless held many prejudices on the question of women. The men Abolitionists, who were giving their lives to end slavery, nevertheless refused to chair the meeting of the women. The

only one who consented was Frederick Douglass. (In fairness to the founder of Abolitionism, it should be said that when the Anti-Slavery Conference in England refused to seat the American women delegates, forcing them to sit in the balcony, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, who was supposed to give the main speech to the Conference, refused to do so. He sat with the women in the gallery, as a protest.)

So long as they were related to both the black and the proletarian women, the Suffragettes, even though they were middle-class women, went very far in fighting for more than just rights for themselves. But after the abolition of slavery, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott and all the middle-class women who continued the long bitter fight, nevertheless showed a narrowing of the struggle along class lines. When they finally did get the vote, it was far removed from what the proletarian women needed and were doing. This separation along class lines has not stopped, so that today we must face those degrading TV commercials that try to sell us the idea that the hard-fought battle for equality has been met by our right to wear mini-skirts (at least until fashion dictators tell us otherwise) and having "our own" brand of cigarettes!

As against the past, all of the past, including some of the revolutionary past, and the women who made it in a man's world, today's Women's Liberation Movement not only refuses to stop short of total freedom, but refuses to wait for "the day after" the revolution to obtain it. On the contrary, she will be part of that historic process of making freedom real for all.

The Newness of Today's Women's Liberation Movement

The uniqueness of the WLM is seen also in this, that even the women in the revolutionary movement are saying: "We are not waiting for tomorrow to get our freedom. We're beginning the struggle today. We are not leaving it to the men comrades to gain freedom 'for' us. We're struggling for it ourselves. We refuse to subordinate it to another movement; the WLM itself is a revolutionary force toward total liberation for all. The very emergence of an independent WLM is proof of the validity of its independent existence. That wasn't created from above; it wasn't built by men, not even by male revolutionaries; it won't fold up so that a political party, as some 'general will', should be pre-eminent."

And I should add that, in distinction to my generation whose aim was to be "just like men" (since they seemed to be having all the privileges), the new generation of "feminists" do not wish to be "just like men." The young women feel that men, too, are alienated beings, and they want to be whole human beings. Having seen revolutions as great as the Russian Revolution go sour, and the Chinese revolution -- or Cuban, for that matter -- remain incomplete, they have added to their sense of world revolution that it be not only against the old exploitative system, but aim for a totally new society on truly human foundations.

Put differently, they do not consider the relationship of woman to man to be a "private matter" either before or the day of or the day after the revolution. Precisely because it had been dealt with as a private matter, it was easy to play the game of waiting till "the day after." If we are to begin that liberation struggle today -- and that's what the

women have begun in the past few years -- the relationship of man to woman cannot be treated as a private matter, as if it were only a question of husband and wife, or mother and child, or single girl to parents. That is only one more way to make women feel isolated and helpless. Once there is a Women's Liberation Movement, the whole atmosphere of the country changes, so that even where it is a question of establishing personal relations with sweetheart or husband, with father or brother, you don't feel alone any longer, just as you don't feel alone when you fight for the right to have abortions.

Collectivity and individuality have become inseparable not merely because after you have had your fight at home, you can come to the WL meeting and hear of others' struggles, but because of the heightened consciousness which makes you see, be it man or woman, that he or she "is only individualized through the process of history."

I am sorry to criticize the organization before which I'm speaking -- I do appreciate your inviting me to speak on Women's Liberation. But it shocked me to hear that you still use the word "auxiliary" -- Women's Auxiliary of the Ethical Cultural Society. Women are not "auxiliaries." As you saw, the historical origin of the Women's Liberation Movement, even when it centered around getting the vote, was born in opposition to being mere auxiliaries to the Abolitionist Movement. Today, as we shall see later, it is far, far beyond the political struggles for vote or property rights. When I spoke to the Women's Liberation group at Chicago University, they presented me with statistics about how few women are professors, the restrictions on promotions, etc., etc. Women workers are presenting their demands. It is clear that the struggle will not stop until there will be total liberation.

What is involved now is a whole new philosophy. Where Hegel had moved the myth of Adam and Eve from the theology of sin to the sphere of knowledge, Marx looked at history as a development of labor, and, therefore, of the need of a totally new way of life, a philosophy of liberation he called the new Humanism. In his early Humanist essays, he kept reiterating that so long as we talk only about different property forms, we will never get to new human relations, least of all the relationship of man to woman. Private property, Marx insisted, has made us so stupid that we think only of possessions. We are constantly substituting a "to have" for a "to be". But the abolition of private property would not, alone, bring about a new society, as the vulgar communists thought; this Marx insisted, only "negates the personality of man," not to mention the most fundamental of all relations, that of man to woman.

It is this type of totally new relations that many in the Women's Liberation Movement are aspiring to. There are many different varieties of groups, from the so-called grandmother of them all -- the National Organization of Women (N.O.W.), which is directed to the professional women -- through WRAP which was concerned not merely with the status of women in academia but with actual class struggles (especially those that

1. Although the Grundrisse as a whole has not been translated into English to this day, the passages both on individualization through history and Marx's view of woman in primitive communism, which differ sharply from Engel's occur in the section that has been published under the title Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations. See especially pages 85, 91, 96.

regard women hospital workers and their demand for a nursery for working mothers), to the Women's Liberation Coalition of Michigan that retains the decentralized small group nuclei. I am mostly concerned with those in Detroit who have issued this pamphlet, Notes on Women's Liberation -- We Speak in Many Voices, which has black and white and Chicana, both proletarian and students -- and who do not separate "culture" from a total philosophy. The many voices include the apolitical as well as the Marxist-Humanist, but the latter are a minority, deliberately a minority among the many voices. I would like to read to you two of the pieces by black women contributors. One Ethel Dunbar, criticises the white woman:

Men have run this world out by organizing it into a hate-society. Today that is why white women can't sit down to discuss with black women about women's problems. White men have taught them for so long that they are better than black women, that it keeps coming out all the time. I was at a discussion several weeks ago on the question of women's rights . . . where one white woman, an old politico, said she had just left a caucus in her union which had been discussing the problems of women in the shop. The question came up of white women fighting for higher pay, because even black men were getting higher wages than white women. Being a black woman, it made me angry to have it put that way, because it sounded as though white women thought they should make more than black men. Black men do hard, hard work. And there is something wrong with that whole way of thinking. . . . White women have to make sure that they do not let white men mix up their thinking.

The other black worker was concerned, instead, with the fact that black women workers "are so busy with other fights around the job and racial discrimination, and they feel these are more important to do first. But really they should all go along together, because they are all in the same vein. I am fighting for someone who is a woman as well as black; to me it is the same fight. . . . I am divorced and it's hard to be alone. But I have enough to do without taking on any more projects, and men are projects."

To try to deny that men are "projects," to feel so self-conscious about women being "apolitical" (and because of that "backward") that you think preoccupation with male chauvinism is to the detriment of "socialist politics" leads, of necessity, to degrading the very concept of revolutionary socialism to a variety of reformism, "a radical feminism compensurate with the reformists' political sophistication and efficacy." In conclusion, therefore, I wish to turn to a criticism of the "Left," old and new, and to do so from the vantage point of Marx's Humanism.

2. Most of the quotes that follow are from Claire Moriarty's article in "On Women's Liberation," New Politics, Spring 1970. However, I'm actually taking issue with the whole Left, old and new -- Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists, independent socialists. It just happens that Claire Moriarty has expressed these politicians' views best.

Marx's Humanism and Today's Marxists

It is not only the young Marx who had demonstrated the decrepit state of capitalism both through exploitation of labor and through an analysis of the five senses in the alienated state that exploitative society imposes on them: "In place of all the physical and spiritual senses, there is the sense of possession, which is the alienation of all these senses." Fragmentation of the individual would continue, the mature Marx of the Grundrisse states, so long as we do not reunite man as doer and man as thinker. Indeed, insofar as the enslavement of women is concerned, it occurred within communal society itself before the institution of slavery. Furthermore, the free, unpaid labor of wife and child continued after the abolition of chattel slavery.

Marx's whole point is that nothing, nothing short of a new "thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism," that is to say, the self-development of men and women (and, for that matter, children, for we all live and suffer from living in what Marx called the "pre-history" of humanity), the reconstitution of being as a laboring, thinking, passionate, whole human being signifies a new society. Thus the abolition of private capitalism is but the "first negation." This too must be transcended for "only by the transcendence of this mediation (communism)...does there arise positive Humanism, beginning from itself."³

As we have shown, this is not only the young Marx (1844), but the Marx of the Grundrisse (1857). Indeed, it is Marx at his highest point of activity (theoretically, in Capital; practically and politically, in the Paris Commune) and all the way until his death in 1883. The fetishism that Marx lifts off from the commodity-form is not only for purposes of showing that what appears in the market as an equal exchange of things is, in reality, an exploitative relationship of capital to labor at the point of production. It is also, and above all, to demonstrate that "the fantastic appearance" is true. This is what human relations have become in class society: labor has become reified, made into a thing as if labor were no more than an extension of the machine. Therefore the old must be overthrown, root and branch -- its "ideology" (false consciousness) as well as its exploitation.

Instead of either grasping the link of continuity of today's strivings with that which Marx saw emerging, or listening to new voices, today's "Marxists" themselves are the best examples of Marx's concept of ideology as false consciousness. They look upon themselves as "the leaders," or at least the politicians who can offer "a rational reassessment of feminist ideology," and look down upon today's new women rebels as "apolitical," as if politics were the equivalent of a philosophy of liberation. They are insensitive to the distrust the rebels entertain toward them because they cannot conceive that the Women's Liberation Movement has a point when it considers the politicians as no more than still another group that wishes to transform them into mere auxiliaries of other movements. Whether they are asked merely to form a "Committee to Support the Socialist Workers

3. Marx's now famous Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, 1844, have undergone many English translations. I'm quoting my own which appeared as Appendix A in Marxism and Freedom.

Party Candidates," or they are invited "to build a labor party," their disgust is the same. They are sure they are being used, when someone like Claire Moriarty rushes to the wrong conclusions that "Just as the 'Negro problem' is, in reality a white problem, chauvinism should be the concern of men."

The truth is the exact opposite. While socialists were busy proclaiming the impossibility for Negroes to solve the "Negro problem" "by themselves," the blacks proceeded to create their own independent mass movement. It is not labor or "socialism" which acted as catalyst for both the anti-war movement and, indeed, gave birth to a whole new generation of revolutionaries, but the black revolution which was both catalyst and reason, and continues to be that ceaseless movement today. To hold that the women rebels are now to consider male chauvinism "the concern of men" may sound as thunderous as Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex (it is she who proclaimed it early and loudest), and may produce a few more women who have made it in a man's world. But the movement was created, not by her, but by these "apolitical" women who took matters into their own hands.

The whole attitude of today's "Marxists" to Women's Liberation is not helping, but endangering the movement just when it is trying to overcome its own empiricism and distrust of ideologues and is beginning to search for theory, for a total philosophy that is a way of life in search of other life forces of liberation who would look to be whole men as they look to be whole women. Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists, Maoists and even Fidelistas cannot, after all, hide the fact that, despite the countless revolutionary women, and many martyrs, there has been one, only one, woman who has served not only as revolutionary muscle but revolutionary theoretician -- Rosa Luxemburg.

We need theoreticians who can face today's problems. It is true that women theoreticians can be "created" neither via isolation from men, nor by spending all their time denouncing male chauvinism. But why be so fearful of "excesses" on the question of fighting male chauvinism, and why be so eager a beaver in getting women "to participate" in the working out of "political strategy" that you are led to plunge into assinine assertion? Thus Claire Moriarty writes so glowingly of technology that it would appear it has indeed "eliminated" nothing short of the "inconvenience of pregnancy"!!! Naturally she didn't mean the absurdity that loose phrasing makes it sound. But how could she have slipped into such bizarre expressions?

The answer lies deep in the recesses of the concept of the backwardness of the apolitical women. So weighted down is she by this elitist concept that she is led inexorably to vulgarize Marx's greatest discovery: Historical Materialism. She so sharply separates the ideal from the material that she can write: "Given our position as historical materialists, we understand that changes in consciousness do not precede but accompany institutional change, hence, it is relatively fruitless for women to attempt to combat male chauvinism."

There, the cat finally is out of the bag. Along with the concept of the backwardness of the apolitical women is the concept of the immobility of the males from their dominant position. Poor Marx! To all the vulgarization the bourgeoisie attributes to his discovery of historical mater-

ialism, we now have an independant socialist blaming that historic discovery for making it "relatively fruitless for women to attempt to combat male chauvinism"!

Material conditions, it is true, determine consciousness, not vice versa, as we look at a historical stretch of the development of mankind through history. History is process, is dialectics. Every unit is invested with its opposite. The future is inherent in the present. The opponent forces to the existing society not only fight it, but gain the consciousness both about the significance of their fight and an intimation of a direction toward that future. Otherwise Marx would never have been able to work out a philosophy of revolution; we would have remained the one-dimensional men and women Herbert Marcuse thinks we are.

The dialectic, even in the bourgeois idealist Hegel's concept, was a great voyage of discovery for all because it let us see the antagonistic duality of opposing forces living in the same nation, country, world. Hegel's genius saw that the very process of laboring produced, in the slave, a "mind of his own." Marx expressed this more concretely and comprehensively when he said the very alienation of the laborer produces "a quest for universality." If that were not so, humanity might as well wait for the moon to visit earth!

Compare the confining walls built by today's Marxists with the vision of Marx who could describe wealth in the future in the Grundrisse:

When the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers, etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature -- those of his own nature as well as those of so-called "nature"? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution -- i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previously established yardstick -- an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not reproduce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?

The uniqueness of today's Women's Liberation Movement is that it dares to challenge what is, including the male chauvinism not only under capitalism but within the revolutionary movement itself and speaking even with female voices. To fear to expose this male chauvinism leads to helplessness. To face reality, and to face it not through sheer voluntarism, but with full awareness of all the forces lined up against us, is the one way to assure the coalescence with other revolutionary forces, especially labor which is so strategically placed in production and has its own black dimension. No doubt we will not fully overcome male chauvinism so long as class society exists. But we can and will break up its monolithism. We can and will witness the development of women themselves not only as force but as reason. We can and will be a catalyst not only for our development as all-round human beings, but also for that of men. The first step in that direction is to meet the challenge as it appears, everywhere it appears, any time it rears its head, under no matter what disguises. The first act of liberation is to demand back our own heads.

...ON WOMEN IN THE POST WAR WORLD, AND THE OLD RADICALS*

During the war, women by the millions left the kitchen for the factory. The physiognomy of the labor force changed very considerably, and with it, the relationships in the home. But this is by no means a completed battle. The revolt of the women, which began during the war, did not end with the end of the war. Quite the contrary, it has intensified. It is a daily, an hourly struggle in which the woman wants to establish new relations with her husband, with the children, with other women, and other men.

From all this, the radical parties were as isolated as they are from the mass movement in general. But the new imprint that the women were making in society as a whole, could not leave the parties unaffected, and the struggle burst out there when the men began to return from the war and resume their old posts, even as it did in bourgeois society. But it was so wrapped up in Marxist jargon that it was not always easy to see that between the party and bourgeois society there was no basic distinction on this very basic question.

To get a concept of the smaller battle in the party, it is best to see it in society as a whole first. The mass movement into the factories was looked upon with suspicion by men in the same manner as the first movement of the Negroes into industry, before the CIO: would they bring their working conditions and standards down? And just as the Negroes proved to be loyal fellow workers, so did the women. Only the women looked at the men with suspicion, too: will these try to dominate them in the factory as their husbands, fathers, brothers do in the home? They were determined that no such thing should happen.

When the women as human beings proved to have a class loyalty, the men loosened up sufficiently in their relations to note that in fact something new had happened on the American scene: not only the women in factories, but even white collar women, telephone workers and such, took to the picket line and mass worker approach. They said of the awakening of these new strata in the population: "I didn't know they had it in them."

They also didn't know that the women workers would "have it in them" to come home and wish to establish new relations there, too. There the men stopped. The woman was still expected to do all the housework and take care of the children, and stay at home while the men went out to play poker. The women, however, took their new role in production seriously: they gained a new dignity and a new concept of what their relations to their fellowmen and fellowwomen should be, and they refused to submit to the subordinate role in which they had

* This article consists of excerpts from an unpublished rough draft of an essay, "Our Organization," written by Raya Dunayevskaya in 1951. It was reprinted in Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices, News & Letters Committees, 1970. The entire essay is in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, Wayne State University Labor Archives, Detroit, MI 48202.

been placed in the home before they got their factory-jobs. So where they could not work out the new relations, they took to breaking up the homes, even where it meant the woman would become the sole support also of her children.

The politicians thought all that was needed to reestablish the stability of the home was to give the women a few posts in the government, business, the army, and point with pride to the expanding American economy and all the gadgets for the kitchen to make life easier for "the little woman."

Not so the women. They categorically refused to remain an appendage to the men. They wished to have not only sexual but human relations with them. They were out searching for a total reorganization of society. In that search, some women also came to the radical parties. These radical parties failed to recognize this new concrete revolutionary force in society, but that force recognized them, for it had set up new standards by which to judge this so-called revolutionary movement.

In that same period, at the end of the war, a fight broke out in the Workers' Party, over their failure to grow. They looked, not to the type of propaganda they had put out which was governed by their view that the American masses were "backward". No, they looked only at the people who had carried out the line and, since these happened to have been women who had replaced the men in all posts where needed, it was against them that the fight had started.

For the first time our tendency, which had never paid any attention to struggles between members for posts, began to pay attention to this one. For it was clear that this was not an individual question, but here a social problem was involved.

We came to the defense of the women who had occupied the post of city organizer which was now being contested: "What is this bourgeois nonsense of the men returning to their posts as if the women who had done all the work during the war years were not genuine political leaders, but just substitutes? But this new element was buried in the old political terms: it is your political line, not the person executing it, which brought about this mess, and stultified the party's growth."

Our own use of old political terms, instead of seeing the entirely new element--that the Woman Question, in and of itself, was playing a new role, not alone outside, but inside the organization--left us unaware of the significance that women, in increasing numbers were workers. One woman in particular had a special problem, since she had a 12 year old child and no husband. But we paid no special attention to this problem as if, to the extent that it was not just a personal but a social problem, it was in any case unsolvable under capitalism. That is the monstrous trap that awaits all who do not see the new in a situation, and we ourselves almost fell into it.

What prevented us from so doing in this case was our ranks,

and especially the women. First, one thing was clear: There was a new type of response to certain historic incidents which would stress "the affinity of the struggle of Negroes and women in America." The new women members in our tendency would listen, for example, to the relationship between the Women's Rights Movement and the Abolitionists, to the fact that Frederick Douglass was the only one, even among the Abolitionists, who was willing to chair the women's meeting, as if this was something that occurred not in the '30's of the last century, but something that in one form or another they were encountering right now daily, at the bench, and in the home.

These historic questions assumed that contemporary coloration because of the urgency of their present revolt. What was pushing itself outward was the intensity and totality of the approach. By continuing her revolt daily at her home, the women were giving a new dimension to politics. She was by-passing the specialized organization of women and looking for a new, a total way out. This our own women were sensing by their association with their shopmates and the proletarian housewives in their neighborhoods.

It was from these new social types among the masses outside that our women were getting new impulses. They were finding their best friends, moreover, not among the so-called revolutionaries on the inside, but amongst their shopmates on the outside. If this had brought them into conflict with the petty-bourgeois women in the Workers' Party, it reached even a greater intensity when they began talking to the women in the Socialist Workers Party, which our tendency had rejoined in 1947; when it looked as if they were at least retaining their revolutionary perspective on the American scene.

Our rank and file women first came into conflict with the women in the SWP because some occupied the same subordinate position that women did in bourgeois society: they worked to support their men, who were "leaders" in the party. They were equally hostile, however, to the women leaders in the party who looked to them like the career women in the bourgeois world. These weren't the new social types they were meeting on the outside, who added a new dimension to the American character by their present revolt. Not at all. They were women with a "mission"--to lead other women. The struggle was one of the rank and file against the leaders, male and female.

The first incident came about as follows. Our ranks had been talking to their shopmates and to the neighborhood women and from them they began to get tales of revolt, described rather broadly above, but very vividly and concretely by these women from the outside. One young woman of our tendency stated that the Woman Question was not something merely historic, and she for one was not interested in the development of matriarchal societies, but instead would like very much to talk about the women of today; the revolt that is still going on.

When she was permitted to present her little talk, the male intellectuals listened, amused, while their outstanding woman leader stated that the only real solution was for women not to be women. This was the very same woman who, in electioneering, wore tight skirts,

with a slit on the side, and advised our woman comrade, who was her junior in campaigning: "You've got to use sex."

The mannishness of these SWP women, on the one hand, and their mawkishness, on the other hand, was too much, not only for the women in our tendency, but the rank and file women in the SWP also began to rebel. It was impossible, they said, to bring around proletarian women and have their leaders appear as nothing but "exceptional" women. There was nowhere a concept of the question being a social question. These women leaders had merely reduced the whole fight to fighting for positions in the party itself, and accusing all and sundry who opposed them of "male chauvinism."

APPENDIX:
WOMEN IN THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION: IN FACT AND IN THEORY
by Neda

Some one hundred years ago when a great Iranian woman, the poet Ghoratolain, raised her banner against the double oppression of women under feudalism, she lost her life through her struggles.

Over seventy years ago, the 1907 Revolution in Iran witnessed the active participation of all women in struggle. One observer, Shuster, described how "out from their walled courtyards and harems marched 300 of that weak sex; with the flush of undying determination in their cheeks they were clad in their plain black robes with the white nets of their veils dropped over their faces. Many held pistols under their skirts or in the folds of their sleeves."¹ Facing the parliament's president they pulled out their pistols from their sleeves and demanded that the representatives of parliament abide by the constitution and not surrender to foreigners under any circumstances, that they not abolish the constitution and the parliament. Shuster adds: "During the five years following the successful bloodless revolution of 1906 against the oppressions and cruelty of the Shah, a feverish and at times fierce light shone in the veiled eyes of Persia's women, and in their struggles for liberty and its modern expressions they broke through some of the most sacred customs which for centuries had bound their sex in the land of Iran."

Once the parliament (Majlis) was formed, the clergy who had sided with the revolution began moving away from any class struggles and by Oct. 1907, the Amendments the Majlis passed restored many powers to the Shah.

During the 1978-79 revolution against the Shah, the Iranian women once again took to the streets. They had long been suppressed under his regime and helped to overthrow him.

Later, they began an entirely new phase in protesting the new retrogression that Khomeini was trying to impose upon them. On March 8, 1979, International Women's Day, women's liberationists took to the streets under the banner "In the dawn of freedom we have no freedom." They thereby opened chapter two of Iran's revolution. They did this at the moment when the Fedayeen, who had criticized Khomeini earlier, let themselves be persuaded by Arafat, Khomeini's friend, to call off their march to Khomeini's headquarters and instead held a rally at Tehran University.

The Marxist-Humanist revolutionary Raya Dunayevskaya, some of whose writings are here translated, continues her description of the women's revolutionary activity: "For five straight days the women continued their marches, and not only against Khomeini, but against Prime Minister Bazargan, and on March 10 held a 3-hour sit-in at the Ministry of Justice. Nor did they tolerate the mass media's autocratic choice of what they would photograph, who they would give voice to, whom they would focus on. Instead

* This was written as an Introduction to a pamphlet of Farsi translations of writings by Raya Dunayevskaya on Women's Liberation, published for International Women's Day, March 8, 1980.

1. Quoted in Raya Dunayevskaya's Political-Philosophic Letter, "Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution," News and Letters, 1979

of letting their protests go unrecorded, the women marched upon the mass media, thus exposing the fact that the censorship there is now almost as total as it was during the Shah's dictatorship."²

Then in November 1979, when the women attempted to hold the first Women's Convention, they were forced to do so under candlelight, as the opposition cut off their electricity. The women as well faced a competing rally by the Fedayeen at the same day and hour they wished to start their meeting. Despite the women's demand, the Fedayeen refused to change the time of their rally. This served to divert the attention of people from their meeting.

The women by their rallies demonstrated that their struggles for liberation of women and uprooting of the male chauvinism in Iran would not be subordinated to a political party's stand, that it would not fold up so that a political party as a "general will" would be preeminent. Rather, they wish to benefit from the fruit of their revolution -- liberation -- not only because they have sacrificed so much, but because their struggle for a new social order envisions totally new human relationships for men as well as women.

Because new human relationships require a world scope, most especially in the Muslim world, I wish to turn to other countries and show that even so great a writer as Frantz Fanon had not, in his day, dug deeply enough into the question of male chauvinism. Our Algerian sisters' experience showed how narrow nationalism does not lead to socialism. This woman who was behind the veil helped pass information, arms, medicine; she helped prepare surprise attacks, took up grenades and submachine guns, and climbed the Djabal (mountains). She succeeded, as Frantz Fanon noted, to "crack the double oppression of women, social and sexual" during the course of the revolution. But once the revolution was over, she witnessed statements such as "We are all for liberation of women, except maybe for our own sisters" by the men.

A great revolutionary like Fanon so beautifully explains the gradual process of her liberation, the weakening of the many traditions in the male-dominated society of Algeria as a result of the great contributions by women and of the change in the man/woman relationship. But seeing that the colonizer stressed the issue of the liberation of the Algerian woman to try to drive a wedge into the liberation struggle against French colonialism, Fanon goes so far as to deny the male chauvinism of the Algerian man in many areas and to emphasize the unity of the narrow nationalistic struggles against the colonizer. He writes: "The much discussed status of the Algerian woman, her alleged confinement, her lack of importance, her silent existence bordering on quasi absence and the 'Moslem Society' as having made no place for her ... The Algerian woman, in imposing such a restriction on herself and choosing a form of existence limited in scope,

2. Dunayevskaya, op. cit.

3. Frantz Fanon, A Dying Colonialism

4. New York Times Magazine, Oct. 29, 1972

was deepening her consciousness of the struggle and was preparing for combat."⁵ Have we not witnessed the end result of such limitation, whether self-imposed or imposed by the male-dominated, incomplete revolution, in the status of Algeria today? And not alone for women, but for all Algeria.

Now then, the truth is that for the struggles of women's liberation to materialize, it needs to parallel the freedom struggles of all the other oppressed forces of society. This liberation is not a "gift" to be handed to us by men on the day "after" a revolution. Rather it is a right for which women themselves must struggle in the course of revolution. Without such a struggle, it is not only the liberation of women which is at stake, it is the liberation of all of society.

Today at a time when the so-called Left is tail-ending Khomeini's "anti-imperialism," is liberation for women, as the Trotskyists claim, summed up in the fact that "Armed women are taking part in the defense of the demonstrations outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran"? That the Left can label this most degrading, humiliating stage relating to Iranian women as "progress" shows how far away they are from both the concrete reality that women face today in Iran, and from the Humanism of Marx which could aid in pointing a way out.⁶ Far from that being proof of liberation, it is part of the Big Lie that goes under the name of "anti-imperialism" harnessing Iran with a new oppression.

We can see this, if we look at what the new Constitution -- the one pushed at the Iranian people at exactly the time attention was turned to the American Embassy occupation -- and the recently enacted laws, mean for women.

Is the road truly progressive when the truncated family protection laws have been totally abolished, one-sided divorce is re-established, and we're back to four permanent wives and many temporary wives; back to incidents of burning the "Havu" (the other wife) with hot oil and setting her on fire; back to Joseph's time and step-children's fights? When the new Constitution identifies "the raising of children as the primary task of women," resulting in "voluntary retirement" of women from schools and offices? And Velayet Faqih, Khomeini's book, clearly states that a woman has a right to food, clothing, shelter and other necessary expenses only when she sexually abides by her husband.

The clergy who regard women as sex objects or means of production cannot even comprehend the many problems, multiple oppressions, she faces daily. To him only those aspects of her life which directly pertain to her sexuality, within man's total possession, are relevant; and so when he hears that the means of production are to become common property rather

5. Fanon, op. cit.

6. See my article, "New Constitution, new repression for women" in News & Letters, Jan.-Feb. 1980. Also, in a recent discussion with a group of students from a section of the Confederation of Iranian Students, the women, who seemed to stand by the organization's motto of support for Khomeini's government, expressed themselves differently from their male comrades once the question of temporary marriage, abolition of family protection laws and anti-abortion laws came up. One could observe the internal struggle of these women towards a philosophy which supports the Islamic Republic.

than private under "socialism," he claims that women would therefore become part of the community property, and through his sermons, lectures and articles expresses his misconceptions to the male-dominated society in Iran. The woman who is already familiar with the concept of community of women because of the phenomenon of temporary marriage, and in a class society under patriarchy perceives her existence in her sexuality, and her social activity as being her function in reproduction controlled by a man (husband, father, brother), ends up equating women's liberation and liberated women with prostitution. Whether the Iranian woman would rather choose "the legal system blessed by God" to what calls itself socialism is not the question. Rather, she longs for totally new human relations.

A new generation of women's liberationists who call themselves Marxist-Humanists is no longer seeking the goal of "reaching the man in society." They see that the men under capitalism or the other version of it, state-capitalism which calls itself Communism, are alienated and far from liberation themselves. By looking at the Russian Revolution which turned into its opposite, and aborted revolutions in China and Cuba, they have concluded that a social revolution should not only seek the annihilation of oppressive systems of government, but should also follow the objective of instituting a totally new society based on real human relationships. A society which does not regard the man/woman relationship whether it be mother and child, father and daughter, husband and wife, as a personal, isolated question. Rather they seek a society which establishes this most fundamental of all relations on a human basis. A society which takes full responsibility to assure the full and free development of women.

Such a philosophy of liberation, Marxist-Humanism, seeks the abolition of capitalism, and poses the establishment of a human society without exploitation, racism, or sexism, and the avoidance of state-capitalism, a truncated form of the total economic-humanistic philosophy of Marx. A philosophy which encompasses an economic system based on freely associated labor and new human relations.

As an Iranian woman who herself has tested the bitter oppressions of the male-dominated society of Iran, once I was in the U.S., I could trace a continuation of such a separation between "thinking and doing" within the Left organizations here. In my search to resist such a division and to find a new and total philosophy of liberation which encompasses the "new passions and forces" of revolution (women and minorities) as a Particular, but would also strive towards a Universal to liberate all human beings, I finally encountered the News and Letters Committees and its founder, Ms. Dunayevskaya.

Raya Dunayevskaya, whose works appear in this pamphlet, is the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. and the News and Letters Committees. She has been active in the revolutionary struggles in this country as well as internationally, and has written various articles during the course of her activities, including two books, Marxism and Freedom and Philosophy and Revolution.

The translations you are about to read are chosen from her lectures and short essays with regard to the woman question from a genuine Marxist perspective. I hope during this tumultuous period of the revolution in Iran, they could serve as a guide for all Iranian brothers and sisters who seek a truly human society for "every man, woman and child."

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