

June 14, 1979

Dear A :

It was great to get your magnificent letter of May 29th received here yesterday. I write briefly, not in order to leave ~~some unanswered~~ questions that you raise profoundly, but both to make space, after absorbing them, for a full objective dialectical analysis, and not to call attention to bulky mail. Thus, under separate cover I am air mailing the Selected Correspondence of Marx--the Collected Correspondence, some 6 hefty volumes in Russian and German, are unavailable in English, but this is a very good selection & you'll see, since it is my copy, how very relevant much of the correspondence is for our day. Also, sending separately biog. sketch. Here, besides copy of letter I sent to K. . . that I felt you too would be interested. I do wish to include a special introduction to your translation of Marx's Early MSS, so again I will be brief in this covering note.

I was most happy to see how both our thoughts are on some wave length. You speak of also translating the Paris Programme chapter from MAF, and I use that centrally for a class I was proposing for R. . . You say, intellectuals in Iran do not go beyond "What Is To Be Done?" and that elitism of vanguard party has to be done away with, but, instead of an outright no, we could use the expression as jumping off point for what Marx meant by that as necessity to consider theory and practice, philosophy and action, ideal and material, second negation as positive affirmation --all of which he included in his concept of praxis. (Incidentally I hope you get a chance to translate pp. 264-6 from Philosophy and Revolution which explains, precisely, Praxis,) to which I added one paragraph at the end of the page to include Gramsci's expression "The philosophy of PRAXIS is consciousness full of contradictions in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not merely grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradictions and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action." (From Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, "Problems of Marxism")

Why not organize a study group that would have some such title as Philosophy Action Group, which would permit you both to function within a Left group closest to Marxist-Humanism, and yet persist on doing more translations and your own analysis of current events on native grounds. Nothing is more important than to maintain independence as tendency, so that, though united in action, you are always trying one step ahead in uniting praxis philosophy and revolution as unit. You alone can judge. Naturally, we would love it best if you could come here for "Labor Day", last day of August & 1st 2 of Sept. so that world perspectives could be worked out jointly, but if more work could be done in Iran and also more concrete absorbed than we could decide otherwise. You decide. You asked the key question: What kind of activity? I believe that when I suggest a Philosophy Action Group it gives you both theory and practice without being one-sided about either, and learning that Tendency cannot be without organizational form of expression and yet not being elitist about party so that you can function with others. But to be independent in Tendency, in dialectic committee form of organizing organization means you are not an outsider either in theory or practice, organization or spontaneity. Think about and tell me also what you think about the special introduction I here include for you.

In a couple of days I will meet a friend of yours and this will give me the opportunity to send all our love to you.

Yours,

P.S. You can, of course, change both the title "Special Introduction", etc. and the designation of myself as author also of the PPL on Iran; you be the judge how it is best to designate the writings.

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Special Introduction for Iranian edition of Marx's Humanist Essays
by Raya Dunayevskaya, author of MARXISM AND FREEDOM, PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION, and
IRAN: UNFOLDING OF, and CONTRADICTIONS IN REVOLUTION

Because there is nothing more exciting than addressing a people in an ongoing revolution, I feel very honored to have this opportunity to introduce the 1844 Marx Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts which I was the first to translate into English a quarter of a century ago. That year, 1953, was also a very adventurous one since, despite the counter-revolutionary events both in the U.S. and in Iran, the East German workers did raise a new banner of freedom -- "Bread and Freedom" was its slogan -- in fighting against Russian state-capitalist totalitarianism calling itself Communism. In being the first to revolt from under Communist totalitarianism, East Europeans had also brought out of the dusty archives onto the historic stage Marx's original statement that "communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society." What was he called "a new Humanism". That that remained the truth, no matter what he later called his philosophy, is proven by CAPITAL, where, in Volume III, he expresses it as "human power is its own end."

When the U.S. capitalist-imperialist ruling class, in 1953, tried, at home, to stifle free thought via Mc-Carthyism-FBI, and in Iran via CIA-imperialism to kill the national revolution and bring the Shah back to the throne, it succeeded only in part -- driving both revolutionary forces underground. Indeed, the young American that fought its ruling class, solidified with Iranian revolutionaries in that year is even more alive in 1979, is seen in this modest publication, where we appear as one, and, together, catch the historic link to Marx's Humanism which reveals nothing short of a whole new continent of thought. That this was not just "the young Marx", nor only "the mature Marx" but the living heritage for today, is proven, once again, by what has just been discovered, a full century after Marx wrote them, Marx's Ethnological Notebooks where he returns to what he first wrote in 1844, that not only must capitalism be overthrown and its exploitation of the working masses, but a totally new society be built where all human relations, beginning with a most fundamental Man/woman relationship.

*Since the Ethnological Notebooks have still not been translated, but only transcribed in Marx's notes for himself, that is to say, in polyglot fashion of more than a half dozen languages, say I, in addition to recommending the 1974 English edition, recommend my analysis in NEWS & LETTERS, Detroit: Jan-Feb., 1979: "Marx and Engels Studies Contrasted: Relationship of Philosophy and Revelation to Women's Liberation."

Iranian women liberationists can see how very today-ish Marx's new continent of thought is, and how total the uprooting of the old must be, both in need for workers' and peasants' power and control over the conditions of labor and end to all alienations by the measure of the liberation they are struggling for. Indeed, as one follows Marx's view of total freedom, one can see that his philosophy of revolution must extend beyond technology. Long before the atom was split and out of it came, not the greatest productive force, but the most destructive A-bomb, H-bomb, H-bomb, Marx wrote in these essays before you "To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie." We have lived this lie for 134 years and only with Hiroshima did we see what a holocaust that lie of separating the reason for being from the reason for scientific development can become. Now, with the anti-nuclear movement throughout the world, we see all over again how very urgent it is to study and practice Marx's new continent of thought for, as the great English poet expressed it, nothing is more binding than "mind-forged manacles." Let us finish with these and for all.

One other interesting item in these Ethnological Notebooks, and how they reconnect, with the 1844 Humanist Essays is Marx's move away from Europe-centrism and seeing "the Asiatic mode of production" not just as a repeat of Western life and path to revolution. In speaking of primitive communism and of the "ancient Orient" and the ancient Orient was not only China and Japan as we think of them now, but the Persian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Median empires--Marx shows, at one and the same time, that, whereas we have much to learn from primitive communism, including its greatest freedom for women, we must not think that all we have to do today is to add "technology" and we have a new modern free society. Quite the contrary. Not only is the technologically advanced capitalist-imperialist societies the most exploitative, but we can also begin new types of revolution. That is to say, technologically backward lands does not mean the masses are backward. Revolution could start, first, in Russia (and Russia was then considered "East") and then spread "West"; in all cases the revolution cannot stop with just the overthrow of the old; "permanent revolution" must follow to create new ground for new human relations.

To doing a new magazine on those new beginnings, Marx wrote, "we must not be afraid to criticize the existing world ruthlessly. I mean in the sense that we must not be afraid of our own conclusions and equally unafraid of coming into conflict with the prevailing powers...The world has long had the dream of something and must only possess the consciousness of it in order to possess it actually."

It is the striving for such a manifesto of total freedom that I as Marxist-Humanist express my solidarity with the Iranian revolutionaries as we all aspire to a new world internationalism. The struggle continues.