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The Women's Review of Books is feminist but not restricted to any one conception of feminism; all writing that is neither sexist, racist, homophobic, nor otherwise discriminatory will be welcome. We seek to represent the widest possible range of feminist perspectives both in the books reviewed and in the content of the reviews. We believe that no one of us, alone or in a group, can speak for feminism, or women, as such; all of our thinking and

Living the Revolution

by Adrienne Kich

For about three years I've been reading a paper called *News and Letters*, formerly published in Detroit, now in Chicago. Describing itself as a Marxist-Humanist publication, it combines worldwide capsule reporting, feature articles making connections among political movements and events, discussion of Marxism, past and present, with particular emphasis on "the Black/youth/women's dimension" of liberation. It features the thinking of Raya Dunayevskaya, its founder and clearly its guiding hand and spirit. Who, I soon began to wonder, is Raya Dunayevskaya?

I question now why her name remained so long unknown to me. From her back-of-books bio and the extremely spare internal evidence of her writings, she is a woman of some years, having been active in the Black movement in this country in the 1920s. From 1937 to 1938 she worked as Trotsky's "Russian secretary" during his Mexican exile, there coming to know Natalia Sedova Trotsky, his wife, about whom, in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, she writes a moving "In Memoriam"; in Mexico also; if my guess is correct, she met the Black Trinidadian Marxist philosopher and critic C.L.R. James. With James, in the 1940s, she led a movement within the Socialist Workers Party, called (after the party

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Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future, by Raya Dunayevskaya. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1985, 308 pp., \$38.50 hardcover, \$15.95 paper.

Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, by Raya Dunayevskaya. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982, 250 pp., \$19.95 hardcover, \$10.95 paper.

Philosophy and Revolution from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao, by Raya Dunayevskaya. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982. (First published 1973, now out of print.)

Marxism and Freedom from 1776 until Today, by Raya Dunayevskaya. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982. (First published 1958, now out of print.)

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continued from p. 1

names of the two) the "Johnson-Forest Tendency." This movement for an independent Marxism broke with Trotsky over the issue of defining the Soviet Union as "state capitalism" (James and Dunayevskaya declared Stalinist Russia a counter-revolution in which the Communist Party, not the people, owned the means of production and ran the economy and the labor unions). Johnson-Forest also "extended to women and youth its idea of the special role of the black movement." This emphasis on Blacks, women and youth as major catalysts of change predated not only the Women's Liberation Movement but the student movements and the escalation of the Black struggle in the 1960s.

Dunayevskaya and James themselves split over a question of strategy when the "Johnson-Forest Tendency" was blacklisted as a subversive organization in the McCarthy period. James was interned on Ellis Island in 1952, and expelled from the United States a year later. He was to support Nkrumah and the Ghanaian revolution, return for a time to Trinidad, where he was considered "the grandfather of West Indian independence," and finally, from the 1960s on, banned from Trinidad, to divide his time between the USA and Britain, writing prolifically on politics and literature, lecturing and teaching.¹

Dunayevskaya herself remained in the United States, founding the "News and Letters Committees" and the newspaper and developing her philosophy of Marxist Humanism.² She has travelled, taught and lectured in Europe, Africa, Asia, Mexico, zestfully combining the tasks of philosopher and activist. She has translated Marx, reinterpreted Marx, fitted together fragments of Marx scattered in post-Marxist schisms, refused to leave Marx enshrined but ill-read, or relegated to "the dustbin of history."

Why should these threads of the history of the sectarian Left be relevant to feminists, and why have I dwelt on them so far? The answer seems obvious to me: feminists need to know the history of the Left, especially in the United States where it has been so occluded and silenced. But also, Raya Dunayevskaya is part of the history of women's liberation, and one of the oldest continuously active women revolutionaries now living. Who she is and what she thinks matters to our understanding of what and where the movement for women's liberation has been and might go. I came out of a strain of feminism (I almost said "a tendency") which saw itself as a leap forward out of Marxism, leaving the Left behind, and for which a term like "Marxist-Humanism" would, in the late sixties and early seventies, have sounded like a funeral knell. A major problem (not just a problem of language but of organizing) was to break from a male-centered terminology of class struggle which rendered women invisible unless in the paid workplace, and also from a "humanist" false universal which derived from the European glorification of the male. Radical feminists were of necessity concerned with

keeping the political focus on women, because in every other focus—race, class, nation—women had gotten lost, put down, marginalized. In addition, we were fighting the dogma of class as the primary oppression, of capitalism as the single source of all oppressions. We insisted that women were, if not a class, a caste; if not a caste, an oppressed group *as women*—within oppressed groups, and within the ruling class.

And, as Dunayevskaya is quick to point out (in *Rosa Luxemburg*),

the Women's Liberation Movement that burst onto the historic scene in the mid-1960's was like nothing seen before in all its many appearances throughout history. Its most unique feature was that, surprisingly, not only did it come out of the left but it was directed against it, and not from the right, but from within the left itself. (p. 99)

It's clear how eagerly she welcomed this new force as it sent shock waves through radical group after radical group, starting with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in 1965. But while her thinking has obviously been incited and nourished by the contemporary Women's Liberation Movement, she had, as early as the 1940s, recognized "the woman dimension," and one of the earliest essays in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* (hereafter referred to

as *WLDR*) is an account of organizing by miners' wives in the 1949-50 anti-automation strikes in West Virginia. Dunayevskaya wants women recognized not just as "Force" (contributing support, courage, strength) but as "Reason" in revolution—as initiators, thinkers, strategists, creators of the new.

Dunayevskaya has spent a lifetime in the philosophic and organizing struggles of the Left, in the study of Hegel, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Mao, Sartre, among others, and of more obscure documents of the radical movements of our century and before. While I've felt the challenging dimensions opened up in trying to review her, I've also felt that her work deserves examination from a feminist who has lived alongside, but not immersed in, that world at once so splendid, poignant, schismatic, sometimes visionary, sometimes stifling, always embattled—nowhere more than here in the US.

I was drawn to Dunayevskaya's work a few years ago by the title of her pamphlet, "Woman as Reason and as Force in Revolution," an early presentation of some of the material in *WLDR*. I was coming out of a period of increasing discontent with tendencies in feminism toward a kind of "inner emigration" (Hannah Arendt's term for the withdrawal of many Germans during the Third Reich into an "interior life... to ignore [the] world in favor of an imaginary world 'as it ought to be' or as it once upon a time had been.") I'm talking not just about lesbian separatism but about versions of female oppression which neglect both female agency and female diversity, in which "safety" for women becomes valued over risk taking, and woman-only space—often a strategic necessity—becomes a place of emigration, an end in itself.

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I was first struck, in the pamphlet and then in ranging through Dunayevskaya's books, by the vitality, combativeness, relish, impatience, of her voice. Here is not the prose of a Marxist mandarin, a disembodied intellectual. She argues; she challenges; she urges on; she expostulates; her essays have the spontaneity of an extemporaneous speech (some of them are) or a notebook—you can hear her thinking aloud. She has a prevailing sense of ideas as flesh and blood, of the individual thinker, limited by her or his individuality yet carrying on a conversation in the world. The thought of the philosopher is a product of what s/he has lived through.

Marxism and Freedom, first published in 1958, is a history of the process of Marx's thought, as it evolved out of eighteenth-century philosophy and Hegel's dialectic through the mass political movements of the nineteenth century, as it became adopted and modified by Trotsky and Lenin and finally, in Dunayevskaya's words, "totally perverted" by Stalin. She traces the shift from Marx's idea of a workers' state with no separation of manual and mental labor, to Lenin's idea of a bureaucratically run "workers' state," to Stalin's creation of a corporate totalitarian state run by the Communist Party—which she defines as counter-revolution. She sees, in the East German workers' strike of 1953, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, evidence of a continuing revolutionary spirit in Eastern Europe (she was, of course, writing well before the Polish Solidarity movement). She ends the first edition of *Marxism and Freedom* with the Montgomery bus boycott as "a spontaneous movement kept within the hands of the Blacks."

In *Marxism and Freedom*, Dunayevskaya is grappling, in the face of the Stalinist legacy, with the question which continues to engage her: *What happens after?* What happens when the old oppression has been successfully resisted and overthrown? What turns a revolutionary leader into a tyrant? Why did the Russian revolution turn backward on itself? How do we make the "continuing revolution," "the revolution in permanence" in which this cannot happen? She is passionate about "the movement from theory to practice and from practice to theory" as a living process, and about the necessity for the "voices from below" to be heard and listened to if a movement is to keep on moving. She has the capacity, rare in people as learned as she is in Western philosophy and theory—including Marxists—to respect and learn from other kinds of thinking and other modes of expression: those of the Third World, of ordinary militant women, of working people who are perfectly aware that theirs is "alienated labor" and know how to say that without political indoctrination. Maybe

Dunayevskaya would claim she originally learned this from Marx.

But *Marxism and Freedom* is also a creation of its own historical environment. Dunayevskaya writes of the shaping impact of the American Civil War on Marx's thought when he was writing *Capital*; she acknowledges the unfinished legacy of Reconstruction, and is able to recognize the acute significance of the Montgomery bus boycott—the "Black dimension." Women, however, whether as "force" or "reason" are here invisible except in a few references to Rosa Luxemburg. She does not mention Lenin's ideas on the emancipation of women, women's leadership in the Paris Commune, nor the reversal of liberal sexual legislation in the Soviet Union. At this stage, for Dunayevskaya, women seem to have been still subsumed under "the proletariat."

I make this point because it's clear, from several essays in *WLDR*, that already in the fifties, long before *Marxism and Freedom* was written, Dunayevskaya was keenly attuned to women's leadership and presence both within and outside radical groups. In "The Miners' Wives" (1950) she notes that while the press depicted the women as bravely going along with the strike, they were in fact activists, sometimes pushing the men. In an unpublished essay of 1953, she sharply criticizes the Socialist Workers Party for failing to recognize that the women who had streamed by the millions into factories in the US during World War II were "a concrete revolutionary force" searching for "a total reorganization of society." "By continuing her [sic] revolt daily at home, the women were giving a new dimension to politics." Perhaps it's not by mere oversight that this essay remained unpublished until now. In it Dunayevskaya makes clear that the equality of some women as leaders within the party did not extend to any real recognition of women as a major social force. Possibly her own consciousness of women, though keen, received little affirmation in the organization of which she was then a part.

Philosophy and Revolution is the most academic, least accessible of Dunayevskaya's books; it retraces some of the history of philosophy in *Marxism and Freedom*, moving on

from there to discuss the Cuban revolution and the student and youth uprisings of the Sixties, along with the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement. This work feels—up to the last chapter—less dynamic and more laborious, more like a political philosophy textbook. But in both books, Dunayevskaya is on a very specific mission: to rescue Marx's Marxism from the theoretical and organizational systems attributed to him; to reclaim his ideas from what has been served up as Marxism, in Eastern Europe, China, Cuba and among Western intellectuals. She insists that you cannot sever Marx's economics from his humanism; humanism here meaning "the self-emancipation of human beings," necessarily from the capitalist mode of production, but not only from that. The failure of the Russian revolutions to continue as "revolution in permanence"—their disintegration into a system of forced labor camps and political prisons—was the shock that sent Dunayevskaya back to "the original form of the Humanism of Marx," translating his early humanist essays herself because "the official Moscow publication (1959) is marred by footnotes which flagrantly violate Marx's content and intent." "Marxism is a theory of liberation or it is nothing"; but she refuses to "rebury" Marx as "humanist," shorn of his economics.

Rosa Luxemburg is something more than a critical philosophical biography. But that it certainly is: an account of Luxemburg as woman, thinker, organizer, revolutionist. A central chapter is devoted to Marx and Luxemburg as theorists of capital, dissecting Luxemburg's critique of Marx in her *Accumulation of Capital*. In the midst of a vivid and fascinating biography, the non-economist reader may find herself dragging with effort through terminology like "variable capital" and "underconsumptionism." Dunayevskaya dissents at many points from Luxemburg's effort to fulfill, as she saw it, Marx's unfinished work. But beyond the economic debate Dunayevskaya asserts that Luxemburg, despite her eloquent writings on imperialism, never saw the potential for revolution in the

colonized people of color in what is now called the Third World; and, despite the centrality of women to her anti-militarist work, never saw beyond the purely economic class struggle. Where Marx had seen "new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society" as capitalism declined, Luxemburg saw only the "suffering masses" under imperialism.

Luxemburg was "a reluctant feminist" who was "galled in a most personal form" by the "Woman Question" but, "just as she had learned to live with an underlying anti-Semitism in the party, so she learned to live with... male chauvinism." (Does this have a familiar ring?) In particular, she lived with it in the person of August Bebel, a self-proclaimed feminist who wrote of her "wretched female's squirts of poison" and Viktor Adler, who called her "the poisonous bitch... clever as a monkey." However, when she was arrested in 1915 it was on the eve of organizing an international women's antiwar conference with Clara Zetkin. Of their relationship, Dunayevskaya says:

... far from Luxemburg's having no interest in the so-called "Women Question," and far from Zetkin having no interest outside of that question, ... both of them... were determined to build a women's movement that concentrated not only on organizing women workers but on having them develop as leaders, as decision-makers, and as independent Marxist revolutionaries. (p. 13)

In fact, from 1902 on Luxemburg had been writing and speaking on the emancipation of women and on woman suffrage; in 1911 she wrote to her friend Luise Kautsky, "are you coming for the women's conference? Just imagine, I have become a feminist!" She debated Bebel and Kautsky over the "Woman Question," and broke with Kautsky in 1911, yet, in her short and brutally ended life, feminism and proletarian revolution never became integrated. Dunayevskaya is critical of Luxemburg, but also impatient with present-day feminists who want to write her off.

In Luxemburg, Dunayevskaya portrays a brilliant, brave and independent woman, passionately internationalist and antiwar, a believer in the people's "spontaneity" in the cause of freedom; a woman who saw herself as Marx's philosophical heir, who refused the efforts of her lover and other men to discourage her from full participation in "making history" because she was a woman. But the biography does not stop here. The book opens out into a sequence of essays generated, as Dunayevskaya tells us, by three events: the resurgence of the Women's Liberation Movement out of the Left; the publication for the first time of Marx's last writings, *The Ethnological Notebooks*; and the global national liberation movements of the 1970s which demonstrated to her that Marxism continues to have meaning as a philosophy of revolution. Luxemburg's life and thought become a kind of jumping-off point into the present and future-- what she saw and didn't see, her limitations as well as her understanding. We can learn from her mistakes, says Dunayevskaya, as she begins developing the themes which she will pursue in *W.L.D.R.*

In this 35-year collection of essays, interviews, letters, lectures, you see Dunayevskaya going at her central ideas in many different ways. Agree or not with her analysis here, her interpretation there: these working papers are some of the most tingling, invigorating writing since the early days of Women's Liberation when writing and organizing most often went hand in hand. This is



Raya Dunayevskaya.

an irresistible depiction of women in movement, across the world and through history; Dunayevskaya really does hold to an international perspective. She chides and criticizes Simone de Beauvoir, Sheila Rowbotham, Gerda Lerner; praises *Wuthering Heights*, *A Room of One's Own*, the "Three Marias" of the *New Portuguese Letters*, the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks and Audre Lorde; she says Natalia Trotsky went further than Trotsky; she chastises Engels for diluting and distorting Marx, and post-Marxists and feminists for taking Engels' *Origin of the Family as Marx's* word on women and men. Her quarrel with the Western post-Marxists is that they've taken parts of Marx for the whole, and that what has been left out (especially the dimensions of women and the Third World) is crucial in our time. Her quarrel with the Women's Movement is that feminists have jettisoned Marx because he was a man, or have believed the post-Marxists without looking into Marx for themselves. She insists that Marx's philosophy, far from being a closed and autocratic system, is open-ended, so that "in each age, he becomes more alive than in the age before." That Marx was himself open to an extraordinary degree to other voices than those of white males.

But why do we need Marx, anyway? Dunayevskaya believes he is the only philosopher of "total revolution"—the revolution that will touch and transform all human relationships, that is never-ending, "revolution in permanence." Permanence not as a Party-led state which has found all the answers, but a society all of whose people participate in both government and production, and in which the division between manual and mental labor will be ended. We need such a philosophy as grounding for organizing, since, as she says in *Rosa Luxemburg*, "Without a philosophy of revolution activism spends itself in mere anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism, without ever revealing what it is for."

Dunayevskaya bases her claims for Marx on her reading of his entire work, but attaches special importance to the *Ethnological Notebooks* (only transcribed and published in 1972) as showing that at the very end of his life, as in his early writings, he was concerned with "humanism"—not simply class struggle but with the values and structures of pre-capitalist, non-European societies, and the relationship of the sexes in those societies. I found the *Notebooks* intriguing, though hardly a good quick read. In these manuscripts, jotted between 1880 and 1883, Marx reviewed the anthropo-

logical/ethnological writings of Lewis Henry Morgan (Engels based his *Origin* on Marx's notes on Morgan), John Bodd Phear, Henry Maine and John Lubbock. You have to imagine a German Jew of vast scholarship and irascibility, reading and taking notes in English with occasional ironic German or English asides. And indeed, Marx seems to be on a search for how gender has been structured in pre-capitalist, tribal societies.

Marx did not go along with the ethnologists in their definitions of the "savage" as measured against "the civilized." Capitalism doesn't mean progress; the civilized are also the damaged. He saw "civilization" as a divided condition—human subjectivity divided against itself by the division of labor, and also divided from nature. He was critical of Morgan for ignoring the genocide and ethnocide against the American Indians, of Phear's condescension toward Bengali culture and of the ethnocentricity of the ethnographers in general.

But neither did Marx idealize egalitarian communal society; he saw, says Dunayevskaya, that "the elements of oppression in general, and of woman in particular, arose from *within* primitive communism as property and rank began to emerge. . . . That is to say, within the egalitarian communal form arose the elements of its opposite—caste, aristocracy, different material interests." He watched closely how the family evolved into an economic unit, within which were the seeds of slavery and serfdom, how tribal conflict and conquest also led toward slavery and the acquisition of property; but where Engels posited "the world-wide historic defeat of the female sex," Dunayevskaya asserts that Marx saw the resistance of the women in every revolution, not simply how they were disempowered by the development of patriarchy and by European invasion and colonization. The *Ethnological Notebooks* are crucial in Dunayevskaya's eyes because they show Marx at a point in his life where his idea of revolution was becoming even more comprehensive: the colonialism that evolved out of capitalism forced him to return to pre-colonial societies to study human relations, and "to see the possibility of new human relations, not as they

might come through a mere 'updating' of primitive communism's equality of the sexes, . . . but as Marx sensed they would burst forth from a new type of revolution." "Marx envisioned a totally new man, a totally new woman, a totally new life form (and by no means only for marriage); in a word, a totally

new society."

Dunayevskaya vehemently opposes the view that Marx's Marxism means class struggle is primary, or that racism and sexual oppression will be ended when capitalism falls. "What happens after?" she says, is the question we have to be asking all along. And this, she sees, the Women's Liberation Movement, Black and white, has insisted on.

After Chernobyl, 20,000 women in Finland declare they refuse to become pregnant until nuclear reactors are banned. In the heart of the South African revolution are women, as there always have been: women and youth, the children of Soweto boycotting substandard schools, the women of Soweto organizing in self-help groups for literacy, food, health care. In the heart of Reagan's war against Nicaragua, its people are discussing a new constitution, including proposals for gay rights and abortion rights. In the Philippines, one of the worst sweatshops of the global factory that is wasting women, a bloodless popular revolution gathers around a woman, Corazón Aquino. At Big Mountain, where as I write Navahos are readying themselves against forcible relocation, the grandmothers stand fast.

I have learned so much from Dunayevskaya, have so much respect for her political imagination, her tenacity, her own dialectical growth, that I want to hear what she has to say on many of the edges of struggle where we find ourselves in 1986. She mentions in passing, for example, that "It is that topic, sexuality, that is still in need of a relation to revolution." Neither sexual purity nor sexual liberation has established that relation for women. She affirms the lesbian and gay liberation movement, but I want more. We're still unclear how and by what historical forces heterosexuality has been socially constructed, indoctrinated; the degree to which lesbian and gay liberation has been a revolutionary force; how actual sexual practice informs theory; the conditions under which sex is work, recreation, or, in Audre Lorde's phrase, "the erotic as power." In North Carolina Mab Segrest, a white lesbian anti-Klan activist, is on the line between the gay-baiting and queer-bashing of the Right and the homophobia of some anti-Klan organizers. (Her *My Mama's Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays on Southern Culture*, recently published by Firebrand Books, draws important connections between sexuality, race and action for social justice.) Yesterday I had a call from a gay liberation Central America activist on his way to Nicaragua to study and report on gay and abortion rights in that revolution. Lesbian liberation sent a rocketing pulse of energy into the women's movement, and we can only conjecture how Left sexism, anti-Semitism, homophobia have constricted the political scope of radical women, Jews, gays and lesbians, people drawn to the work of justice but often disallowed the search for justice for themselves.

In El Paso, Texas, last March, I listened to the attorneys of the Immigration and Naturalization Service trying to establish that the writer, photographer and teacher Margaret Randall should be deported from the US on account of what she has written; over and over the word "Marxism" was used as identical with Communism and both as identical with evil. Randall's cross-examination by the INS was an unabashed attempt to intimidate and smear many levels of political dissent. She was Red-baited, but also woman-baited. Her independent life, her having had children by different fathers, her having once worked in a gay bar and posed as a nude model, were cited by the INS to label her an undesirable element. In her testimony, Randall stated that "I do subscribe to some ideas of Karl Marx as a tool to look at history." Clearly, in the present climate of officialdom, that is an activity liable to suppression.

What I hear Dunayevskaya saying above all is that we have reached the point in history where real freedom is attainable, if we are willing to commit ourselves to a more inclusive definition of freedom than has ever been attempted. If indeed Marx was moving in such a direction, we can't leap forward from Marx without understanding where he left off, and what he left to us. □

¹ C.L.R. James. *At the Rendezvous of Victory* (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), p. ix.

² See *News and Letters*, Vol. 31 No. 5 (June 1986), p. 4.

³ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), p. 19.

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RD

Sept. 18, 1986

Dear Adrienne Rich:

Your review of my four major works created an adventurous journey for me. It was an adventure because it showed that not only does the uniqueness, the newness of today's Women's Liberation Movement no longer stand in the way of its appreciation of Rosa Luxemburg, the great revolutionary Marxist feminist, but it poses as well other critiques of today's Marxism.

The simultaneity of the appearance of Women's Liberation-- that had developed from an Idea whose time had come to a Movement-- and the appearance of the transcription of Marx's Ethnological Notebooks led me to think (evidently wrongly) that the work I was rushing to completion-- Philosophy and Revolution-- with its final chapter tackling "new passions and new forces", would result in a veritable union of radical feminism and Marxist-Humanism?

Instead, as you so cogently expressed it in your review, "... a term like 'Marxist-Humanism' would, in the late sixties and early seventies, have sounded like a funeral knell" to the Women's Liberation Movement at that time.

From the reception (mostly the lack of it) of my works by so-called orthodox Marxists, on the one hand, and by radical feminists, on the other hand, I felt that both the radical feminists and the post-Marx Marxists lack a philosophy of revolution needed for total revolution. It became clear to me that the Marxists were raised on Engelsian Marxism, not Marx's Marxism, i.e., what Marx from the very start called "a new Humanism".

How could women, I asked myself, skip over history and act as if nothing happened before the 1960s? After all, it meant skipping over integral, crucial periods of their own history, be it of the 19th century or the 1930s.

In Yenan in those '30s and '40s, some women were critiquing Mao himself. The great writer and revolutionary Ding Ling had written "Thoughts on March 8", declaring the wives of the Communist leaders as "Noras who came home". Yet U.S. radical feminists not only dismissed the 1930s as "counter-revolutionary", but never addressed the significance of the battles of the housewives driven into the factories to become those "Rosie the Riveters", only to be thrown out of the factories at the end of World War II and told to go back to the kitchen.

It seemed to me that not only was a critique of the Women's Liberation Movement needed, but it was also necessary to draw up a balance sheet about that missing link-- philosophy-- not only in the Women's Liberation Movement, but among even the great Marxist revolutionaries.

Pardon me for smiling at the word "academic" in your description of Philosophy and Revolution as "the most academic". What is true

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is that way back in 1950 when I was active in the Miners' General Strike and writing the dispatches also on the miners' wives, I also dug deep into a study of Hegel's works. Having never been part of academia, (I'm 76.) I was not even aware that when, in 1953, I first broke through to a new concept of Hegel's Absolutes*, I had broken with the whole Hegelian tradition which saw Hegel's Absolutes as a hierarchial system. Instead, I saw, in the Absolute, new beginnings, a movement from practice as well as from theory.

This is why Marx never let go of the Hegelian dialectic, which he saw as "the source of all dialectics." Marx held Absolute Negativity-- "the negation of the negation"-- to be an active creativity that Feuerbachian materialism's critique of Hegel's idealism had not matched. Marx's dialectical, historical materialism did not depart in its critique of Hegel though Marx had discovered a whole new continent of thought and revolution, of class struggles, of the Man/Woman relationship-- in a word, "revolution in permanence".

It was only when the turbulent 1960s ended with DeGaulle winning in Paris, 1968, without firing a shot, at the very height of that massive activity that had relegated theory to something that could supposedly be caught "en route", that I finally felt compelled publicly to delve into that missing dimension of philosophy-- the Hegelian dialectic that Marx had been rooted in. To tackle the dialectics of thought and revolution, was, I held, what all the new passions and new forces needed to have as their ground. I knew I was treading uncharted waters, not only among Women's Liberationists, but among orthodox Marxists, but I did not expect the response to my findings would be such total silence.

(You have hit the nail on the head when you wrote: "If, indeed, Marx was moving in such a direction, we can't leap forward from Marx without understanding where he left off and what he left to us." That's what I thought I was doing when I concretized the task as the need to work out the new signalled by the 1950s that I had designated a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory. I involved myself in the recording of those new voices beginning with the miners on general strike, and their wives, in those activities against that machine, the "continuous miner", which they called a "man killer". With it they had posed the question: "what kind of labor should man do?" In the '60s we recorded the voices from below in Freedom Riders Speak for Themselves (from Mississippi and Louisiana jails) as well as the voices and thoughts from the Mississippi Freedom Schools and the Free Speech Movement. This last pamphlet, The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution, by Mario Savio, Eugene Walker and Raya Dunayevskaya, as well as the pamphlet, Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices, were issued along with Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions. I had hoped that the essence of all these new voices and new worlds was articulated in Philosophy and Revolution.

* Over a decade after those Letters on the Absolute Idea were written, (see my Archives, the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection at Wayne State University, pp. 2431-66 and pp. 5041-5109), as I began writing my draft chapters of Philosophy and Revolution, I found that Hegel scholars had left the three final syllogisms of Hegel's Encyclopedia (paragraphs 575, 576, 577) fairly untouched, without realizing that it was not Logic, but Nature that had been the mediation, the ground for the self-movement of the Idea, from Phenomenology, Science, Philosophy of Nature, Kind, i.e. the whole Encyclopedia.

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Passions, I might add-- and Marx was a great one to talk about "new forces and new passions"-- was not restricted to what Audre Lorde calls the "erotic as power". Any struggle for new human relations required not only philosophy and revolution, but self-development, and that both the day of revolution and the day after. That nothing new, much less a totally new society, could be achieved cold-bloodedly shows that the creative urge demanded passion. That is what brought forth from Marx such new language as "time is space for human development"-- and that in an article on economics.

Towards the end of your review of my books, you place a whole new series of problems before me. You single out "the edges of struggle", asking me to expand on the question of women's liberation's relationship to revolution, since sexuality-- "neither sexual purity nor sexual liberation"-- has established any relationship to revolution. What remains "still unclear (is) how, and by what historical forces heterosexuality has been socially constructed; the degree to which lesbian and gay liberation has been a revolutionary force; how actual sexual practice informs theory; the conditions under which sex is work, recreation, or, in Audre Lorde's phrase, "the erotic is power".

My problem is: how can I answer the specificity of sexuality in the sense it is now used without seeming to slough it off if I reply: You are the one who must do it; workers work out their own emancipation and Blacks theirs, so must all other forces of revolution-- youth, women, and women not just in general, but the very concrete question of lesbianism, or, for that matter, all of homosexuality.

It is true that women revolutionaries in the 19th and early 20th century referred to sexuality (if they used the word at all), and meant by it only the discrimination against women in labor and wages, never bringing the topic in to the "Party", as if it had no relation to men in the movement. And it is true that by the mid-20th century, when we began posing the subject, we were still referring, not to specific practices, but using the word sex as if it encompassed homosexual as well as heterosexual, and thus leaving the impression that we actually narrowed sexism to conditions of labor, class struggle, or race, rather than different sex practices. What was true was that as revolutionaries we were always putting the priority on the dialectics of revolution.

I believe that where I have had the greatest experience with a specific force of revolution demanding proof of the concreteness of freedom for itself is with the Black Dimension. I have been active there from literally the first moment I, a Ukrainian, landed on these shores, the first time I saw a Black man. I asked who was that. I took myself from the Jewish ghetto to the Black ghetto in the 1920s. In the 1960s, on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation we embarked on a short history of the whole Black Dimension in American history, American Civilization on Trial, which had as its subtitle, "Black Masses as Vanguard". I was questioned by a Black woman in the late '60s about what the concept of freedom in Marxist-Humanism means to Black women.

Without feeling that I was evading her question, my answer stressed the fact that, far from Marxist-Humanist philosophy limiting us in the fight for total freedom for all, it led me to the creation of the category, "Woman as Revolutionary Reason as well as Force", and that before women's liberation had moved from an Idea to a Movement. I pointed to Black women speaking for themselves in News & Letters not only as activists, but as columnists such as Ethel Dunbar in "Way of the World" and the development of a "Woman as Reason" column.

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I had to respond that each revolutionary force does have to concretize the question for what it considers, holds, as the proof that freedom is here and does relate to them. No one can do it for Cther.

I then embarked on collecting 35 years of my writing for Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution. Clearly, dialectics of revolution was still my preoccupation. This time, however, I wanted to single out women as the subject. The aim was to show how total the uprooting of the old must be, be it in work, or culture, or leisure, or self. And with it, how total freedom must be, which was the meaning of Marx's "revolution in permanence", that is, to continue after the overthrow of the old, at which point the task becomes most difficult, as it involves nothing short of such full self-development that the division between mental and manual is finally abolished.

The Introduction/Overview to that book, Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution, tried to spell out that dialectic of revolution, whether it dealt with labor, Black, Women (Part I), or, as in Part II, all women, whether leaders, or ranks, or whatever, and in whatever period, designated "Revolutionaries All". At the same time I had been developing the indispensibility of theory by speaking on "Not by Practice Alone, The Movement from Theory". Where in Part III, I speak of "Sexism, Politics and Revolution" in various parts of the world, I posed the question without answering it: "Is there an Organizational Answer?". I deliberately didn't answer it there because I feel very strongly that without that missing link -- philosophy-- there is no answer to the question of organization, which of course means relationship to revolution.

This is exactly what I am in the process of working out in my book-to-be, Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The "Party" and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity. As you saw from Part IV of my last book, I traced Marx's New Humanism together with the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies. Here is how I phrased it in my new working papers: "Put briefly, Women's Liberation is the first dialectic of revolution when it is relationship-- when it comes out of-- the new epoch itself, which we declared philosophically to be a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and absolutely inseparable from revolution. It is those three elements-- the epoch, the philosophy, and a new force of revolution-- which we, and we alone, named when we saw Women's Liberation not only as Force, but as Reason."

My point was that before Marx learned all those great things about the Iroquois that excited him so much as to create still "new moments" for him, he wrote the first draft of Capital (which the Marx-Engels Institute a belated century later called the Grundrisse), where he analyzed pre-capitalist society and became sufficiently enamored of those societies that he used a most Hegelian phrase to designate human development-- "the absolute movement of becoming".

This discontinuity of epochs becomes creatively original rather than being just an "update" when it is deeply rooted in continuity. The new continent of thought and of revolution that Marx had discovered when he broke with capitalism, as well as with what he called "vulgar communism", and critiqued Hegelian dialectics, he called a "new

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Humanism". That will remain the ground needed until there has been total uprooting of all forms of capitalism, state as well as private, including capitalist-imperialism. That is first when the Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty brings the Self-Determination of the Idea to maturity and the dialectic is unchained. The Universal and the Individual become one, or, as Hegel put it: "Individualism which lets nothing interfere with its Universalism, i.e. Freedom." We cannot tell in advance what a fully new human being is because we are not,

I would very much like to talk more with you. Is Chicago on your calendar? Would you be interested in commenting on any of the sections of what I am now working on, Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy?

Yours,

Raja Ramenetsky

#481

"An individuality, however, also purified of all that interferes with its Universalism, i.e. with freedom itself".

12/7/59
Dear AR - When one is just a poet,
how can she possibly write a
thing you would pour like the
writing of Blood, Bread and Poetry?

Tiger Tiger! burning bright
In the forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

At least I laughed hard
when I read your description
of enclaves "defended by little
beats who feed off each other's
errors".

You are right -

ask "Who is it?" my passion is

"Resolution in permanence. How, you
is just the end of the note, not
an ending." I am forever
reaching for new beginnings &
share with emerge when self-
determination of nations, is
movements find their affinity
with the 'Self Determination

of the Med.

Ask

Jan. 24, 1987

Dear AR --

When one is not a poet, how can she possibly make a
thank you note sound like the rythm of Blood, Bread and Poetry?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the Forest of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame they fearful symmetry?

At least I laughed hard when I read your description of
enclaves "defined by little sects who feed off each others'
errors."

You are right to ask "Who is me?"

My passion is "revolution
in permanence". That, too, is just the end of the note, "not
an ending." I am forever searching for new beginnings and
those will emerge when self-determination of nations, of
movements find their affinity with the "Self-Determination
of the Idea."

Raya

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Emma Tenayuca (n. 1916 en San Antonio, Texas). Valiente líder obrera chicana, su compromiso con la justicia la llevó a una activa militancia en contra del hambre, la miseria y el desempleo durante la Gran Depresión. De 1934 a 1938 apoyó casi todas las huelgas de la ciudad escribiendo panfletos, visitando hogares de huelguistas, uniéndose al cordón de piquete. Se enteró del apuro de los obreros en la Plaza del Zacate (especie de Plaza de Trafalgar de San Antonio), donde los socialistas y los anarquistas solían pronunciar sus discursos. Su contacto con los obreros de allí la llevó a unirse al Partido Comunista en 1937 y en 1938 a la Alianza Obrera, una organización fundada por los comunistas y socialistas para desempleados, el 90% de los cuales eran limpiadores de nuez y obreros agrarios. La Alianza organizó manifestaciones en demanda de empleos, no de limosnas, exigió que el obrero chicano tuviera el derecho de huelga sin el temor de ser deportado, así como el derecho a una jornada y salario mínimos. Cuando 12,000 limpiadores de nuez abandonaron las fábricas en 1933, Tenayuca fue elegida unánimemente líder huelguista. Al respecto Tenayuca opina, «Lo que empezó como un movimiento para organizarse en demanda de una igualdad de salarios se convirtió en un movimiento de masas contra el hambre, a favor de los derechos civiles, y por una ley de salario mínimo y todo eso transformó el carácter del lado oeste de San Antonio.»



Postcard

Dear Raya, Your writing to me means a great deal. I will be teaching from WLDR in my feminist theory course next fall. I hope we can meet sometime when I come to Chicago. I will keep in touch. Meanwhile, my continuing admiration for your life & work.
For "revolution in permanence" -
A.R.

P.O. Box 1776, Martinsville, IN 46151 • AL38 SP

Raya Dunayevskaya

Evansston

IL 60122

POST

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11308

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Postcard

Raya Dunayevskaya

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For "revolution in permanence" -

A.R.

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