

NOV. 3, 1979

Dear Raha,

It's great to welcome back an Iranian revolutionary who, as quite an original thinker, does not separate theory from organization. Quite the contrary. The result is that even when some of the ideas on form of organization are what I consider quite wrong, the profundity of the theoretical ground and the concentration on form of organization makes even what is "wrong" quite evocative.

Let me concretize these generalizations. You are the first who saw anything about form of organization in Marx's early writings. The opposite is true; the early writings are always quoted as if Marx was both "pre-Marxist" and very nearly dumb on the question of "the Party", so when you, on p.1, quote what Marx said on "communist artisans form associations" and that these "associations itself creates a new need--the need for society--and what appeared to be means has become end", it is clear that you have sensed something that does indeed reconnect with Marx on the question of freely-associated men and women and that you have every right to conclude that theoretical result is that we should search for a kind of organization which is, at the same time, in unity with philosophy of the revolution and with the aim of the proletariat as a class."

Where I disagree is that you make too ^{quick} a leap to the present with the result, much as you want to do the opposite, you are really once again separating philosophy and organization. For example, we of course are not only emphasizing "new forces" but Reason, and that is absolutely indispensable. So that you cannot possibly jump to the Fedayeen where every word you say is correct (both against hierarchic form of organization and guerilla warfare, that untidy combination of vanguardism and voluntarism) and yet it would appear at the end as if it were only because they were separated from the masses instead of it being both that and completely lacking in philosophy.

I think on p.3, where you ask the right question -- "how a theory can be materialized" -- but then make that materialization only that which relates to objective conditions, as if that meant economics, whereas in fact to Marxist-Humanism, objective conditions is both economics and the masses revolting against that economics. It's very dangerous because that's exactly what has been wrong for the whole Second International and with Trotskyism, that somehow in the process of the economic analysis, the proletariat itself became object. To Marx, however, material did not mean just economics. It meant the whole form of life, so that the need naturally was first and foremost food and shelter, but also all that was needed, by no means limited to whether you had a spoon to eat with or you were eating with your fingers, but the need for what Marx called "quest for universality."

I disagree that the proletariat were not the first in the Iranian revolution. Of course, the so-called first, whether it's Fr. Gapon leading masses with icons to the Tsar's palace, or whether it's posts in Iran revealing the horrors of the Shah's prisons, or whether it's the journalist-editor in Nicaragua who was murdered by Somoza, precedes the actual proletarian outburst. But it doesn't become revolution until the proletariat, both in strikes and in demonstrations, that is to say, when masses in motion appear. When Marx, as you quote on p.4, writes that both as a "movement of enthusiasm" and when the proletariat arouses the kind of interest that is an actual universal, that it's possible for "a particular class to gain general supremacy."

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P.5: of course you're right, when you laugh at Khomeini for thinking that his rulership is "a gift from God", and that you show that it in fact has "its base in the profane world", but it isn't true that somehow the fact that the merchants were together with the proletariat in these mass demonstrations that made it possible for Khomeini to get usurp the power that belongs to the proletariat.

I believe that the really important thing, in the middle of p.5, is what you say: "what appears to be an end is rather a new beginning." It isn't true, however, that that new beginning can be only workers' councils, even when you correctly add to them the new forces like women's liberation, because one of the real deviations in Lukacs was his concentration on totality, but not totality as a new beginning, and that totality also meant more of a summation rather than that Absolute Idea which is both theory and practice, and that as the new beginning. I'm sure the Trotskyists would be for workers' control of production, and I'm sure that they would consider the councils "a socialist institution" whereas the councils -- and by no means do I wish to play them down because that definitely is the height of workers' control of production being in their own hands rather than being in a trade union or in a state -- but again, unless they, too, do not separate themselves from philosophy, unless they, too, feel as strongly the need for work on intellectual, as the intellectual feels the strong need for the workers, and unless that "intellectual sediment" (to use a Luxemburgian phrase) has philosophy and organization and revolution and reason as well as new forces, we will once again lose. And, I should add that when Marx writes "revolution is necessary also because it revolutionized the class itself", that's exactly what he meant, the proletariat as Reason as well as force, as objective as well as subjective, as new man/woman.

Now, don't think that my critique means I want you to rewrite this. Quite the contrary. I think that precisely because it is from a youth and is from a vantage point not just of Iran and precisely because the universality of this question we are grappling with -- form of organization -- is characteristic by no accident of both USA and Iran, that it is extremely important that we see not just "results" but the process. Indeed, I believe that we should have very nearly a whole year of discussion on this question before we even attempt to draw conclusions. I will suggest to the RES that in January your "letter" become a new discussion bulletin. At the same time, I do want some of the discussions published directly in the paper. I believe that Andy is attempting to do something like that for the December issue, and Jan-Feb will of course be a 12-pager in which my chapter on Luxemburg will be the main point. As for the March issue, I would very much want you to have something substantial to contribute, and I'm going to do my best to have others participate before pre-convention discussion is opened during July-August.

Welcome back!

Yours,

Raya

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