

The Trail to the 1980s from the 1880s:
Marx's New Moments and Those in Our Age

A Lecture by Raya Dunayevskaya

This sixth and final lecture in a series of classes on "Current World Events and the Dialectic Method" is being reproduced for the 1986 Convention of News & Letters Committees so that the Convention can have before it the summation of the Workshop/classes, in preparation for the bi-weekly N&L being considered this weekend.

Hello.

Today, what faces us in these crisis-ridden counter-revolutionary times is not just "terrorism in general," and not just in a single country, but nuclear terrorism. On a global scale, then, which new beginnings -- in the absolute opposites of revolution and counter-revolution -- will determine the end, not of humanity but of establishing totally new human relations?

We have, on the one side, the undeclared, ongoing civil war in apartheid South Africa, and, on the other, the magnificent Black struggles, which just established the first-ever national Black trade union, COSATU. At the same time, there were great revolutions in Haiti and the Philippines, as well as a new awakening here of the divestment movement and the great mass movements in Europe -- as well as the opposition here -- against the abysmal depths of Reagan's Retrogressionism.

What is as disastrous as Reagan's criminal actions in his attack on Libya is the Reagan ideology that pollutes the air. Here is the President of the U.S., unashamedly saying, "I am also a contra," and following this up with a blitz on Libya which he dares to call "self-defense" against "terrorism," as if he wasn't committing a state-terrorist act.

With this bombing of Libya, Reagan Retrogressionism has reached such an abyss that the whole of today's talk is entitled:

Which new beginnings will determine the end -- the new developing revolutions or the Reagan counter-revolution and its putrefaction of thought?

There are two opposing worlds in each country -- the rulers and the masses. The Reagan degenerate chauvinistic super-patriotism pollutes our air. Long ago, Samuel Johnson had the right description of such patriotism

when he said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel."

Just look at the concrete disgusting rationale with which Reagan followed the attack in the Gulf of Sidra with an actual attack on Kadafi's living quarters, killing his 15-month old infant and severely wounding two others of his children, three and four years old. Eighteen bombers flew from England to drop the bombs. If anyone can be lower as a terrorist than Kadafi, then Rambo-on-the-loose, Ronald Reagan, is the one.

It is this type of pull from the gutter imperialist politics of nuclearly-armed capitalism that makes it important to struggle against all rulers. And it is the enemy at home that Marxist-Humanism must struggle against, not only by being active in all mass movements and by solidarizing with international movements, but by the specificity of a totally opposite philosophy of revolution. The philosophy of classless new human relations is also a force to be projected in our daily lives journalistically as well as philosophically.

As a beginning toward that end, we projected the transformation of News & Letters into a bi-weekly. In order to become fully practiced in responding quickly to current events as they happen, we outlined a series of Workshop/Classes called "Current World Events and the Dialectic Method."

I.

Let's dig into the Dialectics of the three Marx principles in the context of the new global concrete of these past three months, with a brief view of the Workshop/Classes: from the Reagan-Gorbachev summit to the Lesotho coup; from a Palestinian in Gaza to the Shuttle explosion; from the attack on Libya to the new Japan-Russia agreement.

Here are the three Marx principles that form the ground of 1986 analyses, whether they relate to Workshop/Classes; or to News & Letters; or to Volume XII of the Marxist-Humanist Archives that was being finished in the same three months; and, of course, to the events themselves as they will affect our 1986-87 Perspectives:

1.) Marx's concept of history in the making. That is to say, recording an event both as the masses in motion are shaping and reshaping history and as the Marxist philosophy of revolution practices the Idea as a force, even

as action itself is force. First, then, is history in the making.

2.) Inseparable from it is Dialectics. It is not something restricted to any one historic period. The Dialectic method examines every event in the context of both historic continuity and discontinuity, as well as the perspective for tomorrow.

To put it another way, while there is no substitute for action, action like theory is in itself one-sided. The unity of action and thought is what motivated Marx from the very start when Marx designated his philosophy "a new Humanism" and unfurled a banner not only for the overthrow of capitalism but for the creation of totally new human relations.

Whether an event happened in Marx's lifetime, specifically, his founding of a new continent of thought and revolution in 1844; or whether the event happened in Lenin's time, 1914, and he issued the call for the transformation of an imperialist war into a civil war -- what all Marxists singled out from Hegel was the "materialistic" statement that wherever there is life, there is movement, there is the Dialectic.

Marx's transformation of the Hegelian Dialectic from a revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution led him, when the 1848 Revolutions were defeated, to call for "revolution in permanence." The second principle, then, is Dialectics.

3.) The third principle is the relationship of objective to subjective, neither as mere generalization nor something that stops at the first negation -- that is, the overthrow of private capitalism-imperialism, the uprooting of capitalism, private or state. Rather, it analyzes the concrete events inseparable from a vision of the future. This isn't something Marx said only in 1844 or 1848. It is something Marx experienced; he lived it. The "new moments" in the very last decade of his life, with his dialectical attitude to the so-called new science of anthropology -- i.e. his new appreciation of the pre-capitalist society, what we now call the Third World -- are proof/

We all know what the Communist Manifesto projected as the world outlook of the newly-named Communist League: "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!" Why, then, don't we remember as well that the Communist Manifesto was

practicing Marx's 1844 proclamation of "revolutionary, critical-practical activity" not only against the ruling state-party, but by separating himself from "the varying existing opposition parties"?

In a word, why don't we remember the battle of ideas in all periods?

Let's now briefly examine the Workshop/Classes as to range of topics, countries, historic periods, theories like those of state-capitalism and the philosophy of revolution.

The first Workshop was on "The Reagan-Gorbachev Summit and the Black Dimension." In that first Workshop, we made clear that the two poles of capitalist-imperialism are fundamentally the same, whether they call themselves private capitalism or what calls itself Communism, but has proved to be a state-capitalist society.*

That first Workshop dealt, in two different ways, with the Black Dimension. The main report dealt with the coup in Lesotho, while the subreport could show in practice both the international and American Black dimensions in the new expanded edition of Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought.

The second class, "The State of the Union and Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program" (to which I will return at the end on Dialectics of Organization) was concerned not only with the objective U.S. retrogression under Reaganism, but with the class struggles at Hormel and against the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. The subreport dealt with the concreteness of the question of the Miskito Indians.

The question of the post-World War II revolutions were dealt with in two lectures -- "Latin America's New Type of Worker-Peasant Revolutions"

* For a detailed analysis of all three Five Year Plans at the outbreak of World War II, see Marxism and Freedom...from 1776 Until Today. The world Depression of the 1930s signified not only the collapse of private capitalism but disclosed that what had been a workers' state -- Russia -- had been transformed into its very opposite, a state-capitalist society.

The 1930s also had new revolutionary beginnings which were climaxed with the Civil War in Spain. They pointed to new forms of Organization as well as new forms of revolt. The German Nazis helped the Spanish fascists to crush that revolution, but that defeat did not leave the Stalinists blameless. (See also Volume XII of the Marxist-Humanist Archives.)

and "Revolutions in East Europe from under Totalitarian Communism." The one on Latin America had a subreport on Iran and women's liberation in that 1905-11 Revolution. The other, on East Europe, which did not separate those revolutions from ongoing philosophic debates on the concrete dialectic and Karel Kosik, had a subreport in which the Youth stressed the fact that what is significant for Marxist-Humanists is the breakthrough on the philosophic questions when those new post-World War II revolutions occurred.

The same held true when we were discussing not only the objective situation, but how revolutionary journalism, News & Letters, developed, in the Workshop on "Revolutionary Journalism and the Absolute Method." The subreport was on Eleanor Marx in the U.S. Its relevance will be proved next month as Haymarket is remembered on its 100th anniversary.

That non-separation of battle of ideas and the ongoing objective situations in which we were always participating held true for all classes. Today, as I stress the new, the concrete of those three months, I'm referring also to what was happening in this period even if it wasn't part of the classes.

II.

In turning to the way the Marx principles are ground for current events that weren't part of the classes, we must at the same time never depart from the dialectic method whether it is past, present or perspectives for the immediate period ahead.

First, then, whether you take the present now magnificent expression of a Palestinian in the Gaza Strip, Tawfik Abu Chazalch, who spoke as follows: "I guess you could say we have fallen off the map. Yes, that's it. Gaza has fallen off the map" (NY Times, 4-5-86);

or whether you take the question of so-called "pure science" which was so all-pervasive in the 19th century that although Hegel himself certainly recognized no academic discipline including "science" as anything comparable to the Absolute, he nevertheless called his detailed work on logic the Science of Logic. The point is not any "contingent" historic designation, but the Dialectic of Humanity's Development. It is this that Marxist-Humanism is preoccupied with -- the Concrete, the Concrete, the Concrete of that development. This is neither up-to-dateness nor a

sound like we way to/want to go back to the "horse and buggy" days. It is a way of proving in the concrete Marxist-Humanist opposition to the capitalistic use of science.

Take the case of the Challenger explosion. It was absolutely the clearest way, the most concrete new way to oppose thingifying and militarizing of science at the expense of human beings, including of astronauts, because of the global reach of American imperialism and its time clock. As you saw from the April issue of News & Letters on that explosion, the new wasn't a mere restatement of the capital/labor relationship. Rather, it was a way of opposing the new way of thingifying human relations, the capitalistic, imperialistic militarization at this stage when the two nuclear Behemoths, out for single world mastery, forced the time clock for the whole of society.

This the News & Letters lead achieved by showing Reagan Retrogressionism, be it in the state or the factory or science, including the Three Mile Island disaster as well as the Shuttle, in pointing to Bhopal, India as well as Charleston, West Virginia, the Wilburg mine in Utah as well as the Dalcon Shield IUDs -- and, to get back to the class struggle, it pointed to the most militant class struggle involved in the Hormel strike.

Unless we are always concrete, have as our point of departure the new, and at the same time have other discussions of the topic, we will miss up on what Marxist-Humanism in its journalistic expression, News & Letters, started with on the Black dimension, on Automation and on having both Angela Terrano's and Charles Denby's points of view be expressed in Denby's Workers Battle Automation, a continuing free flowing discussion. In 1986 let's continue what we started in Workers Battle Automation in 1960.

Take Volume XII of the Archives, noting that the new Introduction/Overview shows that the actual focal point before the final break with Trotskyism and before we used the word, Marxist-Humanism -- the tensions, that is, which led to the final break -- all first emerged in the 1930s, when, on the one hand, there was the Depression and the collapse of private capitalism, and, on the other hand, the Spanish Revolution. That was the threshold of the break with all established Marxism, whether that be Stalinism or Trotskyism, and our continuity with Marx's Marxism that became Marxist-Humanism. That is why we now call the Archives "Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development."

It is just as necessary to look at the Pacific and the double-crosses within each of the alliances -- specifically Japan as it relates to its new trade agreement with Russia.

Despite the fact that there has been a full decade of hibernation in these relations; despite the fact that Russia not only didn't return but refused to even discuss with Japan the four islands in the South Kuriles it appropriated from World War II; and despite the fact that the shooting down of the South Korean airlines plane in 1983 had heated up that stagnation of relations -- suddenly, in January 1986 nobody less than the Foreign Minister of Russia, Shevardnadze, paid a full four-day visit to Japan and did more than just sign a trade agreement.

As the official Soviet news agency, Tass, put it: "The level of Soviet-Japanese relations corresponds neither to the two countries' political influence on international affairs, nor to their economic potential." Whether or not the rulers in Japan intend to play "the Soviet card" in the future, the point is that the trade agreement was in no sense minor, or just on the level of U.S. "cultural" relations with Russia. They send us the Bolshoi ballet and we send them jazz.

Here are the specifics: 1) 300 Japanese firms will take part next November in the first Industrial and Technological Fair to be held in Moscow in 16 years. Russia has asked Japan to draw up a plan for technological cooperation in Robotics, new materials, microprocessors and bio-technology.

2) Japan just signed a major agreement to buy wood from the Soviet Union (\$600 million) and has approved a new \$248 million credit line for the USSR. This is the first time since 1982 that Japan's official import-export bank has agreed to finance the Russians, during which period the trade between the two countries, which stood at \$5.6 billion in 1982, had dropped to \$3.9 billion.

3) The 12th Five Year plan, which begins this year, discloses how very much in need is Russia of up-to-date technologies for both its general modernization and concretely for development in Siberia and the Sakhalin. This is exactly the type of expansion of markets Japan is looking for. The new Japan-Russia agreement is but the first step of the new relationship.

III.

It is high time to detail Marxist-Humanism's development because what becomes imperative in this crisis-ridden capitalistic-imperialistic world -- and that of course includes both nuclear Behemoths -- is Marx's multilinear concept of human development, be it of the industrialized world or what he called the pre-capitalist world, and we know as the Third World, as well as the whole concept of organization for that final battle, that would be inseparable from Marx's philosophy of revolution. This of course is what we point to when we say that Marx's new moments make it clear that the 1880s is the trail to the 1980s. But this requires concretization by this new generation. First we broke with all post-Marx Marxists and worked this out explicitly in Chapter 12 of Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. The turning point in the global struggle for freedom was the recognition that the Absolute Method is the philosophic ground for the present world struggle for freedom.

In a word, we must face what we consider the burning question of today -- ORGANIZATION AS INSEPARABLE FROM THE IDEA, i.e. MARX'S PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION, VS. THE VISAGE OF HITLER AND THE ONGOING REALITY OF REAGANISM.

The visage of Hitler in South Africa extended itself to producing the Lesotho coup which didn't stop Reagan from rolling out the red carpet for the most notorious mercenary, Savimbi, financed by apartheid South Africa which is getting very substantial help from Reagan to intensify their counter-revolutionary work in Angola and in Mozambique. This turned out to be just a "curtain raiser" for the imperialistic, savage onslaught against Libya -- which Reagan dared to call "self-defense" against terrorism. In truth, he is the greatest terrorist. He must be stopped. Nor can the activities in opposing him be separated from the battle of ideas against this new form of counter-revolution.

The relationship between the battle of ideas and our actions against the reactionary age we are living in may not seem to be connected with what sounds like such a mystical abstraction as Absolute Method. The truth is that 1953, when the world witnessed the very first ever revolt against totalitarian Communism, was the very period when I broke through on

the Absolute Idea. I said that signified that there was a movement from practice as well as from theory, and this involved the whole struggle for total freedom in the specific post-World War II period. That is exactly why, in a similar period of Prussian reaction more than a century ago, Marx called his ideas "a new Humanism." All this we spelled out in our first major theoretic work, Marxism and Freedom, which worked out the continuity with Marx's Marxism and the discontinuity which was an actual concretization for our age's battle for freedom. Indeed, the very first chapter ended with a section called "Hegel's Absolutes and Our Age of Absolutes." In a word, Absolute Method, far from being any metaphysical abstraction, is actually the process of concrete dialectical development in each age.

The ceaseless movement of human development, through ever-reappearing contradictions, signifies that an end is really the ground for new beginnings. And new beginnings determine the end.

When the turbulent 1960s ended with an aborted revolution, it became clear that Youth activity alone, with its disregard for theory as if it could be "picked up en route", would only end in more and more aborted revolutions. We concretized this in Philosophy and Revolution, from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao.

To this day, neither post-Marx Marxists nor activist pragmatists have wrestled with the Dialectics of Organization: Philosophy, the "Party", and Opposite Forms of Organization Born Out of Spontaneity. That is the topic of my next book. Unfortunately it will take another two years to complete. All I can do here is touch with where I begin -- with Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program, written in that last decade of his life when he experienced all those "new moments."

No Marxists understood fully this critique as it relates to organization, not even Lenin, who achieved the greatest leap on concretizing Marx's analysis of the need to destroy the bourgeois state in his State and Revolution, which unfurled the banner for the actual November 1917 Russian Revolution. But insofar as the Party was concerned, he omitted entirely that question of Organization, leaving himself confined within his 1903 concept of the vanguard Party, notwithstanding the changes he introduced in 1905 and 1917, and hailing the spontaneous new forms of organization, like the

soviets in 1917.

Rosa Luxemburg, who had made a category of spontaneity, likewise remained "orthodox" on the question of the Party and criticized Lenin only on the point of centralization and decentralization. Who, then, took organizational responsibility for Marx's philosophy, not just of revolution "in general," but specifically the question of what happens after the overthrow of capitalism? What Marx was pointing to concretely was that both those who called themselves Marxists (Eisenachists) and those who were Lassalleans considered that what was of the essence was unity, putting off or "taking for granted" the philosophic ground.

In actuality, what "taking for granted" achieved was to make a principle of the specifically German General Workers Association that was nationalistic, as against the First International Marx headed.

Put differently, what Marx was aiming at in the Critique was to tell Marxists they must not forget the Universal of freedom as what happens after overthrow, in their preoccupation with immediate activity, activity, activity. It is true that those last three words were from the 1960s, not from 1875. But the essence of what Marx was aiming for was expressed in that simple word that everyone "took for granted" they understood -- labor.

There Marx "repeated" at the very time he completed the French edition of Capital what he had been saying on labor since 1844: that labor must not remain alienated, that it must become a total human activity, never separating theory from practice.*

The world in which we live now confronts us with all its counter-revolutionary actions, with the Reagan Retrogressionism on all fronts, including the U.S. itself and its "ideology," which we must never forget that Marx designated as false consciousness. The putrefaction of thought that the Reagan Administration is exuding is polluting the air for all.

That makes it all the more imperative to grasp what has happened in this post-World War II period since the movement from practice was so creative as to be a form of theory itself. Let us not forget that a form of

* A conversation with Herbert Marcuse in the late 1970s in a way revealed the whole relevance of that for our age, when he asked me what did I think of that specific paragraph in the Critique of the Gotha Program.

theory is not yet philosophy. Rather, it is a challenge to the theoreticians to end the one-sidedness of theory, as practice is challenged to end its one-sidedness, so that theory and practice can create a new unity, the new relationship of practice to theory in order finally to reach the realization of philosophy. This is what Marx was working out in his last decade, after the defeat of the revolutions in his period, and the fact that the 1875 attempts at organization put a priority on the unity rather than the principles which they supposedly "took for granted."

What is an imperative for our age is never to "take for granted" the Marx principles, Marx's Universals, the philosophy of revolution, as the age grapples with its immediates.

New forms of theory that have arisen from the spontaneous mass revolts, with its challenge to the theoreticians, are exactly where Marxist-Humanism started when working out a new newspaper where the production worker became the editor.

News and Letters Committees at the same time assigned the completion of the first major theoretical work, Marxism and Freedom, and that it be done by submitting the draft for discussion with workers and Youth. (See especially Chapter 16, "Automation and the New Humanism" as well as the Introduction.) In a word, the combination of worker and intellectual was not limited to the journalistic form, but was for all our major theoretical works in process.

The point is that objectively the new passions and new forces of revolution -- whether they be rank-and-file labor, Black, Youth, women's liberation, peasant -- are present both as force and as Reason, all aiming to see that the new revolutions are not aborted but create the ground for new human relations.

This is exactly what we are aiming at with what we call organizational responsibility for Marxist-Humanism. The doors are open, wide open.

April 22, 1986
(Lenin's birthday)