

Born 70 years ago in a tiny Russian village, Raya Dunayevskaya accepted Communism at the age of five; led her first strike at 12, two years after coming to the United States, and got her "real education" riding the streetcar through Chicago's ghettos. "If she would write a biography, it would be the biography of an idea," says a friend. "You really can't separate the personal from the ideas."

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She lives among mementos alive with history. One faded photo (third from left in foreground) shows her in Trotsky's Mexican camp with a pistol strapped around her skirt. She once even saved his life.

RAYA

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in exile in Mexico City at the hands of an assassin sent by Stalin, stares stiffly at the camera in the midst of a lush Mexican garden.

From that time in Mexico City when she was Trotsky's Russian language secretary, there is also a small picture of her.

In it, she is an attractive young woman with fine features, long dark hair and a proud stare. Buckled around her long skirt is a holster with a pistol strapped into it. It must have been taken sometime in 1938 in Coyoacan, Diego Rivera's home near Mexico City where Trotsky had fled, and she worked as his Russian secretary.

"I was a poor shot," she says, chuckling, tossing back her head. "I was always afraid of hitting the old man." She once even saved his life, she says, by spotting a suspicious visitor. If she had still been there at his side, she says, she might have prevented his death. She was very scrupulous about allowing outsiders to see him.

About her own life. Pause. Yes, some things can be said. There is her husband of nearly 30 years, but his name is unmentioned. He is a retired engineer whose work had nothing to do with hers: leading the new masses. It also couldn't have helped his work, and somebody had to earn a living so the revolution could be sought after, she says.

There is her acceptance of Communism, which she says came at the age of five years old. She was the youngest of nine children born 70 years ago to an orthodox Jewish family in a time of great anti-Semitism in a tiny Russian village on the Romanian border. Her father was a rabbi.

Her leadership of her first strike came at the age of 12, two years after arriving in the U.S. It was over anti-Semitism and a Chicago public school teacher's use of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." She was convinced the teacher's interpretation went beyond Shakespeare's intentions.

Her real education took place traveling by streetcar to explore Chicago's ghettos, she says. Her official education ended after one year at the University of Chicago, when she departed to go off and join the young Communists in New York.

With the Great Depression came the strikes of the 1930s, a feast of sorts for a young Communist willing to hitchhike around the country, which she did. By 1937, she decided to side with the Trotskyists, although she wasn't sure what they stood for.

"It seemed inconceivable that Trotsky was a betrayer to the revolution," she recalls. As a woman, she was rejected by the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a group of Americans who fought the fascists in Spain, so she went to Mexico to join Trotsky.

The old man had a brilliant memory and spoke a collection of languages. But her worship of him ended when he refused to criticize Stalin's signing of a nonaggression pact with Hitler. She couldn't understand Stalin's action, but was

baffled by Trotsky's silence. And so she left, a few months before his assassination.

Within the party, she had been an uncertain rebel. "There were a lot of times I disagreed with Stalin, but I didn't trust myself," she recalls. "I was just the rank and file. I was just a woman." But breaking away from Trotsky was a cataclysmic event.

"When I broke from Trotsky, that was my great self-development," she says. "I lost my speech for 72 hours. I couldn't believe what I had said. I disappeared for two years. What did I just do, I said. I hid myself for two years." She went to New York, where she spent the time in the public library studying Marxism, developing her own theory, and justifying her break from Trotsky.

In the early '50s Raya came to Detroit, convinced that the city's large working classes, and especially its black workers, would naturally accept her brand of Marxism.

It was only a few years earlier, at a coal miners strike in West Virginia, that she had met Olga Domanski, a tall, soft-spoken woman who had been working as a part-time waitress and secretary. For the last 25 years, she has been Raya's personal secretary, overseeing her schedule and her sometimes 12-hour workdays.

"I don't think she stops thinking when she goes to bed at night," claims Domanski, who is almost constantly at Raya's side.

To be sure, her letters, notes, and speeches — the grist for three books, the most recent "Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution" — fill 10 volumes and two appendixes in Wayne State University's Labor History Archives.

"If she would write a biography, it would be the biography of an idea," Domanski says respectfully. She seems very close to Raya, as if the two women were bound up by an unspoken loyalty over the years. "Her personal life is so wound up with ideas. You really can't separate the personal from the ideas," Domanski says.

Indeed, half of the day is gone, but a full schedule remains. Notes must be recorded. Lectures to be planned. A college tour is coming up. Domanski is painstakingly watchful of Raya's busy schedule and lack of time, and Raya is equally so of the long-delayed revolution.

CHOICE, June 1983

DUNAYEVSKAYA, Raya. *Rosa Luxemburg, women's liberation, and Marx's philosophy of revolution*. Humanities, 1982. 234p. bibl. index \$1-24063. 19.95 ISBN 0-391-02569-4. 10.95 pb ISBN 0-391-02793-X. CIP

This book consists of three separate essays which are, however, thematically linked; one on Luxemburg, one on the potentialities of the women's liberation movement and its relationship with black and Third World movements, and last, the longest of the three, an analysis of aspects of Marx's thought, with special emphasis on the continuing importance of the dialectic and analysis of his late "Ethnological Notebooks." Throughout, the author, Trotsky's former secretary and a thinker profoundly familiar with the theory and practice of Marxist movements of the last half century, takes a strong polemical position. Her aims are freedom and revolution, and she argues that these goals can be achieved only by using dialectical understanding to analyze external circumstances and the movement's strategy. Only Marx himself meets her standards: the Soviet state, German Social Democracy, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, even Engels are criticized with varying degrees of severity for failure to understand properly the dialectic and hence to chart a true course. The book is written in the language and with the thought patterns of Marxist philosophy; only a reader able to enter into this universe of discourse will be able to grapple with it.

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GEORG LUKÁCS AND HIS CRITICS

An International Bibliography
with Annotations (1910-1982)

FRANÇOIS H. LAPOINTE

360. Dunayevskaya, Raya. "Lukács' philosophic dimension (1)." *News and Letters* (18 February 1973):5 & 6; and "What is orthodox Marxism? (11 and 111)." *Ibid.*, (18 March 1973):5 & 7.

361. Dunayevskaya, Raya. *Philosophy and Revolution. From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973.

[A valuable contribution to the developments of Marxism that have occurred in France and Italy, as well as to the other debates of East European revisionists and West German critical theorists. See review by John O'Neill in *Telos* no. 22 (Winter 1974-1975):163-171, especially pp. 166-168, discussion of Lenin. Her appeal to Lenin "joins with similar efforts by Lukács, Merleau-Ponty, and Althusser.... Merleau-Ponty turned to Lenin when reflecting upon the problematic of the relation between humanism and terror.... In his *Lenin*, Lukács "has argued that Lenin's practical ingenuity or political genius must be understood in terms of his superior theoretical abilities.... Lukács has the same view as Merleau-Ponty of Lenin's political practice, separating it entirely from what others might regard as *realpolitik*...."]

MARXISM
MAOISM AND
UTOPIANISM

Eight Essays

Maurice Meisner

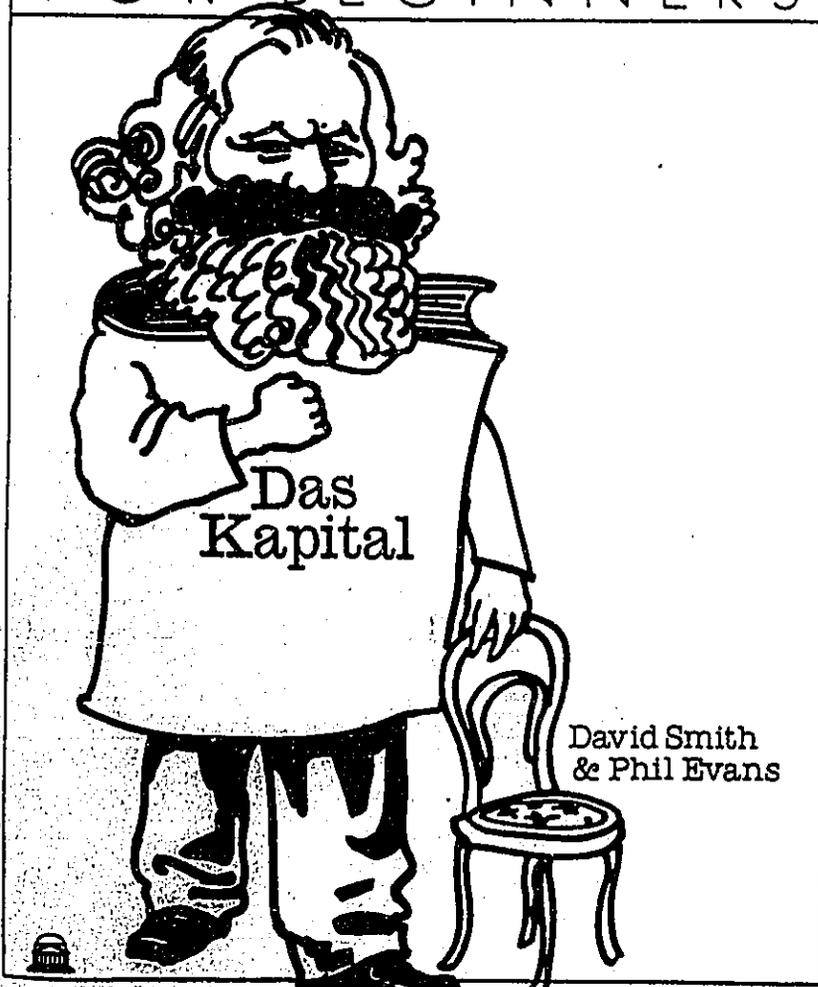
Among the major works on the nature of Maoism and its relationship
to the Marxist-Leninist tradition are:

Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution* (New York: Dell, 1973)

Raya

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Kapital
FOR BEGINNERS



David Smith
& Phil Evans

Pantheon Books, New York

FURTHER READING

Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom* (Pluto: London, 1971)

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MALCOLM X:

A TRIBUTE

May 19, 1925 - February 21, 1965

STEPPINGSTONES
Winter 1983

Dunayevskaya, Raya. "Malcolm X and 'Old Radicals.'" *News and Letters* (Detroit), April 1964.

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