

October 28, 1983

Dear Raha:

Your letter of the 24th, as most letters I receive from you, shows a real self-development which naturally pleases me. Because, however, with all the objective and subjective events of this week, which require a new Political-Philosophic letter on my part, on both the Lebanon crisis and the Grenada invasion, I will limit this note simply to answer one question, regarding your introductory note to the publication of Marx's 1844 Essays. I'm very much in favor of E&A publishing the Essays, and in the inclusion of my Introduction, as well as a translator's note by you. But I do not think that your translator's note should explain "the delay in publication"? What I mean by not "explaining" the delay is not to leave out the difference in time when it was first done and its publication now. Rather, I mean that that should be done as fact, whereas if you explain the differences in time with the word "delay" it sounds as if the people who translated and were interested in bringing out Marx's Humanism and Marxist-Humanism to Iran during a revolution, were somehow not involved in the revolution itself. That is to say, you have to be sure that your readers do understand philosophy as clearing one's head and preparing oneself theoretically for actual revolution.

Let me put it in another way. Your note could start by saying something about the current situation, i.e. that the counter-revolution within Iran makes the publication of these Essays more relevant than ever; indeed, you might say imperative. No defeat of a revolution is to be taken as permanent. What is always required of a defeat is both self-criticism and those lessons to be learned, as Marx would have put it, begin with grasping the highest point of the revolution and using that as a guide to what he called "revolution in permanence." That the Iranian Revolution, which was so great an event on a world scale, so total in the participation of the Iranian people, could nevertheless so quickly be usurped by a single religious sect headed by Khomeini, makes it all the more imperative, you think, to conclude that without a philosophy of revolution a revolution as action alone cannot but fail. Therefore, you consider that this publication will help clear heads, continue the dialogue of the dialectics of revolution, with the expectation of a revolution yet to be. Hope this helps.

Yours,



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10-24-83

Dear Raya:

It was not until I came back to America and started to associate with N&L as Organizers, that I began to grasp what "The Workers & Intellectuals at a turning point in History" really means when it isn't just the question of how wrong the alternatives to Marx's Marxism were in 1848, but rather what that relation was to Marx and more importantly how Marxist-humanism has worked it out for our age. From the outset, it was this unity of worker & Intellectual, not just as something to be achieved but as the new take-off point for an entirely new kind of organization, in a word Raya Demeyortkaya/Charles Demby relationship, that struck me the most. It was then that I began to understand the meaning of what you wrote me in June 14, 79, when you said that it is not just the question of saying no to the elitism of vanguard party but instead "what Marx meant by that as necessity to consider theory and practice, philosophy and action, ideal and material, second negation as positive affirmation."

It was this same RD/CD relationship that became the "energizing principle" for the birth also of E&A organizationally. Here what is crucial for us to grasp is that what laid the ground for E&A, i.e. the series of PPH's on Iran, also began as a letter RD wrote to CD.

The fact that we have had to operate in exile, and therefore not be able to establish an actual relationship with an Iranian worker, was all the more reason to deepen my ties with N&L. And this, even more so today when Charles Demby is no longer with us, for it is above all in N&L that the ideas of Fredon Demby lived & died for are being continued nationally & internationally.

The only other thing I want to say in this letter is to inform you that the Facis translation of the entire 1844 Humanist Essays has finally arrived here after being

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scruggled out. It is typed & almost ready for publication. As you know, by the time it was ready for publication in Iran, the censorship had already assumed monstrous proportions. Now the only possibility seems to me to be its publication here by E.P.A. We can actually bring it out before this Marx centenary year's end. So I want to know what you think about the entire idea? Needless to say, if published, it will also carry your special Introduction along with a short biographical note about R.D. I have also thought of a short Translator's note to both explain the delay in publication, the difference between the Persian and acknowledgment to those who compared the text with the original German edition, to the editor, to the person who translated the poems in the section on "Moses" & the typist. Please let me know what needs to be done.

Yours

Raha

May 7, 1985

Dear Raha:

Very, very briefly, not only because I have absolutely no time, but because it isn't really necessary. Here are a few suggestions:

1. A "Translator's Note" really does include a little more than mere technical matters on translation, which is exactly what you did do, and therefore I propose that you change that heading to say:

Why the Publication of Marx's Humanist Essays Now?

2. Your third paragraph on page 1, needs no referral to the 1979 Revolution; ~~instead~~ instead, I propose for the first half of that sentence:

At the same time, we cannot escape self-criticism, since our revolution is undergoing a counter-revolutionary transformation...

The only other thing for that paragraph that would read better is the ~~last~~ last sentence which would say:

It is this which makes imperative the present publication. of Marx's Humanist Essays.

3. On page 2, I thought ~~the first sentence~~ the first sentence should be reworked, so that it contains the expression that Marx, himself, used -- "a new Humanism" --- and therefore, I suggest something like this:

This is the first complete Farsi publication of Marx's Humanist Essays, which date back to his very first statement in 1844, where he defines his new philosophy as a "new Humanism."

I scribbled some other things on that sentence and I'm returning your pages to you, so you can make what you will of them.

4. On page 3, the last para. on the page, after you speak about my projecting "the ongoing revolution was as powerful to me as revolution itself", I propose adding a sentence something like this:

Moreover, Raya Dunayevskaya's knowledge of Iran, which she had been tracing from its first democratic revolution in 1906-11, when it was ongoing under the impact of the 1905 Russian Revolution against Tsarism, was being worked out by her for our period. (See Raya's ^{and} biography "at the

end of her 'Special Intro'.)

Hurriedly,



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WHY THE PUBLICATION OF MARX'S HUMANIST ESSAYS NOW?

On this 6th anniversary of the massive May 1 labor demonstration in opposition to Khomeini's attempt to institutionalize his counter-revolution, and the 4th anniversary of the birth of the Iranian Marxist-Humanist tendency, *Anjuman-e Azadi*, the struggle continues. Presently, while continuing the deadly war with Iraq, Khomeini's regime has intensified the battle for the minds of the masses. Parading its new barbarism as the "realized aim" of the revolution, Khomeini is under the delusion that the idea of freedom can also be put before the firing squads!

But the current street demonstrations against the war, which in some places have taken the form of outright revolt of an entire city, and the many labor strikes in recent months, or the simple fact that today any dissatisfaction, collective and individual, is immediately politicized and aimed at the Islamic Republic, points to a deep and continuous unrest which proves all over again that the masses cannot be brainwashed.

At the same time, we cannot escape self-criticism, since our revolution is undergoing a counter-revolutionary transformation which has put all of us to the test. To enable us to make the transition to a new revolutionary stage, a self critique that is a clearing of the head is of the essence. In other words, because the present enemy has emerged from **within** the revolution, claiming to be its inheritor, today's struggle for freedom has become both more arduous and in need of a totally new relation **from theory** to practice which builds on the highest point achieved by the revolution. It is this which makes imperative the present publication of Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays.

This is the first complete Farsi publication of Marx's Humanist Essays, which date back to his very first statement in 1844, where he defines his new philosophy as a "new Humanism". This translation began in the fall of 1978. The essays "Alienated Labor," "Private Property and Communism," and "Private Property and Labor" were first published in "Engargan" (translation notebooks) and subsequently republished "spontaneously" in Iran in the spring of 1979. The idea of translating all of Marx's *Manuscripts* took form in Iran and was done during 1979 by this writer and another comrade, M.R.J. However, the censorship by the Islamic Republic as an organic part of the counter-revolution so soon cast a shadow on revolutionary Iran that despite the interest of many publishers, there remained no chance to publish these essays.

Nevertheless, the forced interruption in publication could not stop the work on a clearer, more accurate, and more comprehensible translation, as well as, deeper work on the **practice** of Marx's new revolutionary world view that he founded with these essays. In fact: both the concept and practice could neither be separated from one another, nor from producing a translation of **Marx**. The outcome, then, is the many alterations and fundamental transformations introduced in these translations.

Elsewhere I have appreciated the work of all those who have had a role in helping to make this publication possible (see Acknowledgements). What needs to be emphasized here is the labor of comrades in *Anjuman-e Azadi* whether in relation to finances, the painstaking page proofs, or especially, our ceaseless work in clearing our minds about Marx's concepts. Truly, this translation is a **collective product**. We are certain that the new sphere in the battle of ideas that can be opened up with this publication, can also lead to the overcoming of any shortcoming that this translation might have and lead to even newer translations.

Had we left the problematic of introducing Marx to mere "problems of translation" not only would we not have addressed the difficulties of translation, but, more importantly, we could not get any closer to grasping **Marx's Marxism**. In fact, it was in the **process** of work on this publication that we realized that the revolutionary critique of "post-Marx-Marxists" who have tried to "popularize" Marx by not publishing Marx's own works and rushing instead to present their own views, also included the act of translating Marx. Thus the idea of this translation has had ramifications that were unforeseeable at the outset. That is how I came to know the revolutionary Marxist-Humanist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya and her works.

It was the morning of March 8, 1979. On my way to revolutionary Iran I met Dunayevskaya in Detroit. She greeted me at the front door by announcing the massive demonstration of Women's Liberationists in Iran and its significance for continuing the revolution. The pull of her thoughts, the altogether new concept she was projecting about the ongoing revolution was as powerful to me as the revolution itself. Moreover, Raya Dunayevskaya's knowledge of Iran, which she had been tracing from its first democratic revolution in 1906-11, when it was ongoing under the impact of the 1905 Russian Revolution against Tsarism, was being worked out by her for our period. (See her short Biography at the end of her 1980 Special Introduction to this publication).

As she expressed it, Iran after the overthrow of the Shah and his backer, US imperialism, is now on the threshold of the greatest social

revolution since 1917, but is being threatened from within by newly emerged counter-revolution. The internal contradiction in the revolution is the collision between **two kinds of subjectivity**: on the one side there is a Khomeini trying to substitute his goal of the revolution as the fact of consciousness for all, and on the other is the emergence of new forces of revolution as Reason whose continuous self-development is in need of a concretized and total expression. This was a shock of recognition which brought me face to face with the task that only begins with the publication of these essays: accepting the responsibility for working out the principles of Marx's humanism for today.

Thus, Marxist-Humanism itself became a path for me to both reconnect with revolution and also with this translation in its light. Even though at the time we ourselves were not conscious of the urgency of Marx's Humanism for the revolution, we can see today how **objective** ideas are. The elemental outpouring of mass creativity in revolution had also displayed a great passion for a philosophy of revolution. From the round-the-clock work of printers in the height of the general strike, to all the bookstands which covered every corner, to the countless translations of revolutionary/Marxist works, to the active and mass character of all discussion related to revolution, all were the reflection of a popular search for an idea of freedom which opened a new stage in cognition. The next direction of the revolution had not been predestined and could still be determined.

But the Left's bowing to religion as a substitute for a philosophy of revolution revealed such a deep **false**-consciousness that it completely deviated from dialectics of revolution as it was being recreated by the live and diverse forces of revolution. This left the door wide open to counter-revolution: the revolutionary dialectics remained in chains.

The fact that the Iranian Revolution, which was so great an event on a world scale and so total in the participation of the masses, could nevertheless so quickly be usurped by a single religious sect headed by Khomeini leaves no doubt whatever that a revolution as act alone cannot but fail. It is vital therefore to turn to philosophy as action and action as philosophy. Thus the aim of this publication is to help us clear our heads and continue the dialogue on the dialectics of revolution.

Raha
May 1, 1985

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