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Preface to Iranian edition of Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions

by Raya

We are presently — the fourth year since the 1979 Iranian Revolution — in the year of the Marx centenary. This is no mere coincidence; rather it is the year when, finally, Marx's Marxism can be seen as a reality. It is only now that we have the works of his last decade where he turned to what we now call the Third World in the Ethnological Notebooks. It is only now that we can see that Marx kept working out his whole life as a revolutionary the question of how to begin anew. We have gone through an actual revolution — a revolution so massive, and so persistent in the long preparatory strikes that became a General Mass Political Strike which drove the Shah along with his backers, U.S. imperialism, from power. Yet we are now under the whip of counterrevolution, one that emerged right from within the revolution which it turned so brutally to destroy. We must, therefore, seriously ask ourselves: why is it that we let Khomeini usurp that spontaneous revolt as if he, Khomeini, was that expression of elemental revolt of the masses for freedom?

WHAT IS EVEN worse now is to take defeat as our ground and to act today as if there was no way for the movement to go any further because of Iran's technological backwardness, which liberals very nearly automatically translate as "backwardness of the masses." This kind of economic determinism which identifies the whole of revolution with Khomeini, with "backwardness of the masses," with defeat, surely doesn't leave us anywhere to go. What is needed is a closer look at revolution that doesn't begin with what appears to be the end result, but looks to the revolutionary process to answer the question what happens after the overthrow. This is what compelled the translation and publication of Raya Dunayevskaya's *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*, which was written at the start of the Third World revolutions and is even more relevant today than in the 1960s. Then it was a warning of where these revolutions might end without a philosophy of revolution. Now that warning is both tragic fact and indication of how we can begin anew.

The author of this pamphlet, Raya Dunayevskaya, is the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. In a lifetime of involvement in diverse revolutionary movements, she has completed three comprehensive theoretical-philosophic works on Marx's philosophy of revolution as well as its development for our age as dialectics of liberation. These works are: *Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 to Today* (1958); *Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973) — both republished this year for the Marx centenary. The newest work, just off the press, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, makes them what she calls a "Trilogy of Revolution" for our age which began as a movement from practice to theory which was itself a form of theory with its new revolts in production (Automation), in cognition (in East Europe especially, but also in Latin America and Africa and Asia as well as in the Black revolts in the U.S. itself), and is now challenging both post-Marx Marxists and all theoreticians to rise to the point of philosophy.

SHE WAS AT work on her latest book when the Iranian Revolution began in 1978. This led her to work out the ramifications of the 1906 Russian-Polish Revolution in the East, especially in the 1906-11 Revolution in Iran, where a deeper development of the Russian Revolution itself was found when it came to the formation of the first women's anjuman (soviet) in history. The work on this latest book led her to greet the great demonstration of Iranian women liberationists on International Women's Day 1979 and spell out its significance as an opening to the second chapter of the revolution as well as its international dimension. Along with that was an analysis of the emergent retrogression in her March 27, 1979 Political-Philosophic Letter "Iran: Unfoldment of and Contradictions within the Revolution."

This letter and her other Political-Philosophic Letters which trace the course of revolution and counterrevolution are all published in a separate pamphlet: *Iran: Revolution and Counterrevolution*. Because the introduction she wrote to the Farsi publication of her letters ("The Struggle Continues: What Kind of Revolution is Needed in the Battle against the Khomeini-IRP Counterrevolution?" September 25, 1981) is both a summation of the recent revolutionary period in Iran as well as a perspective for the future, we felt it necessary to republish it as an appendix to this pamphlet.

What Dunayevskaya saw in the Third World was, not geography, but new human dimensions, new forces and new passions for the reconstruction of society, whose maturity is the exact opposite of technological backwardness. Now that the first workers' state, Russia, too, had been transformed into its opposite (state-capitalism), she articulated a new concept of revolution, concretized as a new relationship between the revolution of the technologically advanced and the technologically backward countries.

Dunayevskaya pointed to the great passion for freedom in our age that does not want to be determined by technology, finding in that refusal a new point of departure for world revolution. It began with her return to the Hegelian roots of Marxism which in turn revealed Marx's Marxism which makes clear that post-Marx Marxists had rooted themselves in a truncated Marxism since they did not have the works of his last decade. She had rediscovered a total philosophy of revolution in which the determinant is, not technology, but self-developing human beings who are not just force but Reason for revolution.

THE NEWNESS AND profundity of the philosophic questions these movements raised made Dunyayevskaya develop further her original idea that the "movement from practice is itself a form of theory." The key is that the movement from practice does not release Marxist revolutionaries from their responsibilities. Quite the contrary, it was the beginning of a new stage of cognition about a human relationship to technology that now challenged theory itself to meet its demands; to establish a new relationship to practice.

Instead if we fail to work out a new unity between theory and practice, the outcome, if not outright betrayal, surely initiates a retrogression in thought that rather than releasing the creative energies of the new mass rebellions, stifles the revolution.

Herein lies the tragedy of the African revolutions that began so soon after the revolution. The beginnings of the African revolutions were also a proclaiming, even in their leaders, of Marxism as humanism. Yet so weighted down were the national leaders with the consciousness of technological backwardness, the need to industrialize, that they turned to one of the two poles of world capital — U. S. or Russia. Without the masses, i.e., without their reason as the basis of revolution and humanism, there remained no way to escape the objective vortex of the world market.

EACH REVOLUTION, however, discloses something new, unique and challenging. The new in the Iranian Revolution reveals both great strength and great weakness. Four years ago, Iran was the birthplace of the greatest, most massive revolution that burst forth and brought ever broader and deeper layers of society to the actual scene of revolution, and so miraculously put an end to the despotic regime of the Shah, armed to the teeth with the most sophisticated technological weapons. What was even more outstanding than the overthrow of the Shah was the flowering of creative energies of millions in the ongoing revolution who felt themselves to be not just muscle but the Reason of revolution. The shores that emerged at the workplaces were instruments of workers' self-emancipation, of workers' control over their lives. It took two full years of constant state repression both with outright force of arms and certainly always with the imposition of Islamic ideology to transform them. That meant suppressing any initiative outside of opposition to "the Great Satan."

The same is true for the unemployed and student youth who fought the regime on the barricades. It took nothing short of closing the universities, even high schools, to make those hotbeds of revolutionary activity — and activity in this period meant also a search for new revolutionary ideas — quiescent. The Kurdish fight for self-determination which is the most democratic and extensive in worker takeovers and peasant land seizures, is ongoing to this day. Thousands of women mobilizing for five full days against Khomeini were the first to make explicit the goal of the revolution by declaring "at the dawn of freedom, we have no freedom." The overriding truth is that these revolutionary forces were also the ones who at-

tempted to deepen the revolution from mere overthrow of the Shah to actual freedom and new human relations. But what is equally true is that the thought and activity of Marxist revolutionaries was deeply separated from the masses in motion: a separation that became absolute at the high point of the revolution.

Rather than feeling compelled to reorganize to catch up with the revolution, the Left instead chose to so narrow the very concept of revolution as to identify its expression with Khomeini. Thus tailending his "anti-imperialism" meant tailending also his aim for the revolution. Those of us today, who have become oppressively aware of Khomeini's counterrevolution, certainly can't reduce once again the whole preparation for revolution to strategy and tactics and plunge ourselves into the indulgence of pure

sloganeering — this time "Down with Khomeini" in place of "Down with the Shah" — as unifying force. No! The whole experience of revolution demands that we not express ourselves only in terms of what we're against. What is needed is a new unifying principle that builds on the high point of the revolution.

It is true that the revolution that was is no longer ongoing, however, the great experience of the masses in creating the revolution and taking the first breath of freedom is not going to disappear so easily. The elemental creativity of diverse forces of revolution — workers, peasants, youth, women, minorities (Kurds especially) — meant also a new consciousness of what is possible which will not sink into the void being created by Khomeini's counterrevolution. At this moment, when the objective crises are deeper than ever and the hardship of the masses more than before, that consciousness can become the regenerating force for a revival of mass activities. That's when a new beginning in the very concept of revolution becomes crucial: one that can open a perspective of total uprooting and become ground for actual revolution by spelling out what we are for. It is therefore imperative to begin anew by preparing ourselves theoretically for the next stage of the revolution. The contribution of this pamphlet is what I hope can become a taking-off point in that direction.

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* In her keynote address to the Conference of the Center for Iranian Research and Analysis (Washington, D.C., April 23, 1983), Raya Dunyayevskaya develops such a view of the totality of Marx's oeuvre as that new unifying principle. In her talk on "The Todayness of Marx's Humanism in the Century of Marx's Death," she especially pointed to the significance of the discoveries of Marx's last decade as that which challenges all the post-Marx Marxists.