

**THEORY / PRACTICE**

by Raya Dunayevskaya

Author of *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*

The following are excerpts from "New Beginnings that Determine the End," a report delivered by Raya Dunayevskaya to a meeting of the expanded Resident Editorial Board of *News & Letters*, December 29, 1985. The full report can be obtained for 50¢ from *News & Letters*, 59 E. Van Buren, Rm. 707, Chicago, IL 60605.

So new are our Workshop/Classes, not just for ourselves, but because of the kind of workshops Marxist-Humanism has in mind, that philosophically as well as concretely they are totally new. You will become practicing dialecticians as we probe the objective developments and see that while the media gives you what happened, it doesn't give you the meaning objectively and subjectively — and that is true both of the reporters and the so-called analytical commentaries.

To grasp the meaning, objectively and subjectively, you need to have internalized what Marx meant by history-in-the-making. Naturally — though not out of whole cloth — each generation does bear the responsibility for how history is shaped and re-shaped in its age. Dialectics discloses, if you probe deeply, the process of development, objectively and subjectively.

The meaning of the event is grounded in the event itself; your method of examining it is not just as a single event or one which you judge in a quantitative way only, but in its totality, in its class relationships, where each class has an aim of its own. Rulers make headlines because of their power to exploit and destroy; it is that military might that seeks to terrorize people, to make us believe that our fate is in their hands. In truth that is not so, and Method will help us see the truth.

Each workshop will need to study the daily press inseparable from the source and principles. It is the source and principles that set the direction of the approach to the news. It is true that we approach a current event not in an abstract manner, but concretely. Concrete, however, is not just immediacy or appearance, but essence which flows from Concept — what to Hegel and Marx was comprehensive/concrete. Precisely because the meaning of the event is seen to be imbedded in the event itself, it draws the audience into participation. To comprehend a meaning in the concrete event, a meaning the audience may not have seen when it was just a headline in the newspaper, can "transform" listeners into participants. This, too, is the purpose of the

Learn about revolutionary journalism with Marxist-Humanists

**News & Letters Workshop/Classes on Current Events and the Dialectic Method**

classes as workshops.

The source and principles are what give meaning to the event as well as understanding of Marx's concept of history-in-the-making and your own practice as dialectician to develop it for our age.

**Class I — The Reagan-Gorbachev Summit and the Black Dimension**

The first Workshop is not to take off only from the Editorial in the December issue of N&L (even though that was written as the summit was occurring). Though the Editorial did take into consideration the fact that the person who was not among those listed principal participants — Weinberger — was the one who really set the line through the Reagan-planned "leak," what is needed is to philosophically comprehend the objective situation, the masses making history, the undeclared civil war in faraway South Africa.

This is quintessential because it is important to not be diverted by seeing opposite nations talking, even when they are as far apart as the U.S. and Russia. The absolute opposite is within each country — the masses against the exploiter-rulers. It is the dissatisfaction of the masses with their conditions of labor, with their lives in their respective countries, and it is the birth of the Third World in particular that are the real pivots.

Even if we knew the secret, so-called unrecorded "personal" talks between Reagan and Gorbachev, we would not know what motivated them if we were bereft of Marx's dialectical analysis of history-in-the-making. For example, whether or not anything was mentioned by the two Behemoths about South Africa, the rulers' preoccupation was the dissatisfaction of their masses at home — and far, far away was the Third World that, to them, was silent. But in truth the Third World spoke loudly and clearly; it didn't wish to tie its fate to either one of the two nuclear poles of capitalism. That is to say, that was "in the air," kept developing, and is ongoing.

The co-existence of two different "systems" could be seen in their true state — as merely different forms of world state-capitalism. What was pushing at Reagan

and Gorbachev to smile was the concrete crisis in each one's country revealed by the dissatisfaction of the masses in their countries and the continuing unrest in all of the Third World, climaxed by what is happening in the most "stable" (i.e. militarized) country in the world — South Africa.

The visage of Hitler is projected not only in apartheid South Africa but in all the countries. Just as we now see that the stage of automated and robotized capitalist production has produced a permanent army of the unemployed, so what is new since the 1950s is the emergence of a Third World as a measure of the whole

world. That means the masses of the globe. What the rulers will never understand is that it is not they but the masses in revolt, who are the absolute opposite, who will win.

**Class II — The State of the Union and Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program**

We all know that in January the President has to deliver what is called the State of the Union address. All media pundits — economists as well as politicians — also sum up the year and try to see into the next. Statistics continue very nearly endlessly through January and into February.

We will consider them as we ponder the headline of the week. But to really embark on one's task as a revolutionary worker-student-youth theoretician, we need to turn back the clock over a century to what may seem irrelevant, but will be a profound illumination of today — Marx's Critique of the Gotha Program.

In that work, Marx (in what he called "Marginal Notes") commented on the proposed union of "Marxists" (Eisenachists) and Lassalleans that was being founded to fight Prussian overlords. Bismarck's Germany was in its most reactionary period following the White Terror of the first counter-revolution in France against the first attempt for a workers' republic, the Paris Commune. So new were the truly new human relations emerging in the Paris Commune — with the women having been the first to sound the alarm and

10513

take up arms, as well as with men working out production relations in so new a form — that Marx made his own working existence a beacon for all future attempts to create a new society.

This session will be especially difficult both for the reporters and for the audience itself, precisely because every one of us without exception has views on this, and there are a multiplicity of Left tendencies who are all against Reagan but refuse to discuss the topic of what they are for.

Yet this is precisely what Marx talked about in those Marginal Notes. It is the first time ever that Marx wrote anything resembling a so-called party program, not limiting it to immediate tasks, much less the existing situation, but insisting on projecting what communism would be after the overthrow of bourgeois society.

### *Class III — The Post-World War II World: Latin America's New Type of Worker-Peasant Revolutions*

Although what I am going to say now is just for keeping in the back of your mind, the methodology points us to the relationship of something in the movement from practice that signalled the new as not only against capitalism but also against the so-called Communism in Russia. It was the 1937 Revolution in Spain. It made for a kind of new Divide in the 1930s not only in Spain but projected to the whole world, especially Latin America which was not tied to Russia in the first stages of revolt.

A multi-faceted spontaneity emerged that laid the ground for a new generation of revolutionaries and, at first, even united the many native tendencies from anarchism to socialism. Though soon the global outreach of Stalinism with its murderous attacks on dissidents wasted away that spontaneity, it remains a task for this generation to work out its full dimension, as it definitely will illuminate the whole problem of the dialectic of the "Party."

Whether it was the Debs or Lincoln brigades in the U.S. or the very first nationalization of the oil industry in Mexico, there was, and continues to be, a very new and historical alternative to both the transformation into opposites in Russia and a new stage of capitalism born out of Depression, i.e. state-capitalism, welfare state, co-prosperity sphere.

Relate how this impacted on the way we were to work out state-capitalism as the world stage of capitalism, of which Stalinism was but the Russian name.

Although this is kept in the back of your mind, the central point of Latin America is the new opposites

brought on by the Bolivian Revolution, on the one hand, and Pax Americana on the other, all the way to El Salvador and Nicaragua in the 1980s. Reagan leaves no doubt in anyone's mind that his view of Pax Americana will make headlines throughout 1986 as he continues his mad pursuit to overthrow the Nicaraguan Revolution.

### *Class IV — Revolutions in East Europe from under Totalitarian Communism*

The point here is to show how totally new events, that become what philosophically would be called categories, actually are grounded in what is magnificent about Dialectics — whether that be Dialectics in Thought alone (or maybe I should say where the objective situation, especially the revolution, is not openly seen as a determinate); or whether that be where both philosophy and revolution are definitely seen as determinate, as in Marx (but that was the 19th century, not today).

For Lenin, in 1914-17, dialectics was the determinate in defining not only the politics of being against both imperialism and Second International socialism, but 1917 as the actual concretization of the dialectics of revolution. Central, however, is neither 1917 nor 1937 but the three decades from the 1950s to the 1980s with daily headlines on new forms of worker-opposition, from the birth of Solidarnosc in Poland to the ongoing underground revolts as they are related to new points of cognition — and to such betrayals as Kolakowski's writing, when he was in Poland, "Towards a Marxist-Humanism," but adhering in the 1980s to the new Reaganism.

### *Class V — Revolutionary Journalism and the Absolute Method*

This will be a certain type of summation and concretization of what we have done thus far when our need has been to express events as they happen and the attitude must be that to get the full meaning one must turn to it philosophically. You will be surprised at how many new things are seen in the same event, depending on the relationship it has to history, to our other writings, as well as to what we are trying to project for the next year.

Look again at Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future, not as a whole but singling out something like the 1950 article on the miners' wives, as written when the strike happened and as seen in relationship to the 1969 article

that precedes it in the book, written when the category of "Woman as Reason" was created, as well as in relationship to the article "Marx's New Humanism" and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies," delivered during the Marx Centenary, 1983, and reprinted in the international-Yugoslav dissident philosophic journal Praxis. Try to do the same thing in relationship to something you have written, whatever period you choose, relating it to what you think about the same subject now.

### *Class VI — The Trail to the 1980s from the 1880s: Marx's New Moments and Those in Our Age*

Standing on Marx's Marxist ground and reason for a new relationship of theory to practice, Marxist-Humanism saw in the new moments of Marx in the 1880s a trail to the 1980s. Our tasks begin there, but that is not where they end. It is the todayness that has to be worked out anew in each epoch, rooted in the concreteness of the new age. That can not be anticipated; it must be worked out anew by the new generation of revolutionaries. That is what we aim at in all these Workshop/Classes.

Absolute Method helped us reach today. Let us all this time concretize it organizationally in 1986 by projecting it to others. Thus our self-development will bring those hungering for philosophy and revolution to join the News and Letters Committees of Marxist-Humanism.