

**A History of  
Worldwide  
Revolutionary  
Developments**

**25 Years  
of**

**Marxist-Humanism  
in the U.S.**

**by Raya Dunayevskaya**

National Chairwoman,  
News and Letters Committees

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25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.

Raya Dunayevskaya

# Prologue: New stage of production, New stage of cognition, New kind of organization

Ever since I began preparing for the celebration of May 5 as the birth-time of history - Marx's new continent of thought - I have been rethinking the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. There was no way to sum up 25 years of the birth and development of the News and Letters Committees as well as **News & Letters** as paper, without taking account of the **philosophic** breakthrough on the Absolute Idea as containing a movement **from practice** as well as from theory. That occurred in 1953. Once the split in the State-Capitalist Tendency, known as Johnson-Forest,<sup>1</sup> was complete in 1955, our very first publication reproduced my May 12-20, 1953 Letters on the Absolute Idea along with the first English translation of Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks**.

In a word, while 1955 saw the birth of News and Letters, both as Committees and as our paper, 1953 saw at one and the same time, the emergence, in the Johnson-Forest Tendency, of open divergencies towards objective events (be it Stalin's death, the East German revolt, the Beria purge, or McCarthyism), as well as towards the subjective idea of what type of paper **Correspondence** was to be and what was its relationship to Marxism.

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In reaching back to 1953, a new illumination disclosed that we were really talking, not about a, single year, but about the period 1949-1954. After all, nothing short of the Second Industrial Revolution had emerged with the introduction of Automation in the mines. The actual

word, Automation, was not invented until five years later during the wildcats in auto in Detroit. **The truth, however, is that Automation did initiate a new stage in Industrial production.**

And since our age refuses to keep the objective and the subjective in totally separate compartments, it was during that period that I was working on three things at one and the same time: 1) I was active in the Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 during the day and evening; 2) Late at night I was translating Lenin's **Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic**, sending these translations with covering letters to Johnson; 3) I was working on a book on "Marxism and State-Capitalism". These three activities led to a three-way correspondence between myself, Johnson, and Lee (Grace Lee Boggs).

Furthermore, insofar as the year 1953 is concerned, something new has just emerged in re-examining that year. Although we had long ago known that Lee and I had totally different analyses of the March 5th death of Stalin and what we were to do about it, it is only now that I can see the link that connects those differences in 1953 to the period, 1949-51. Because philosophic beginnings, the native ground for Marxist-Humanism which emerged in 1949, didn't become manifest until 1953, and because the Letters, in turn, contained what politically didn't come to fruition until the actual split of the Johnson-Forest Tendency in 1955 (at which time they were first mimeographed). It is necessary to begin at the beginning in 1949-51.

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**IT IS IMPORTANT** that we look at the new stage of production, Automation, and the-form of the workers' revolt against it - the 1949-50 Miners' General Strike - in the same way as, in 1953, we looked at the first revolt against state-capitalism and its work-norms in East Berlin. The point is that both stages of production and both forms of revolt were every bit as crucial for the re-emergence of Marx's Humanism in our age, as had been the outbreak of World War II for the birth of the State-Capitalist Tendency. To grasp the divide within the State-Capitalist Tendency as it grappled with the Hegelian

dialectic and the historic re-birth of Marx's Humanism, it is necessary to look at the three-way correspondence on Lenin's **Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic** as Lenin grappled with the Hegelian dialectic at the outbreak of World War I. Let's follow the sequence of letters that accompanied the various sections of Lenin's work I was sending to Johnson and Lee.<sup>2</sup>

On Feb, 18, 1949 I sent the translation of Lenin's notes on the Doctrine of Being. The covering note refers to the "Notes on the Dialectic" Johnson had written in 1948, which had then impressed me very much, but which in 1949 made me call attention to the fact that Johnson "practically skipped over the first book". The same note focused on Lenin's new appreciation of the "self-development of the concept", no matter how "Idealistic" that sounds. Lenin had written: "Hegel analyzes concepts which usually appear dead and he shows that there is movement in them. The finite? That means **movement** has come to an end! Something? That means **not what Other is**. Being in general? That means such indeterminateness that Being=Not-Being...".

It is with this new appreciation I felt for Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks** that a philosophic division started to emerge between the two founders of the State-Capitalist Tendency - Johnson and Forest. My letters to Johnson continued all the way to June 10 before I ever got an acknowledgement of the receipt of any part of the translation. The silence did not stop me from continuing either with the translation or the covering notes.

Thus, on Feb. 25, I sent him a translation of Lenin's notes on the Doctrine of Essence, singling out three new points for a "historical materialist" to be concerned with: 1) Suddenly Lenin was emphasizing very strongly the 'sequence of dates of publication which showed Hegel's **Logic** (1813) to have preceded Marx's **Communist Manifesto** (1847), and that to have preceded Darwin's **Origin of the Species** (1859); 2) Furthermore, Lenin was now emphasizing the genius of **Hegel's** appreciation, not just of Essence but also of Appearance as against the Kantian impenetrability of the

"thing-in-itself": 3) Lenin was breaking fully with his previous stress on the theory of the primacy of "Causality", now seeing that what is cause becomes what is effect, and vice versa. Instead, he was stressing totality, insisting that: "totality, wholeness, is richer than law". At that point he was underlining the language of certain "definitions" of totality by Hegel, such as "**sundered completeness**", and the definition of Identity as "separated difference".

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**WHEN, ON MARCH 12**, I concluded the translation of Lenin's work and sent Johnson the section on the Doctrine of the Notion, my covering note for it no doubt shocked him: "Let me say at the start that although you have entered into this 'conspiracy' with Lenin, the outstanding difference between the two versions (of the Dialectic) is striking. You will note that Lenin's notes on the Notion are as lengthy as those on the Introduction, and Doctrines or Being and Essence combined... although you spent that much time on Notion, and included its practice, the thing you chose most to stop at and say: **hic Rhodus, hic salta** to was the Law of Contradiction in Essence... (but Lenin) chooses to single out the section on the Idea".

I concluded that Lenin no longer "feared" the Absolute, seeing it both as unity of theoretical and practical idea, as the method of absolute cognition, and as criticism of all Marxists, including himself. Here is how Lenin had put it: "Aphorism: Marxists criticized the Kantians and Humists at the beginning of the 20th century more in the Feuerbachian (and Buchnerian) than in a Hegelian manner".

Contrast this to what Johnson and Lee drew from my translation when they discussed it between themselves on May 27: "Previous to 1914 the whole revolutionary movement, the Second International and all the rest or them, were essentially in the Realm of Being. Even Lenin before 1914 was not very conscious of Essence, although the objective situation in Russia drove him to the Logic. The key to Lenin's notes on Logic is this relation to Essence. We today have not only to do Essence, but also Notion, the dialectic of the

party". Lenin, they claimed, "is more concerned with self-movement than he is with Notion".

It is very nearly beyond comprehension to find how they could make such a claim in the face of the fact that Lenin's commentary on the Doctrine of the Notion was more comprehensive than what Lenin had written on all the rest of the Logic combined. In truth, as early as the Preface and Introduction, before he ever got into the Science of Logic "proper", Lenin called attention to the fact that the three categories of Notion - Universal, Particular, Individual - were precisely where Marx "flirted" with Hegel, especially in Chapter I of Capital. Which is why, when Lenin made his own leaps, he insisted that no Marxist had understood Capital, "especially Chapter I", unless he had studied the whole of Logic.

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**PERHAPS WE CAN UNDERSTAND** part of the reason why when we read the letter in which Johnson finally (on June 10, 1949) first acknowledged the translation of Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks** and my commentaries. He wrote: "You are covering a lot of ground and it is pretty good. But after conversations with G<sup>3</sup> & reading (carefully, this time) your correspondence, I feel that we are still off the point..." Clearly, it is not I with whom they disagreed as hotly as they did with Lenin. Indeed, they had not the slightest notion of what Lenin was talking about until July 9, when finally Lee did get down to the Doctrine of Notion as Lenin worked it out. They continued to be, preoccupied with their own great philosophic knowledge, Johnson stressing to Lee, "After weeks of painful back and forth, in and out, **you and I bearing the burden...**".

Whatever "burden" they were bearing it certainly wasn't comprehension of Lenin's Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic, though Johnson continued to tell me precisely how many words I was to write on Capital, how many on Logic (1,000 words on each topic!). I plunged into a concrete study of differences in Lenin, pre- and post-1914, and then into how the dialectic affected the varying

structural changes in Capital, as well as the objective development of capitalist production from the end of the 19th century to the present.

Finally, on July 9, 1949, Lee began seriously to go at Lenin's Notebooks as well as Hegel's Doctrine of the Notion: "In the final section on Essence (Causality) and the beginning of the section on Notion, Lenin breaks with this kind (Kantian) of inconsistent empiricism. He sees the limitation of the scientific method, e.g., the category of causality to explain the relation between mind and matter. Freedom, subjectivity, notion - those are the categories by which we will gain knowledge of the subjectively real".

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**EXCEPT FOR SEVERAL** letters by me on the changes in the structure of **Capital** (see those dated Jan. 24, Jan. 30, June 7, 1950, and Jan 15, 1951), the three-way philosophical correspondence stopped at 1950, as we prepared to face a new (and last) convention with the SWP by writing the document **State-Capitalism and World Revolution**. It is true that that document, dated August 1950, had, for the first time, a section directly on philosophy, written by Lee. Peculiarly enough, it centered, not on the Absolute Idea - which we had reached (but not completed) in our three-way correspondence - but on Contradiction. The following year, the Johnson-Forest Tendency left the SWP for good and all, but we did not at once declare ourselves publicly as an independent Marxist tendency. The Korean War and McCarthyism were still raging, and we were experimenting with a decentralised form of organization and a new form of paper - **Correspondence** - but only in mimeographed form.

By 1953, it was decided to come out with a printed, public paper, and towards that end we were preparing for the first (and what turned out to be the last) convention of what had been the united Johnson-Forest Tendency. **Everything changed with the death of Stalin on March 5, when suddenly it wasn't only the objective situation that had so radically changed, but divergencies appeared**



**between Lee and me within the Tendency.** Let us look at the sequence of events that followed Stalin's death.

That very same day I wrote a political analysis which stressed that an incubus had been lifted from the minds of both the masses and the theoretician: and that, **therefore**, it was impossible to think that this would not result in a new form of revolt on the part of the workers. Secondly, when Charles Denby (the Black production worker who was to become the editor of **News & Letters** after the split) called me upon hearing of Stalin's death, I asked him to inquire about other workers' reactions to the event. When he reported these conversations, I suggested a second article that would reproduce the 1920-21 Trade Union debate between Lenin and Trotsky within the context of both Russia and the U.S., [in] 1953. Denby not only approved both ideas but the very next day brought me a worker's expression: "I have just the one to take Stalin's place - my foreman". It was that expression which became the jumping-off point for my analysis of the 1920-21 debate, on the one hand, and Stalin's death in 1953, on the other. The article was called "Then and Now".

Lee (who was then on the West Coast and acting as editor that month) had a very different view of what kind of analysis of Stalin's death was needed, because - far from seeing any concern with that event on the part of American workers - she made her point of departure the fact that some women in one factory, instead of listening to the radio blaring forth the news of Stalin's death, were exchanging hamburger recipes. She so "editorialized" my analysis and so passionately stressed the alleged indifference of the American proletariat to that event, that the article became unrecognizable. It was included in the mimeographed **Correspondence** of March 19, 1953 (Vol. 3, No. 12) as "Why Did Stalin Behave That Way?".

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**IN DETROIT, I WAS** preparing a "Special Feature" for the issue of **Correspondence** of April 16, 1953 (Vol 4, No. 2), devoted to the 1920-21 debate, which carried the subtitle: "An Historical Event and

an Organizational Incident". The following issue, April 30 (Vol 4, No. 3), likewise had a "Special Feature", which described the dispute over the political analysis, holding that it wasn't possible to substitute a description of the indifference of a few women in a single factory exchanging hamburger recipes for the political analysis of the ramifications of a world event such as Stalin's death. That issue then reproduced the article on Stalin's death as originally written.

Clearly, the whole month of April was taken up with this dispute and the polemical letters that accompanied it, by which time I was so exhausted that I asked for a week off. It was during that week that I wrote two things: One was a critique of Deutscher - whom I called a Stalinist parading as a Trotskyist - saying of his analysis of the "collectivity of leadership" that it had, in fact, always been the course toward totalitarianism's single maximum leader, and at no time more so than when Stalin arose out of his so-called "collective leadership".

The other was the May 12 Letter on the Absolute Idea. I returned to Detroit, and though I plunged into organizational activity, I couldn't resist going from **Science of Logic** and **Phenomenology of Mind**, with which the May 12 letter was concerned, to the **Philosophy of Mind** on May 20. The point that was singled out by Lee, who had called them nothing short of "the equivalent of Lenin's Notebooks for our epoch", was the fact that I had discerned a movement from practice. Johnson refused to discuss the Letters, sent Lee to Detroit with the promise that he would comment after he returned to England and after we had finished with our convention, to be held in July.

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**AS WE KNOW, THE** subjective movement - not of intellectuals debating, but of millions of masses in motion - transforms the objective scene totally. In this case, the June 17, East German Revolt which erupted was followed, within two weeks, by a revolt from inside Russia - the slave labor camp of Vorkuta. Both events so electrified the world that this time there was no way to narrow the question to an "internal matter". The July convention, however,

proceeded without any reference to those Letters on the Absolute Idea. Thus, no one knew either that they contained an anticipation of a movement from practice, or that they had fully worked out a logical conclusion of all that three-way correspondence from 1949 to 1951. The convention proceeded to vote for preparing the first printed **Correspondence** in September and date-lining it October 3, 1953.

What was happening objectively in the world, however, had little regard for the fact that Lee and I had agreed to stop the polemic. The East German revolt had so shaken up the Russian bureaucracy that it brought about the first form of deStalinization. Though it was not yet designated as deStalinization, the truth is that Stalin's heir tried hard to disassociate himself from the immediate causes of the totality of the Russian crisis. Thus, the post-Stalin rulers stopped the Korean War: shot Beria, the head of the Secret Service and the most hated man of the totalitarian bureaucracy: and instituted some mild reforms, such as a turn to consumerism - without however, demurring to Malenkov as the one allegedly chosen by Stalin.

In my analysis of the Beria purge, though I called attention to the fact that when thieves fall out, the one who was "not to be forgotten, although little known at present" was Khrushchev, my main point was: "We are at the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism. That does not mean the state-capitalist bureaucracy will let go of its iron grip. Quite the contrary. It will shackle them more... what it does mean is that from the center of Russian production, from the periphery of the satellite countries oppressed by Russia, and from the insides of the Communist Parties, all contradictions are moving to a head and the open struggle will be a merciless fight to the end". What I stressed was: "There is no getting away from it, the Russian masses are not only ill-fed, ill-clad, and ill-housed. **They are rebellious**".

There was no way of keeping this article out of the Lead of the first issue of the printed **Correspondence**, because that was what was happening in the objective world and we were now public. That did not, however, mean that Johnson and Lee greeted it enthusiastically.

Quite the contrary. It was met with the same hostility as was my analysis of Stalin's death, and the critique of it by followers of Johnson and Lee continued for several issues.

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**THE ANALYSES OF BOTH** Stalin and Beria were written while McCarthyism was raging in the country. All three events brought about a sharp conflict between Johnson and Lee on the one side, and me on the other. It was clear that in the two years between leaving the SWP and the appearance of **Correspondence** there had developed in the followers of Johnston a real diversion from Marxism as well as from the American revolution. Just as Lee said Marxism was Europe's responsibility, not ours, so now Johnson said that the stewards' movement in Britain rather than the American workers here could dissipate the war clouds over Formosa.

The truth is that they were not prepared to fight McCarthyism, once the war clouds began to form and we were listed in December 1954. When Johnson could not win a majority of the organization, he broke it up.<sup>4</sup> War and revolution have always constituted the Great Divide between Marxist revolutionaries and escapists.

Within a short month, we held our first Conference, which decided that our new publication, **News & Letters**, would appear on the second anniversary of the June 1953 East German revolt; that it would be edited by a production worker; and that I should complete the work on Marxism, now known as **Marxism and Freedom - From 1776 Until Today**. At the same time that we singled out the four forces of revolt - rank and file labor, Blacks, women and youth - we projected the calling of a Convention within a year to create, for the first time, a Constitution for the committee form of organization we were working out as against a "vanguard party to lead". In November, 1955, we published as our first pamphlet the translation of Lenin's **Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic**, along with my Letters on the Absolute Idea.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Johnson (C.L.R. James) broke with Forest (Raya Dunayevskaya), co-founder of the State-Capitalist Tendency, in March, 1955. News and Letters Committees began functioning at once as Marxist-Humanists.

<sup>2</sup> The letters from Feb. 18, 1949 through Jan. 15, 1951 are included in Vol. XIII of the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, "Marxist-Humanism, 1941 to Today: Its Origin and Development In America", available on microfilm from the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. 48202. Parenthetical references in this article refer to specific Volumes In this Collection.

<sup>3</sup> G was Grace Lee.

<sup>4</sup> See "Johnsonism: An Appraisal" by O'Brien, a 1956 Bulletin which is included in the Archives.

# 1. Where to begin: Laying New Theoretical and practical foundations and establishing new international relations

**THE UNIQUENESS OF** our original contributions to Marx's Humanism was first manifested in catching a direct link to it in 1955, at the very time when we were most concrete about the negative features of our state-capitalist age.

It is true that the germ of Marx's Humanism was present from the very beginning of my break with Trotsky at the outset of World War II and my subsequent study of the class nature of Russia as a state-capitalist society. An unpublished section of that analysis "Labor and Society", did root itself in an 1844 essay by Marx on the role of labour as the very essence of the class nature of any society. However, I did not then single out Humanism as the focal point, nor did the State-Capitalist Tendency, when it enjoyed a brief, six-week, independent existence in 1947 and published the 1942 essay in one of its mimeographed bulletins (See Vol. IV, Sec. III of the Marxist-Humanist Archives).

The major document of the Tendency, **State-Capitalism and World Revolution**, dismissed Humanism because, in the late 1940s, it had appeared in the forms of Existentialism and of Christian Humanism. It was only after the final break with Johnson; it was only when new forms of workers' revolts sprang up - that the Humanism of Marx was brought unto the historic stage of our own age.

The year 1980 is an especially relevant vantage point from which to view the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S., both because a quarter of a century is a serious enough period of time to measure

the political-philosophic analyses against the objective world events: and because wars, even when they are but distant clouds on the horizon, do form the Divide also within Marxist groups - if, within those groups, there is an element unable to meet the objective challenge.

At our birth we were at once put to the test; not only because of the McCarthyite listing of our Tendency, which the Johnson faction sought to escape, but because, especially because, of our attitude to objectivity on three very different levels: determining how to fight McCarthyism when war clouds formed; recognizing the movement from practice which was itself a form of theory - in East Berlin: in Detroit: in Montgomery, Alabama: and testing, in the philosophic sphere, Russia's attack on Marx's Humanist Essays during the undercurrent of proletarian revolts.

No doubt, great illumination on Carter's 1980 drive for war (with the old Cold War warrior, Reagan, still further to the Right) could be gained from a look back at what happened with the appearance of war clouds over Formosa in the mid-1950s, when McCarthyism was still prevalent both in the form of the reactionary old China lobby's jingoistic refrain: "Who lost China?", and in the form of attacks on the Left so virulent as to cause splits within it as well, including the break-up of the State-Capitalist Tendency. **But the crucial point of reference for the birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. is embedded in the philosophic capacity to recognize the genius of the masses from below in a way that records its movement from practice as itself a form of theory.**

Beginning with the very first issue of our new publication, **News & Letters**, in June, 1955 in commemoration of the second anniversary of the East German Revolt, we related that revolt to the new, 1955 forms of revolt at home. There were growing wildcats against automation in Detroit and by the end of the year the Montgomery Bus Boycott had erupted in Alabama. Because we saw that event not as some isolated incident against discrimination in a benighted Southern city, but as the beginning of a whole new age of Black

revolt, our editor, Charles Denby - to this day the only Black production worker to edit a Marxist journal - decided to revisit his Alabama home. The second part of his autobiography, **Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**,<sup>5</sup> begins with "Visiting Montgomery".

In a word, both nationally and internationally, and not just locally, the revolts and wildcats were recorded not alone as militant happenings, but as those new forms of workers' revolt that signified a new stage of cognition as well. And, indeed, the third testing came in the philosophic sphere.

It is not that the leading Russian theoretician, Karpushin, had any such goal in mind. The very opposite was the case. In launching his attack on the young Marx's Humanist Essays (the now famous **1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts**), Karpushin was banking on the fact that the article would be taken in the guise in which he presented it: freeing the "materialist" Marx from the abstruseness of the "idealistic" Hegelian phrase Marx was using - "negation of the negation". American pragmatists fell into the trap; "negation of the negation" became the butt of their jokes.

Convinced that what the Russians were attacking had nothing whatever to do with the alleged abstruseness of "negation of the negation" (which, for Marxists had always stood for revolution): that it had everything to do with the here and now, specifically in East Europe - I criticized both the Russian state-capitalists calling themselves Communist theoreticians and the American pragmatists.<sup>6</sup> I insisted that, far from the polemic being a matter of dogmatic hair-splitting, it hid a fear of revolution, and that Russia must be sensing a new revolution in East Europe similar to the East German revolt they had driven underground.

The great Hungarian Revolution broke out the following year. Five months before that historic occurrence, we held the first Convention of News and Letters Committees. So firmly grounded were we in the totally new movement from practice for freedom and so confident



were we that the 1955 Russian attack on Marx's Humanist Essays did signify more revolts to come, that my July 8, 1956 report to that first Convention, "Where to Begin", stressed that the "active relationship of theory and practice is the essence of Marxism", and concluded that the "continuous thread from history is **a sort of wireless communication that will first be decoded in our age which will see to it that the idea of workers' freedom is not so feeble that it will not actually come to be in our day**" (See Vol. VI, Sec. II.2).

**FIRST AND FOREMOST**, we considered it of the essence to assure the continuance of **News & Letters** as a workers' paper ... which is at the same time a new form of unity of theory and practice". To that end we made sure that a Black production worker, Charles Denby, would be its editor.

The Constitution we adopted, at one and the same time singled out four forces of revolution - rank and file labor, Black dimension, youth, and women's liberation - and held that, since each generation must interpret Marxism for itself it is up to us to re-establish both the American and the Humanist world roots of Marxism, and to do so in comprehensive, theoretical-historical "book form". **Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until today** was completed the next year.

It was structured on the movement from practice, by no means limited to our age. Quite the contrary, Chapter I begins with "The Age of Revolutions: Industrial, Social-Political, Intellectual". But where the first revolutions of the industrial age are **followed** by the birth of classical political economy and the Hegelian dialectic, Marx's "New Humanism" leads to the **Communist Manifesto**, which **anticipated** the 1848 revolutions. Nevertheless, as Marx's new continent of thought develops and deepens, it is clear that the great historic events like the Civil War in the U.S., followed by the struggles for the 8-Hour Day, and the Paris Commune, exercised so strong an impact on Marx as to change the structure of his greatest theoretical work, **Capital**.

In our own age I felt strongly, as I put it in the Introduction to **Marxism and Freedom**, that: "No theoretician, today more than ever before, can write out of his own head. Theory requires a constant shaping and reshaping of ideas on the basis of what the workers themselves are doing and thinking... Because we live in an age of absolutes - on the threshold of absolute freedom out of the struggle against absolute tyranny - the compelling need for a new unity of theory and practice dictates a new method of writing. At least, it dictated the method by which this book was written".

I thereupon undertook a tour in which I submitted drafts of various chapters to groups of workers (miners especially) and student youth, discussing the book with them in more than one stage of the writing. I then began to submit outlines of the book to intellectuals. It was no easy matter to find a publisher in the mid-1950s for a book on Marx's Humanism that also included, as Appendices, the first English translation both of Marx's **1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts** and Lenin's **Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic**. Even if you disregard McCarthyism's brainwashing, it is still a fact that academia had nothing to say of youth except to describe them as "the beat generation", failing to recognize that a new generation of revolutionaries was, in fact, emerging. In general, American intellectuals were busy declaiming an "End of Ideology" even as a new Third World was struggling to emerge. One intellectual, however, to whom I had submitted an outline long before I had completed **Marxism and Freedom**, wrote enthusiastically: "Your ideas are an oasis in the desert of Marxist thought". It was Herbert Marcuse.

He also, however, deeply disagreed with me on the role of labor, writing that "the composition, structure and the consciousness of the laboring classes", were not as revolutionary as my analysis claimed. Nevertheless, he did feel strongly the need to broaden the dialogue among Marxists, and agreed sufficiently "with the theoretical interpretation of the Marxian oeuvre"<sup>7</sup> to write the Preface.

**ONCE MARXISM AND FREEDOM** finally came off the press in January, 1958, intensive tours were undertaken both here and abroad. Where in West Europe there were signs of such retrogression as the coming of De Gaulle to power, in Africa, a whole new Third World was emerging. The transformation of the Gold Coast into the Republic of Ghana, the first fully independent state in Africa, so inspired those, like Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, who were still in the throes of colonial subjugation, that the whole map of Africa was soon redrawn.

In 1958-59, however, the pitfalls of our state-capitalist age were soon revealed, not only in the retrogressive movement in West Europe, but in the new independent states of Africa which were being sucked into the Imperialist world market both economically and ideologically - as if there really was a fundamental difference between the two nuclear Titans fighting for single world control.

Where **Marxism and Freedom** had concentrated on the Western world, I now wrote a new pamphlet, **Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions**. It was not only a question of remembering a Camerounian I had met in France in 1947 who had told of a magnificent spontaneous revolt in which the entire population, **literally**, "every man, woman and child", was involved in trying to establish independence the minute World War II was over, only to have the French Navy rush in to crush it, just as De Gaulle had massacred the 1943 rebellion in Madagascar.

It was, above all, the need to recognize that the African revolts had preceded the successful national revolution in Asia, but, being unsuccessful then, were now being fought over in a titanic struggle between imperialisms.

For that matter, the same was true of the newly unfolding Latin American revolts initiated by the first great successful rebellion against U.S. Imperialism by Cuba. Here, again, we were witness to a spontaneous revolution that had gained its freedom without any aid from Russia and had declared itself to be against both U.S.

imperialism and Russian totalitarianism.<sup>8</sup> The very next year Castro found himself in the Russian camp.

By the end of 1959, when Eisenhower and Krushchev, "in the spirit of Camp David", were busy talking of peaceful co-existence, China acted as a special pole of attraction for the Third World.

On June 18, 1957, while I was reading the galleys of **Marxism and Freedom**, Mao Tse-tung had caused a world sensation with his speech, "How to Handle Contradiction Among the People", and I had felt the urgency to include a new footnote,<sup>9</sup> which read:

*"The lowest of all today's sophists is the head of the Chinese Communist Party and State, Mao Tse-tung who... has ridden this single tract, which he calls "Contradiction" ever since 1937. At that time he directed his attack against 'dogmatists' who refused to reduce all contradictions in the anti-Japanese struggle and submit to 'the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek' ... By June 18, 1957, after editing with a heavy hand the speech he delivered on Feb. 27th... he reduced the struggle of class against class to a contradiction among 'the people' while he became the champion, **at one and the same time**, of the philosophy of a hundred flowers blooming and one, and **only one Party, the Chinese Communist Party ruling**. Outside of the exploitative class relations themselves, nothing so clearly exposes the new Chinese ruling class as their threadbare philosophy".*

It was the same period in which the intellectual abdication of Johnson, the co-founder of the State-Capitalist Tendency, had led him to devise the following enthusiastic apologia for Nkrumah:

*"In one of the remarkable episodes in revolutionary history, he singlehandedly outlined a programme based on the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Gandhi..."<sup>10</sup>*

To which, I replied:

*"I admit that combining Marx, Lenin and Gandhi is quite a feat. But for a pamphleteer like J. R. Johnson, who thundered so for the Soviet United States of Europe, Soviet United States of Asia, world revolution, the struggle against bureaucracy 'as such', the self-mobilisation of the masses and for new passions and new forces to reconstruct society on totally new beginnings - to end with Nkrumah as the representative of the new, the new, is rather pathetic. There is nothing to add but to say, with Hamlet, 'Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him'".<sup>11</sup>*

**IT WAS THAT VERY** pamphlet on the Afro-Asian revolutions that attracted an altogether new Left Group at Cambridge University in England, Peter Cadogan, who was active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament with which we, of course, solidarized and collaborated,<sup>12</sup> volunteered to bring out a British edition with a new Introduction by myself and new Preface by him.<sup>13</sup>

So many new relations were opened both here and abroad that by the end of 1959 we not only had participated in an international conference in Milan of independent Marxist tendencies that opposed both poles of world capital, U.S. and Russia, but had established an international forum for further dialogue, through a section of Onorato Damen's Prometeo,<sup>14</sup> printed on a different color of paper to distinguish its independent character. In England I had also established the relations with West African revolutionaries which would lead to my trip there in 1962. And soon after my return from Britain a young group in London actually began writing a special page of "British Labour News" in **News & Letters** which they distributed as their front page.

The important gain for Marxist-Humanism, of course, came when Harry McShane - the outstanding revolutionary Scottish fighter and Marxist, who had been one of the original founders of the Communist Party when it stood for the Russian Revolution of 1917 but who had broken with the Party in 1953 - declared himself a Marxist-Humanist in 1959.

Whether one begins with the new spontaneous revolts in East Europe, or the U.S., or Africa; or with the philosophy of Marx's Humanism which inspired a great outpouring of new energies, nationally and internationally, one thing was beyond any doubt: we were face to face with a new beginning that would determine the end.

# Notes

<sup>5</sup> The 1978 edition of **Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal** (South End Press, Boston) reproduces Part I, first published in 1952, and the new Part II as one continuous revolutionary life story. Nevertheless, there is no way not to see the difference between what was written before the break with Johnson and the 25-year self-development that came with becoming the editor of **News & Letters**.

<sup>6</sup> See my letter in **Philosophy of Science**, July, 1956, Vol, 23, No. 3, objecting to the manner in which Americans had reported on the International Congress for the Philosophy of Science, See also **Marxism and Freedom**, pp. 62-66, on Karpushin's first attack in **Questions of Philosophy**, No. 3, 1955.

<sup>7</sup> See Preface to **Marxism and Freedom** by Herbert Marcuse, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> In a speech during the summer of 1959, Castro had declared: "Standing between the two political and economic ideologies or positions being debated in the world, we are holding our own positions. We have named it humanism... This is a humanistic revolution because it does not deprive man of his essence but holds him as its basic aim. Capitalism sacrifices man: the Communist state, by its totalitarian concept, sacrifices the rights of man..." See "History Will Be My Judge", published in **The New Left Review**, Jan-Feb., 1961.

<sup>9</sup> At considerable expense to myself, I should add, since the publisher could see no reason for my insistence on adding yet another "footnote" when the book was already on the presses.

<sup>10</sup> J. R. Johnson, **Facing Reality** (Detroit, Correspondence Publishing Co., 1958), p. 77.

[11](#) **Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions**, fn. 2, p. 9.

[12](#) The dialogue with other activists, like the libertarian-anarchist Laurens Otter, around the question of war and peace, war and revolution, included exchanges and publication of each other's views with many groups and journals.

[13](#) The U.S. edition was published in August 1959: the British in May, 1961.

[14](#) Before we had even reached our first Convention, the report of the split of the State-Capitalist Tendency in the U.S. was noted abroad among Marxist groups. The Italian State-Capitalist Tendency of Onorato Damen published my report to our first Conference, in the Spring 1956 issue of its theoretical journal, **Prometeo**, under the title of "An American Experience". It was the beginning of the international relations which would result in this international conference of state-capitalist tendencies in West Europe in 1959, prompted by the need to fight neo-fascism, signalled by the 1958 rise of De Gualle to power.



## 2. The 1960s: A new generation of revolutionaries. A new Third World. A new theory?

The four forces of revolution that we had singled out at our birth - rank and file labor, Black dimension, youth, women - made it clear that these freedom fighters wanted to speak for themselves. Whether you looked at African freedom fighters in apartheid South Africa, bursting into open revolt;<sup>15</sup> or at Black youth in Greensboro, N.C., sitting-in to begin a new stage of revolt in the U.S.; or at Japanese youth snake-dancing into history by preventing Eisenhower from setting foot in their land - there was no doubt that 1960 had opened a new age.

What was remarkable about the Japanese youth was that their anti-U.S. imperialism meant also breaking with Communism from the Left, and embarking on a study and translation of Marx's Humanist Essays.

Having declared such freedom fighters to be not only force but reason - that is to say, a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory - it became our task, as Marxist-Humanists to work out a new relationship of theory to practice. In creating a forum for the freedom fighters to speak for themselves at the same time as they searched for a theory of liberation, News and Letters Committees, in 1960, published **Workers Battle Automation**. Though Charles Denby edited it, it not only was a collective effort of workers in the basic industries of coal, auto, and steel, but included also the youth, who had been designated as a "beat generation". A young woman of 16 thus wrote in its pages that, far from being "rebels without a cause," they were rebels who refused to accept the rules of a world they did not make: "My vision is one of a new free society in which, among other things, I will not have to wait until I am 21 to be

admitted into the human race." (See p. 61, **Workers Battle Automation**).

# 1961 - Freedom Riders on one hand and Bay of Pigs on the other

The most exciting color of this new decade continued to be Black, but whereas none could avoid recognizing the color, what remained unrecognized was that out of the racist, sexist South arose a form of Women's Liberation. When two Marxist-Humanist women, one Black and one white, Mary Hamilton and Louise Inghram, joined the first Freedom Rides to Mississippi and found themselves thrown into the hell-hole of Hinds County Jail, they found there, ready to help them, a most amazing organization - Woman Power Unlimited.<sup>16</sup> The record of this, as well as of the whole struggle to break down discrimination, comprises the pamphlet, **Freedom Riders Speak For Themselves**.

In action, in jail and out, the Freedom Riders focused not only on the concrete battles but also on the theories of liberation. Louise Inghram describes the enthusiasm with which the special Freedom Rider Issue of **News & Letters** (Aug-Sept., 1961) had been greeted. She had taken for granted it was because their stories had been printed there, but discovered it was, instead, the Editorial on the state of civil rights in the U.S. that was appreciated most. It was an Editorial that had reached back to the history of Abolitionism and forward to today, clearly separating Marxism from Communism: it was reprinted in the pamphlet itself. (Sec 11. 39, **Freedom Riders Speak for Themselves**).

The state of civil rights in the U.S. on which the Editorial had focused revealed the relationship between the events in the Deep South and the new moves to the right by the Administration ever since the infamous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, which had taken place only a few months earlier. It had been then that President Kennedy had declared that "the deeper struggle" is not with arms, but with

"subversion", promptly trying to himself subvert the freedom of the press.

So ominous was the new counter-revolutionary move American imperialism had launched with the invasion, that we had at once decided to issue a Weekly Political Letter. Since we were too few in number and too poor in finances to print more than a monthly paper, these mimeographed letters were offered to all readers, and initiated a new stage of development for us, testing us by measuring our philosophy against the actual objective developments as they were occurring weekly.

**THE FIRST LETTER** was written April 22, 1961 as a "Preliminary Statement on the Crisis over Cuba". While we naturally solidarized with the Cuban masses against U.S. imperialism, we reiterated our opposition to both poles of world state-capitalism - U.S. and Russia, and to Castro's own conception of the "backwardness of the masses" who have to be led. Refusing to "take sides" other than opposition to both sides, we singled out Kennedy's declaration of the "new and deeper struggle that is taking place every day, without arms or fanfare in thousands of villages and markets and classrooms all over the globe" as what must concern us:

*"This is far beyond the Cuban struggle. This is the American revolution. This is the world anti-war struggle. All this the Kennedy Administration has declared war on, and far from battlefields or on them, in trade unions or schools, this 'new frontier' will come to nip in the bud what McCarthyism only blustered about but had no power to stifle. We must expose, root out this threat to our every freedom, before all life is extinguished in a nuclear holocaust".*

The 40 letters that followed (see Vol. VII) demonstrate what political-philosophic intervention means in establishing new international relations, especially in the Third World. (The last letters in the series were written directly from Africa). The weekly commentaries and analyses of world events did not stop at the description of what is, but involved sensing the direction a particular event would later take. The letter written on Oct. 9, 1961, which dealt with the undeclared

wars of imperialism, took up a brief AP dispatch, hidden in the inside pages of the local press that week. It was entitled "Crisis-Soon-To-Be in South Vietnam and the Sending of U.S. Troops."

# 1962 - A year of confrontations, to the brink of nuclear holocaust

1962 was the year we began by reconsidering the whole question of war and revolution on the basis of the new forces of revolt that had arisen in China, with a Special Supplement to the January issue: "Mao Tse-tung, from the Beginning of power to the Sino-Soviet Dispute".

It was also the year we went to Africa to establish new relations there. So sharply did the dynamism of ideas which centered around African Socialism contrast with Daniel Bell's "End of Ideology", which characterized America's tired radicals and pragmatists, that we began referring to "the underdeveloped intellectuals" as the U.S.'s most notable monopoly.

The Gambia, the last sliver of West Africa which still did not have its independence, was the place I spent the most time talking both with the high school youth who displayed the most original and mature thought, and with proletarians who had a long history of struggle that no one had ever bothered to learn about. They told me that as long ago as the end of the First World War they had had a General Strike and that the most popular saying had been "The sun never sets on the British Empire, and the wages never rise." **Africa Today** (July 1962) published the article. "Gambia Closeup: The Gambia Takes the Long, Hard Road to Independence".

Ghana, which had been the first country to gain its independence, turned out to be the most disappointing. Here was a land that had the most international concepts, via both George Padmore and W.E.B. Dubois, who had established his African Encyclopedia there. It was the land that was still considered by all Africans who had not yet gained freedom as their "homeland" - whether that be Patrice Lumumba of the Congo or Robert Sobukwe of South Africa. And yet, when a General Strike erupted, the rulers of Ghana acted like state

rulers anywhere in relation to workers in revolt. (This experience was written up for the Dec 1962 issue of **Africa Today**, in an analysis entitled: "Out of Colonization, into the Fire"). On the other hand, such good relations were established with African socialists in Nigeria that we continued to have direct reports of the labor struggles there for many years. The two way road between Africa and the U.S. has characterized the untold history of the U.S. from its very beginning: it was resumed in our age in the relationships to African Socialism.

Two exciting letters reached me while still in Africa, from such totally different places as Japan and East Europe. From Japan came a letter from a man who had been a founder of the Communist Party there, had broken with it at the outset of World War II, and was thrown into prison for the duration of the war for opposing both his own country's Imperialism and Russian Communism's Hitler-Stalin Pact. His name was Tadayuki Tsushima. He wrote that he had worked out his own position on Russia as a state-capitalist society and asked permission to translate **Marxism and Freedom** into Japanese. The other letter was from an East European dissident who had somehow got hold of a copy of **Marxism and Freedom** and wanted to establish relations with Marxist-Humanists abroad.

**THAT SEPTEMBER, WHEN** our 1962-1963 Perspectives for the organization was entitled "The Time is Now: Organizational Perspectives in Light of the World Situation and our Unique, Theoretical Contributions", (Vol. IX. Sec. III. 3) we were, of course, aware of the many flash-points in the world, the most serious of which was the unrelenting civil war in Algeria. The March 1962 **N&L** warned that the so-called cease-fire in Algeria was but a "prelude to civil war". We were not, however, aware that 1962 would become so perilous a time that we would actually be thrust onto the brink of a nuclear holocaust over the missile crisis in Cuba.

Because nothing could stop the developing revolutions either in Africa or the U.S., and because we were not only analyzing the Black revolution but participating in it, we had made our October 1962 issue a "Special Mississippi Issue" by turning over the front

page to Charles Butts, Editor of the **Mississippi Free Press**, who had been viciously beaten for speaking out there. Our own editorial was entitled: "Either Freedom Here and Now - or the Magnolia Jungle".

Suddenly, on Oct. 22, the whole world was thrust right to the brink of a nuclear war. No longer did anyone talk of history or theory. It was now nothing short of life and death. Our statement on the brink-of-war situation made clear that the Kennedy-Khrushchev confrontation was perilous enough without falling into the mire of the Left which was trying to argue that Russia had as much right to have missiles in Cuba as the U.S. to have bases in Turkey. We demonstrated a completely different ground by holding out the vision of social revolution and a totally new society on human foundations.

[17](#)

That infamous world-terrifying event on the high seas - when Kennedy was sealing off Russian ships on their way to Cuba, an island 90 miles from U.S. shores where Khrushchev had placed missiles aimed at the U.S. - proved all over again that the World was divided into two, and only two, nuclear Titans, each fighting for single world control. It also revealed how inconsequential to both U.S. imperialism **and** Russian Communism was Cuba if ever it impinged on their imperialist goals.

Though Cuba's life was on the line, neither Khrushchev nor Kennedy bothered to ask Cuba's views, either before or after the decision to place missiles there, and then remove them.

A great deal more was involved than writing about this in the **Two Worlds** column of the November issue. "Ideology and Revolution: A Study of What Happens After", which discussed Cuba's tailing of Russia. And more was also involved than editorializing that "Kennedy and Khrushchev Bring the World Close to the Point of No Return" in the same issue. In this life and death question, with death looming as the more likely victor, it was imperative not to act as if the world had already come to an end and nothing could be done about



it. On the contrary, new eyes were needed to look at every possible force of revolution. It was a question both of reality and of philosophy to look at the whole globe for new points of departure.

As 1962 ended, with a new confrontation between India and China, the two exponents of "peaceful coexistence" in Asia, we were opening up new relations with freedom fighters in Africa, dissidents in China, the youth in Japan, and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England. But what towered above all others as masses in motion was the Black dimension in the U.S.

# 1963 - The power of negativity

"The power of negativity - the dialectic - never ceases to amaze me", I wrote on Feb. 12, 1963. The reference was to the process, by which the statement we had intended to issue on the so-called Emancipation Proclamation had been transformed into **American Civilization on Trial** and signed by the whole National Editorial Board.

Since 1963 was the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, once the immediate missile crisis was over, Kennedy rushed to take advantage of that year and present himself as an alleged "freedom fighter". We, instead, held that not only could the Emancipation Proclamation not be glorified, but we must show the Black masses as vanguard precisely because it impossible to separate them from any part of American history. Black masses in motion were revealed as the touchstone of the whole of American development, whether one took 1776 as the point of departure and showed the Declaration of Independence in its true limited light, i.e. that it meant independence for whites only: or the 1830 Abolitionist movement when the white intellectuals did gain a new dimension by joining with the Blacks to carry on a 30-year struggle that culminated in a Civil War: whether one took America's plunge into imperialism with the 1898 Spanish-American War, when the Blacks were the first to establish an Anti-Imperialist League and demonstrate their affinity with Latin America "which had known, ever since 1820, that while the Monroe Doctrine could protect it from **European invasion**, there was no such protection from **American aggression for which the Doctrine was designed**" (p. 16); or whether one brought it all the way to 1963.

It was clear that instead of writing a mere statement on the Emancipation, **American Civilization on Trial** had become a 200-year history of American development,<sup>18</sup> which delved, at the same time, into Karl Marx's relationship to the Civil War and the post-war

struggles for the eight-hour day, and to Lenin's relationship to the Negro in the U.S. who was made integral to his 1920 Resolution on the National Question.

**OUR INTRODUCTION BEGAN** with the section: "Of Patriots, Scoundrels and Slave-Masters" - referring to the FBI, the Presidency, the Attorney General, J. Edgar Hoover, and the Congress. Our Conclusion ended with "What We Stand For and Who We Are". We said:

*"Today, as in the days of the Abolitionists, we see the new beginning. It is high time now to proceed to a middle, a theory; and an end - the culmination of the creative drama of human liberation freed from exploitation and discrimination and the wars that go with it..."*

*"The ideal and the real are never as far apart as the philistines, in and out of power, would make it appear. Whether we take the 200 years of American development or the last 20 years of world development, one thing is clear: the turning point for the reconstruction of society occurs when theory and practice finally evolve a unified organizational form. We have reached the turning point".*

The pamphlet came off the press on the eve of the June 23 "Walk to Freedom" in Detroit when over a quarter of a million poured down Woodward Avenue to show their solidarity with the struggles going on in the South and to bring it North, **American Civilization on Trial** quickly became a "textbook" for the Freedom Movement.

We found that important Black historians saw in it an affinity of ideas. Thus J. A. Rogers wrote in his column "History Shows" in the

### **Pittsburgh Courier**

of Aug. 3, 1963: "As I am on the subject of books, I will mention a few of the others I have received, though Courier book-reviewing is done by Mr. Schuyler. Among them is

## **American Civilization on Trial: The Negro as Touchstone of History**

. It gives an able and excellent review of what the Negro has been through in the past century, and is well-documented, too. Is the United States losing the global struggle in the minds of men because of its treatment of the Negro? It gives the answer... Please get it".

1963 was also the year that **Presence Africaine** published my article on Marxist-Humanism. Our concentration on the American revolution did not stop the development of our international relations. The analysis of the new France-German axis carried in the March 1963 issue of **N&L** was discussed internationally, especially by the state-capitalist groupings that had met in 1959. An Italian edition of **Marxism and Freedom** for which I had written a new Introduction came off the press.

And at home the intensification of activity among the youth which the Black revolt had inspired was marked for us by the publication of a new pamphlet, **The Young Marxist-Humanist**, and its extension as a regular broadside on the UCLA campus.

# 1964 - From the Hazard, Ky., miners' strike and Berkeley student rebellion to Mao's bomb and Khrushchev's fall

Just as we had given over **N&L** for a special Mississippi Issue in 1962, so in March 1964, we published a special Hazard, Ky. issue. As soon as we had learned that the striking Kentucky miners and their wives had organized themselves into an Appalachian Committee for Full Employment, we sent down as our own reporter and photographer, Andy Phillips, the coal miner who had been active in the historic 1949-50 General Strike and was now an editor of **N&L**.

At the same time that we were working with the miners in Kentucky, we were also involved in new activities in Mississippi - the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. Eugene Walker - who later wrote, "My mind was made up for me by the murder of the civil rights workers James Chancy, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner..." - worked as a teacher in the Freedom Schools where **American Civilization on Trial** was widely used as a textbook of freedom. Not only that. The two-way road between Africa and this second American fighting for freedom continued to intensify. Thus the very same issue of **N&L** (June-July 1964) which focused on Mississippi also carried a direct report and page one picture from Nigeria on the victorious two-million strong General Strike there.

No sooner had the white students returned from their Mississippi Freedom Summer experience to their Northern schools, especially Berkeley, California, than they were at once thrown into a struggle with the administration over every question from the civil rights movement to what is education. It resulted in the most massive student revolt ever - the Free Speech Movement. Mario Savio, the philosophy student who had been thrust into the leadership of the FSM, contributed "Berkeley, Fall", and Eugene Walker contributed "Mississippi Freedom Summer" to our pamphlet **The Free Speech**

**Movement and the Negro Revolution.** Because we never separate on-the-spot "reports from below" from philosophy, the pamphlet carries two very different types of appendices: "Inside Sprout Hall" by Joel Pimsleur, and "The Theory of Alienation: Marx's Debt to Hegel", the lecture students had most frequently requested of me.

**AT THE VERY TIME** that these great movements from practice were developing - in class battles, in the civil rights struggles, and in the student movement - a second (paper-back) edition of **Marxism and Freedom** came out which included a totally new chapter on the Sino-Soviet Conflict in which the question had been posed: "Can There Be War Between Russia and China? The Non-Viability of State-Capitalism". A Japanese edition which followed it a few months later, and which also included this new chapter, had no sooner come off the press than China exploded its first bomb, and Khrushchev fell from power.

The whole year had proved the urgent relevance of the analysis in the January-February 1964 **Two Worlds** about how the Western intellectuals had helped Khrushchev rebury Lenin's philosophic notebooks by reviving the vulgar materialism of his **Materialism and Empirio-Criticism** from which he had broken:

*"Instead of helping Khrushchev in the 35th year since the first Russian publication of Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks**, once again to perpetrate a live burial of these dialectic notes, isn't it high time finally to come to grips with their challenge to today's thought? Without such a meaningful encounter, the ossification of Western thought is sure 'to outdistance' Communist putrefaction".*

Thus, the relationship of ideology to state-capitalism was alive in every development, be it the new generation of revolutionaries, white and Black, or the Goldwater nomination: be it the Sino-Indian War<sup>19</sup> or the developments in Japan where the appearance of **Marxism and Freedom** led to an invitation to lecture in Japan: or be it just the usual professional anti-Communist American pragmatism,

celebrating their analysis of the 10th anniversary of Stalin's death by reburying Lenin's philosophic legacy.

# 1965-1966 - The Vietnam War and the 'Cultural Revolution'

With Lyndon Johnson's bombing of North Vietnam in 1965, the whole world situation changed, including what the New Left was unwilling to see - that China could no longer claim to be "the besieged fortress" when the bombs were raining on Hanoi. Not only that. the "Cultural Revolution" was soon to arise and deepen all illusions about China being a veritable new world. In any case, a great anti-Vietnam War movement soon literally covered the earth. In the U.S. it became the most popular anti-war movement, comprising a massive student movement which adopted the Black Revolution's slogan, "Hell, no, we wont go", and eventually growing to include every segment of the population.

Laboring under the illusion that activity and more activity and still more activity would bring about revolution and a new social order, the movement was so eager to concentrate all its energy against U.S. imperialism that, instead of unfurling a totally independent banner, it tailed either Russia or China. We, on the other hand, while solidarizing with Vietnam revolutionaries and being active in the movement against U. S. imperialism as the greatest enemy,<sup>20</sup> refused to whitewash either Russia or China, as if they had no nationalist or even imperialist interests of their own. And we did not leave it at just pointing out that the Cultural Revolution showed China's interests centered not around Vietnam but on its view that Russia was Enemy Number One.

Where all others in the New Left had their eyes fixed on the 1986 Cultural Revolution - accepting it **as it was promulgated by Mao** - we pointed to the year 1965 as the crucial year of the collapse of Mao's aim for the Djakarta-Peking axis. Far from any new axis, what resulted was the bloody counter-revolution that totally destroyed the Indonesian Communist Party which had toed the Maoist line.



Where all others took the Cultural Revolution at face value, we were listening to the voices of dissent from the Chinese masses, proletarian and youth, whose goals were entirely different from those of Mao.

**AT THE SAME TIME** we were active on three other fronts. First was the international dialogue that was developing around Socialist Humanism. I contributed an article on "Marx's Humanism Today" to the first international symposium on that question which included East as well as West Europe, Asia and Africa.<sup>21</sup>

Second was a trip to Hong Kong which brought me into contact with newly arrived Chinese dissidents. One of those I interviewed, Jade,<sup>22</sup> considered the chapter in **Marxism and Freedom** on "The Challenge of Mao Tse-tung" so relevant, both because of the retrogressionism of Mao and the criticism of Chou Yang's defamation of Marx's Humanist Essays, that she undertook to translate the chapter. It was soon published in Hong Kong and smuggled into mainland China.<sup>23</sup>

Third, was the group in Japan which had been responsible for the Japanese edition of **Marxism and Freedom** and which was now busy publishing our pamphlets on class struggles, like **Workers Battle Automation**, as well as analyses such as the Afro-Asian pamphlet. They arranged an extensive lecture tour throughout Japan for me. They were also anxious to transmit their own views on Vietnam, and we brought out a special bulletin of discussion articles from Japan, after my return, "The Vietnam War and the World Today", (See Vol. IX, Section VI, 3). But I found that the Marxists who had agreed that Russia and China were state-capitalist societies wanted to stop at the economic analysis rather than continue to the philosophy of Marx's humanism. We were the only ones who devoted an entire issue (**N&L**, Dec 1966) to present both that view and our own. Tadayuki Tsushima's contribution was entitled "State-Capitalism and Socialist Revolution". Mine was entitled "State-capitalism and Marx's Humanism".

It has become clear that although the one factor above all others that had motivated my trip to the East was the attempt to find collaborators for a new book on the relationship of philosophy to revolution, that task was mine. It took form as **Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao.**

# 1967-1968-1969 - New passions and new forces: Black uprisings, near-revolutions, the Women's Liberation Movement

It became ever more imperative to rediscover the missing link of a philosophy of liberation as the 1960s were drawing to a close and guerilla wars appealed to the New Left as a substitute for a social revolution. As far back as 1960, I had begun summarizing Hegel's major philosophic works - **Phenomenology of Mind**, **Science of Logic**, and the **Smaller Logic** from the **Encyclopedia of Philosophic Sciences**. By 1967 I restudied Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks** and created notes for a series of lectures others might be able to use for a series of classes, while I undertook my own lecture tour.

The most urgent question that was being raised was how to fight imperialism, how to transform an imperialist war into a social revolution, and whether it was possible to consider guerilla war as a substitute for social revolution, rather than seeing that, far from being a shortcut to revolution, it was the "long road to tragedy". None answered the question more tragically than that great revolutionary, Che Guevara, who met death in 1967 as he tried to start a revolution in Bolivia, with no mass base whatever.<sup>24</sup>

As for the Black uprisings that covered the U.S. following the Watts Revolt of 1965, it was in Detroit in 1967 that they reached a climax, because it was there that the class distinction so dominated the revolt that it was clear it was not so much against "whitey", as against white landlords, white merchants, and white police. Indeed, while many Black stores were spared the torch, Black merchants who had gouged the community were not spared. And unlike other cities, in Detroit the repossession as well as the sniping was

integrated. The country was aflame with a Black revolt that was a challenge to capitalism as well as to racism, and clearly its anti-Vietnam War activities were under-taken not as pacifists but as revolutionaries.

1968 brought everything to a climax as rebellion reached a highpoint in Paris that Spring,<sup>25</sup> when students were joined by no less than 10 million workers in General Strike. Instead, however, of proving Cohn-Bendit's view that activity was primary and that theory could be picked up "en route", the almost-revolution in France aborted and De Gaulle came out the victor without firing a single shot.

The disastrous counter-revolution was the one that saw Russia move in to crush Prague Spring. The news of the tanks rolling into Czechoslovakia came the very morning that the report we had received direct from Prague, "At the Crossroads of Two Worlds", was coming off the press, in our Aug-Sept. 1968 issue. We at once re-published it in a full pamphlet, **Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter Revolution**, together with a Foreword written jointly by myself as Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees in the U.S. and Harry McShane as Chairman of the Marxist-Humanist Group, Glasgow.

**IT HAD BEGUN TO** look as if all the great revolts of the 1960s had come to an end - whether in East or West Europe, or in the U.S., where Nixon was soon to take over the Presidency. It was just then, however, that a still newer and more unexpected revolutionary force was arising in Mao's China - and precisely in Mao's own district of Hunan. It was the Sheng Wu-lien, who demanded the concretization of the Paris Commune for our age, for China - the very country which was in the forefront of the greatest world contradictions and deepest revolutions. We rushed to print the Sheng Wu-lien document (See Vol. XI, Sec. II, 3).

Still another new movement - Women's Liberation - had also been arising out of the Left. Though it did not gain the attention of the media until the 1968 protest in Atlantic City against the demeaning

Miss America pageant (which the media sensationalized as a "burning of the bras"), the truth is that elements of this new force could be felt - if you knew how to recognize it - ever since World War II when women had begun to fill the factory jobs left vacant by the drafting of every eligible man, and Black women had begun migrating North to those jobs.<sup>26</sup>

It was no accident that at our birth in 1955 we had already singled out women as one of the four forces of revolution<sup>27</sup> any more than it was an accident that our women Freedom Riders had found Woman Power Unlimited in Mississippi, or that it was Black women trying to organize nursing homes in Baltimore with whom Marxist-Humanists like Michael Connolly worked to establish the Maryland Freedom Union.<sup>28</sup> By 1969 we decided to publish the many voices we had heard and elicited, together with a lecture I had given to WRAP at Chicago University that April<sup>29</sup> in a mimeographed pamphlet we called **Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices**. In 1970 we issued it as a printed pamphlet, which attracted many non-Marxist-Humanists.<sup>30</sup>

We had also begun circulating draft chapters of **Philosophy and Revolution** to various conferences that we called. Whether they were conferences of youth, of women or of Black activists, all had a chance to read the drafts first, hear my presentation, and then proceed to their own discussion and to drawing their own organizational conclusions. The most exciting of these was the Black-Red Conference held in January, 1969, out of which came the "Black Red View" column for the paper written by John Alan.

Minutes of the Black/Red and the Women's Liberation Conferences were published in special bulletins so that non-members as well as members of the main forces of revolution could become part of the process by which, in the early 1970s, we would tackle what I called "Absolute Idea as New Beginning", both in theory and in practice (See Vol. X, Sec IX).

# Notes

[15](#) The April, 1960 issue of **N&L** carried as its lead article "South Africa, South U.S.A.", relating the vicious use of tear gas and fire hoses to disperse Black students in Baton Rouge, La., Marshall, Tex., Orangeburg, S.C., Savannah, Ga. and Tallahassee, Fla. with the savage rulers in South Africa. Our front page photo was of the 30,000 demonstrators demanding release of their leaders from the Capetown, South Africa police station. And the **Two Worlds** column was devoted to "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in South Africa", pointing out that the revolt had been continuous, including the 1952 resistance of the South African women to currying passes.

[16](#) The discovery of Woman Power Unlimited seems, on the face of it, to have nothing whatever to do with the role of women revolutionaries in Russia. Yet, when Natalia Trotsky died on Jan. 23, 1962, instead of an In Memoriam to her alone as a revolutionary, it was developed into the whole question of the role of women in revolution. (See **N&L**, Feb., 1962). It was translated into French and included in a memorial book to Natalia, published in France, Summer, 1962. (See Vol. VII).

[17](#) With the Oct. 23, 1962 Letter on "Marxist-Humanism vs. The U.S. Blockade of Cuba, the Russian Missile Bases there, Fidel Castro's 'Selective' Party, **ALL** Playing with Nuclear Holocaust", a new series of Political Letters was begun.

[18](#) Angela Terrano developed the relationship of Abolitionism to the Women's Rights Movement in her columns in the May and August, 1963 issues of **N&L**, drawing on the U.S. Dept. of Labor Women's Bureau Bulletin No. 224, issued in 1948, the 100th anniversary of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention.

[19](#) See **Two Worlds** column (June-July, 1964 **N&L**): "Sino-Indian War Reveals Relationship of Ideology to State-Capitalist

Imperialism".

[20](#) The overriding truth is that the main enemy is always at home. Thus, it was not only the anti-Vietnam War movement in which we were active, nor even only the Black Revolution, but all freedom movements that arose anywhere. Because we were always listening to the new revolutionary voices from below, we were among the first to be in Delano with the grape strikers in their Huelga (See **N&L**, Oct. 1965 front page; also Nov. 1965 **N&L** interview with the then relatively unknown strike leader, Cesar Chavez).

[21](#) **Socialist Humanism** was edited by Erich Fromm and published in 1965 by Doubleday, New York.

[22](#) The interview was published in **Two Worlds** in the June-July, 1966 **N&L** as "Alienation and Revolution: A Hong Kong Interview".

[23](#) The translation was printed in **China Monthly**, No. 39, June, 1967, published by Union Research Institute.

[24](#) We wrote a memorial Editorial entitled "Che Guevara, Revolutionary" in our Nov. 1967 issue of **N&L**, in our May and April, 1968 issues, the **Two Worlds** column carried a review of Regis Debray's **Revolution in the Revolution?**, entitled, "Shortcut to Revolution or Long Road to Tragedy?".

[25](#) Eugene Walker wrote an eyewitness critical report which we published as **France, Spring 1968: Masses in Motion, Ideas In Free Flow**.

[26](#) In the immediate post-war period I was working with a group of Black women on their factory grievances, and showed them some translated excerpts from Simone de Beauvoir's **The Second Sex**. Instead of being impressed with the work, because de Beauvoir had brought sexuality out of the closet, they were angered at her conclusion that, since men were responsible for the double oppression of women, it was the man's task to free woman. "That",

said one of the women, "is one more example of what Blacks have always suffered - the Idea that our freedom is white man's burden. No-body ever gives you freedom. You get it by fighting for it. And we women will have to fight for ours."

[27](#) And we didn't leave it only at "theory". We practiced it, as is clear from the three proletarian women columnists we had for **N&L**: Dunbar, Kegg and Terrano.

[28](#) See our pamphlet, **The Maryland Freedom Union: Black Working Women Thinking and Doing**, by Mike Flug (Connolly). Reports of all the MFU activity from 1966 through 1988 were carried in **N&L** regularly throughout those years.

[29](#) Molly Jackson's article about her activity in WRAP (Women's Radical Action Project) appeared in **Notes on Women's Liberation** under the title, "The New and the Newer". It was reprinted in several anthologies, including **Student Power, Participation and Revolution**, (New York, Association Press, 1970).

[30](#) See, for example, two articles written for **N&L** by Doris Wright on Black women, in Jan. and Feb, 1972 issues of **N&L**.



### 3. The 1970s: Dialectics of revolution/under the whip of counter-revolution

Two totally opposite occurrences - Nixon's barbaric invasion of Cambodia, on the one hand, and the criss-crossing of conferences on Lenin and on Hegel, on the other hand - jammed up in 1970 to bring about as new a stage in cognition as in reality.

Nixon's wars abroad had been brought home in blood with the murderous assault on the protesting students at Kent State, Ohio and the Black students at Jackson State, Miss. who solidarized with them. Our front page picture not only focused on the riddled women's dormitory at Jackson: our Editorial Article began with the third massacre that had taken place that week - which all others were ignoring - the six unarmed Blacks killed in Augusta, Ga. for protesting the murder of a 16 year old Black youth by his jailers (See "Nixon's Wars at Home and Abroad", June-July, 1970).<sup>31</sup>

These momentous, world-shaking events were occurring while I was working on my new book, **Philosophy and Revolution**. Because 1970 had marked the 200th anniversary of Hegel's birth, and the 100th of Lenin's, new avenues were opening for the surprising philosophic relationship of Lenin and Hegel, as all sorts of separate conferences kept criss-crossing.

A New Left philosophic journal, **Telos**, printed my draft chapter from **Philosophy and Revolution** on "The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin" in its Spring 1970 issue. Another publication, **Praxis**, in Yugoslavia, published the same chapter in its 1970 issue (Nos. 5-6).<sup>32</sup> And that fall, **Telos** held its first International Conference where I was invited to speak on "Hegelian Leninism".<sup>33</sup>

The need to transform reality, the core of the Hegelian dialectic, is what had suddenly caused Lenin, the revolutionary materialist, to discover an affinity with the Hegelian dialectic as he experienced the shock of the Second International's collapse at the outbreak of World War I. I felt that, in the same way, the new generation of revolutionaries, confronted with the myriad crises of 1970 after their near-revolution of 1968 was shattered, were now led to see an affinity with the Hegelian Lenin. In West Europe, too, there was new interest in Marxist-Humanism and Hegelian Leninism, as witness the new French and British editions of **Marxism and Freedom**.

**IT WASN'T ONLY** the U.S. where the revolt was continuing. The most exciting event in East Europe was the spontaneous uprising of Polish workers in December 1970, when the shipyard workers in Gdansk and Szesein were joined by housewives, students and other workers to bring about the overthrow of Gomulka. In **Shipyard Workers Revolt Against Communist Party Leaders**, we were able to publish a document from a workers' meeting held in January 1971 that had been smuggled out of Poland.

At home what most excited the imagination of the country in this period was the Native American movement, which electrified the nation with the occupation of Alcatraz in 1970. It wasn't only the remembrance of the massacre at Wounded Knee that brought the country to a new consciousness: it was the todayness of the Indian freedom struggles.<sup>34</sup>

By the next year the anti-Vietnam War movement had gained such dimensions that the most massive demonstration ever, half a million, marched to the Capitol in Washington, led by Vietnam veterans.

Suddenly, a stunned world saw Mao Tse-tung take Nixon off the hot seat with the announcement that Nixon would visit Peking. And as if Nixon and Dr. Strangelove Kissinger hadn't created enough devastation with the invasion of Cambodia and massive bombing of North Vietnam, Kissinger started tilting to Pakistan in the India-Pakistan War, in an attempt to abort the striving-to-be-born new

nation of Bangladesh. Our Perspectives Thesis for 1971-1972 was well titled: "Nixon and Mao Aim to Throttle Social Revolution" (See Vol. XI, Sec. III 4).

# 1973-1976 - Philosophy and Revolution; revolutions in Africa and Portugal; woman as revolutionary

The battle of ideas in the early '70s was by no means limited to the New or the Old Left. On the contrary. The subject of Lenin's embrace of the Hegelian dialectic interested also such purely academic societies as the Hegel Society of America, which invited me to give a paper on Hegel's Absolute Idea as New Beginning to its Biennial Convention of 1974. While this was done textually most rigorously, tracing every paragraph of the Absolute Idea, I nevertheless was able to relate it to Lenin's **Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic**, contrasting it sharply to Adorno's **Negative Dialectics**.<sup>35</sup>

In the Introduction to **Philosophy and Revolution**, I called to the attention of the readers:

*"The brute fact... is the all-pervasiveness of the world crisis - economic, political, racial, educational, philosophic, social. Not a single facet of life, prisons included, was not weighted down by the crisis - and its absolute opposite in thought. A passionate hunger for a philosophy of liberation erupted".*

It wasn't that **Philosophy and Revolution** underestimated the supreme difficulty of uprooting the system. It was that its aim was to trace the relationship of philosophy and revolution from the great French Revolution and the birth of Hegelian philosophy, through the 1848 proletarian revolutions and the Marxian theory of revolution, and from the Russian Revolution and Lenin's rediscovery of the Hegelian dialectic up to our own age.

The essence of Part I is seen in the very title: "Why Hegel? Why Now?" The counter to that - Part II, "Alternatives" - deals both with revolutionaries like Trotsky and Mao and with "an outsider looking in"

like Sartre, in order to measure their theories against the objective situation. Since it is up to each generation of Marxists to work out Marxism for its own age, the whole Part III - "Economic Reality and the Dialectics of Liberation" - deals with the African Revolutions and the world economy; with state-capitalism and the East European revolts; and with the "New Passions and New Forces" of today: the Black dimension, the anti-Vietnam War youth, rank and file labor, and women's liberation.

A Constitutional Convention was called for Oct. 21, 1973 to amend our Constitution. We first recorded that, just as the Black Revolution was proof of our thesis of Black masses as the vanguard of the American Revolution, so Women's Liberation as movement was proof of the correctness of our singling out that force as Reason back in 1955. We then added the following:

*"What **Marxism and Freedom**, with its dialectical form of presentation of history and theory as emanating from the movement from practice did do is lay the foundation for the articulation of the unity of philosophy and revolution. **Philosophy and Revolution**, in articulating the integrality of philosophy and revolution as the characteristic of the age, and tracing it through historically, caught the link of continuity with the Humanism of Marx, that philosophy of liberation which merges the dialectics of elemental revolt and its Reason. The new historic passions and forces set in motion in the 1950s gave birth to a new generation of revolutionaries in the 1960s, and in the 1970s have put a mark of urgency on the need for integrality also of philosophy and organization. As against 'the party to lead' concept, such integrality of dialectics and organization reflects the revolutionary maturity of the age and its passion for a philosophy of liberation.*

*"**Marxism and Freedom and Philosophy and Revolution** are our theoretical foundations. However, they are not a 'program'. They are a contribution to the theoretical preparation for revolution without which no revolutionary organization or grouping can match the challenge of our era".*

**WHILE THE PAX AMERICANA** arrogance of Kissinger and the totalitarianism of Nixon<sup>36</sup> continued right up to the day of his forced resignation in 1974, a totally new historic epoch was opening simultaneously in Africa and in Portugal. Indeed, the Portuguese Revolution began in Africa, as the young African revolutionaries - some of them still children - actually influenced the young Portuguese soldiers in the occupying army. A dynamism of ideas had always characterized what had been called "Portuguese Africa", whether that be the way Eduard Mondlane had made the role of women integral to revolution in his 1969 work **The Struggle for Mozambique**, or the way African leaders like Dr. Neto, unlike West Africans, at once established relations with Marxists in the West.

The overthrow of the oldest fascist regime, with the ousting of Caetano, was a great historic event which, at one and the same time, shook up the imperialist world and initiated a truly social revolution, involving not only workers and peasants and students and women, but the young soldiers themselves. While General Spínola tried to delude himself that he was the true leader, it was his soldiers with whom the revolutionaries in Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola were fraternizing.

In Portugal itself, many parties were active - Socialist, Communist, and independent; workers upsurged in great strikes; peasants occupied the land; and - though the masses were reaching only February 1975, and were still far from November 1975 - there was no doubt that the goal was a full proletarian revolution. So fearful was NATO that the revolution would undermine what they considered "the underbelly of Europe", and so determined were the capitalists and neo-capitalists with socialist colorations to stop any genuine revolution, that Portugal soon faced a full Rightist move backward with the Nov. 25, 1975 coup.

"Under the Whip of the Counter-Revolution: Will the Revolution in Portugal Advance?" began a whole series of **Political-Philosophic Letters** that covered the momentous world events from January through December, 1976 (See Vol. XIV, Sec. I. 7).

One of the most significant new phenomena that arose from the Portuguese Revolution and that is sure to remain in the vocabulary of the 1980s is *apartidarismo*. So characteristic of the revolutionary situation was this striving for "non-partyism" that the PRP/BR (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat/Revolutionary Brigades), a split-off from the Communist Party, tried to assign priority not to the party, but to the spontaneous mass organizations.<sup>37</sup> Though never fully worked out, the very fact that "non-partyism" was raised brings up the truly burning question for the 1980s.

**AMONG THE OTHER** significant events of the revolution was the women's movement - not the women's movement "as such", but the fact that from the start the leaflets of the MLM (Women's Liberation Movement), calling for equal pay for women at factories, were forced to state: "It's not only the bosses that are exploiting us; it's our own comrades who are refusing us equal pay".<sup>38</sup>

There has not been a single part of the globe - whether that be Portugal or Mozambique, Italy or Guinea-Bissau, England or Angola; whether it be the U.S or Iran, France or West Germany, or for that matter Russia - where the women have not been on the march for true liberation. And while that has concentrated heavily on the right to abortion, "taking back our bodies" also meant "taking back our heads". The struggles against the "status quo" are not separated from the man/woman relationship right in the home, much less in a new society that cannot ever come to be without tearing up root and branch the old society. The failure to acknowledge this is no small reason for constantly having only aborted, unfinished revolutions.

When **Philosophy and Revolution** singled out the uniqueness of this age's Women's Liberation Movement in the fact that it was challenging male chauvinism not only under capitalism, but within the Left, it pointed out how deep must be the uprooting if we are ever to create a new society. In 1976 we published a new pamphlet, **Working Women For Freedom**,<sup>39</sup> in which the masses in motion again spoke for themselves and to which was appended an article, "Women as Thinkers, and as Revolutionaries", that was excerpted

from a series of six lectures I had given at the Wayne State University/University of the Michigan Cultural Center. It ended with this:

*"Creativity that can really tear things up at their roots and genuinely start something new, humanly new, can only come from mass creativity. It is only then when it is totally revolutionary, is not hemmed in by the concept and practice of the 'Party to lead', and it is only then it can once and for all end aborted and unfinished revolutions.*

*"Be it something as 'simple' as the question of women's struggle for equality in the very midst of all the myriad crises, or the deep recession and racism in the U.S., what women are hungering for is working out the relationship of their creativity to a philosophy of liberation. We surely do not need yet one more form of elitism. What we do need is a **unity** of philosophy and revolution. Without it we will not be able to get out from under the whip of the counter-revolution."*



# Once Again 1973-1976 - This Time as the Middle East war and the world economic crisis

The deepest economic recession since World War II, so deep that the structure of the whole state-capitalist world had reached the point of stagnation, gave birth to many myths, the first of which blamed everything on the Middle East war and the quadrupling of oil prices that followed.

There is no doubt that the quadrupling of oil prices certainly helped bring on the crises. But the truth is that the economy was sick - the U.S. economy most of all - ever since the Vietnam War and the heightened militarization which has become a permanent feature. The missiles alone are now, by 1980, reaching such stratospheric proportions that Carter's program on that for the next five years will reach a trillion dollars.

What is inherent in the Middle East crisis, whether you begin now or at the beginning of the Arab-Israeli collision - which is not 1973, or 1967, but 1959 - is the post-World War II struggle of the world powers for global domination, on the one hand, and the struggle for the minds of humanity, on the other.

Too many are eager to forget what the birth of Israel had originally signified as the birth of a new nation not alone out of the Holocaust, but one that was socialist, was won by fighting British imperialism, and was the only place in the Middle East which had neither oil nor any Nazi associations during World War II. The fact that Israel now has the reactionary leadership it does, which is doing its best to reverse the clock and deprive the Palestinians of their right to self-determination, cannot erase the dialectics of liberation then. What is needed is the tracing of the dialectic of each event, as it happened, within the context of the global situation. This is what we did in the

series of articles collected under the title: **War, Peace or Revolution: Shifting Alliances in the Middle East - from the Six Day War to the Camp David Summit.**[40](#)

As U.S. and Russia entered the Middle East cockpit, it became a key point for the two nuclear titans struggling for control over the Middle East. By 1973, when it looked as if there would be some "even-handedness" on the part of the U.S. regarding the Arab world, global politics again took center stage. In a word, the fact remains that neither Israel (and it is the guiltiest part of all by now) nor Egypt nor the PLO, has the decisive word.

**THEREFORE, TO SEE** what was really happening at this stage of new crises for state-capitalism, we have to return to production and not politics. So decrepit had capitalism become by the 1970s that, far from the never-ending talk of growth, growth, growth, all capitalists could think of to stop the galloping inflation was zero "growth". What was worse still was the revelation of the Vietnam War, that the **U.S. was not only the most savagely imperialistic country, but the one where, for the first time ever, there was a recession during an ongoing war, so much so that even the merchants of death complained of a decline in the rate of profit!**

For revolutionaries to mistake the "arms economy", permanent or otherwise, as if it were equivalent to the booms of capital expansion - accumulation of such ever greater masses of unpaid labor as to counteract the decline in the **rate** of profit - is, **at one and the same time**, to blind oneself to the totality of the crisis, the actual structural changes of capitalist production in its death agony, and, what is far worse, fail to see the new forms of revolt, like the unorganized, the new generation of revolutionaries, and the ever deeper layers of the proletariat fighting automation and its ultimate point of animation.

In a word, whether we start with LBJ claiming we could have both guns and butter; or go to Nixon, the great believer in private capitalism, who was forced to undertake the most rigorous state-capitalist measures, from wage and price controls to devaluation of

the dollar: or go to Carter and Reagan, who, in 1980, are outdoing each other in preparations for World War III - what they all forget is that the unemployed army as a permanent feature, and the Black dimension especially among the youth who have never seen a job, will always bring about new forms of revolt until they bring the system down.<sup>41</sup>

It is this which all forget - whether private capitalism, or state-capitalism calling itself Communism, or all the tailenders from the Trotskyists down. That is why those we called "today's epigones"<sup>42</sup> try to truncate Marx's greatest work, presenting the monstrosity of state-capitalism as if it were the revolutionary alternative to U.S. capitalism. They stand in the way of the proletariat and all the new forces of revolution who are searching for a totally new form of revolution to usher in a new society in which human power is its own end.

With the death of Mao in 1976, it was clear that no matter what de-Maoization would follow, even as the de-Stalinization that followed Stalin's death, the transformation into opposite of any workers' state or national revolutionary state could not be retransformed into its opposite

**unless a new revolutionary force does it**

It cannot be done from the top down; it must be done from the bottom up. It cannot be done by reform: it must be done by revolution. The same was true in post-Watergate U.S.A., where the totality of the crisis was beyond repair. But, as we expressed it in our 1976 Perspectives, "National-international, Objective-Subjective Crises are Testing Revolutionaries" too.

# 1977-1979: From Crisis in Post-Mao China, through Black Consciousness in South Africa and the Latin American Revolts, to the Iranian Revolution

The world crises which were testing revolutionaries were starkest of all in post-Mao China. It was not so much the death of Mao as the contradictory legacy of Mao that created China's particular crisis. The world media was following the factional fights, sensing the hypocrisy of the phony unity at the top that lasted hardly a month, followed by the vicious campaign against the so-called "Gang of Four" - Chaing Ching, Wang Hungwen, Chang Chun-chiao and Yao Wen-yuan - upon whom all crises were blamed.

We, on the other hand, concentrated as we had during Mao's lifetime upon the magnificent revolutionary youth movements like Sheng Wu-hen, who had taken at face value Mao's proclamation of the Cultural Revolution that "it is right to rebel". We felt confident that the movement, though its leaders were railroaded to prison and the movement driven underground, was not destroyed. A new dissident group, Li Yizhe, had arisen in 1974 when Mao was still alive, and its leaders, including Wang Xizhe, were imprisoned for their wall posters. After his release from jail in 1978 Wang continued his struggle "For a Return to Genuine Marxism in China!"<sup>43</sup>

Soon after Mao died we analyzed his empiricism and "capitulation to the objective pull of state-capitalism as the 'next' stage of human development, with the quintessential difference, from Russia's acceptance of that state, that it be China, not Russia, that will 'head' that next stage".<sup>44</sup>

What we had done from our birth - listening to the new voices from below, singling out new revolutionary forces, seeing that the movement from practice is itself a form of theory - does not free Marxist intellectuals from their responsibility. Indeed, what Hegel called "The Self-Thinking Idea" cannot itself think, without people thinking it. It remains the intellectuals' responsibility to work out a new relationship between theory and practice.

To work out a new relationship of theory to practice is no easy task, and requires both listening to new voices and digging back into the past, not only into American roots but also international extensions and developments. Thus, just as in 1976, from our continuous digging into American roots we produced **America's First Unfinished Revolution**<sup>45</sup> and in 1977, on the hundredth anniversary of the St. Louis strike, published **The First General Strike in the U.S.**,<sup>46</sup> so 1977 led to new international relations.

From London we received a 2:00 a.m. telephone call on Feb. 18 from some of the students demonstrating throughout England: "We are occupying the administrative offices of Middlesex Polytechnic. We have been here for 12 hours to protest the astronomical increase in overseas students' tuition fees... 80 percent of overseas students in Britain come from Third World countries. Many of the overseas students face deportation for their involvement. The Iranian students are especially vulnerable". They emphasized the relationship between student action and the increasing revolts of the British workers.<sup>47</sup>

In that same month of February we had received another call - this time from Flint, Mich., asking our help in forcing the UAW bureaucrats to give Genora Johnson Dollinger the right to speak at the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the 1937 Flint Sit-down Strike. Despite the vital role that women played in winning that historic strike - especially the famous Women's Emergency Brigade that she had organized - not a single woman had been included anywhere on the program. Our Women's Liberation Committee, together with angry women from CLUW, NOW, the Ann Arbor Labor History Project, and

the Washington D.C. Women's Film Cooperative, unleashed so colorful and determined a protest right in the auditorium that it not only won Genora the right to speak, but became the highpoint of the film "With Babies and Banners" which took the story nation-wide.<sup>48</sup>

Our national and international activities and writings were, of course, at no time separated - whether that be the initiation of activity against the appearance of neo-Nazism in Chicago and Detroit, or the report of Charter 77 received from Prague, both reported in our June 1977 issue: whether it be the Spanish and Italian editions of **Philosophy and Revolution**, or the Hong Kong publication of **The Revolution is Dead, Long Live the Revolution**, which reproduced my critique of Mao's Cultural Revolution;<sup>49</sup> or whether it be **Sexism, Politics and Revolution in China**, which was issued by the Women's Liberation-N&L Committee.<sup>50</sup>

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**THE OVERRIDING EVENT** of all that year happened in benighted South Africa after they murdered Steve Biko. His movement, Black Consciousness, far from dying, grew and developed and is continuing to this day. We were the first in the U.S. to publish Steve Biko "Speaking for Himself" as the lead in our Nov. 1977 issue:

*"By Black consciousness I mean the cultural and political revival of an oppressed people. This must be related to the emancipation of the entire continent of Africa since the Second World War. Africa has experienced the death of white invincibility..."*

*"Where is the evidence of support among the younger generation for BPC (Black People's Convention)? In one word: Soweto!... For the power of a movement lies in the fact that it can indeed change the habits of people. This change is not the result of force but of dedication, of moral persuasion. This is what has gotten through to the young people. They realize that we are not dealing with mere bread and butter issues..."*

*"The Black consciousness movement does not want to accept the dilemma of capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of Black communalism..."*

*"As Fanon puts it, 'the consciousness of the self is not the closing of a door to communication... National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension'..."*

The Soweto youth who appeared on the historic scene that year were showing that their activities were not separated from their philosophy of liberation, and the books they considered the greatest were those of Frantz Fanon and Martin Luther King, Jr.

The intense development in Black reality and Black thought was reflected the following year in **News & Letters** in two outstanding publications. First was **Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought** by Lou Turner and John Alan. 1978 also saw the completion of the second part of our editor, Charles Denby's autobiography and the publication of the whole as **Indignant Heart, A Black Worker's Journal**,<sup>51</sup> which in summing up, drew so close a connection between Blacks in the U.S. and those in Africa, that the Black dimension manifested itself as a world revolutionary dimension. One of the points that stands out especially in the last chapter on "Worldwide Struggle for Freedom" is the incident in which a white worker is very surprised that a Black UAW member did not know who Meany was, Denby comments: "But the worker who did not even know Meany, the President of AFL-CIO, knew every detail of Lumumba's life from the time he organized the national movement for independence to his murder" (**Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal**, p. 291).

Both on the Black dimension and on student youth, new relations were established with Britain. "Academically" this related to my 1978 pamphlet, **Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis**, because it included not only a sharp critique of Mandel's Introduction to Marx's **Capital**, but also an appendix on the English SWP leader - "Tony

Cliff reduces Lenin's Theory to 'Uncanny Intuition'. Cliff's **Lenin** (volume 2) is as great a vulgarization of Lenin as a Marxist theoretician as is Mandel's interpretation of Marx.

The pamphlet also hits out against both Mandel and Cliff on the question of scholarship, in showing that there are altogether too many Marxists who hardly differ from bourgeois scholars in their carelessness about facts concerning Marx and Lenin. Cliff not only held that Lenin was a lesser Marxian economist than Luxemburg, but evidently had not even read Luxemburg's work. Anyone who knows the original works under discussion would know that Tony Cliff hid the fact he had not read either the massive 739 page work by Lenin, the **Notebooks on Imperialism**, or Lenin's **Sbornik**, which contains an outline of the book he intended to write on **Luxemburg's Accumulation of Capital**, entitled **Rosa Luxemburg's Unsuccessful Supplement to Marxist Theory**. Toward the new discussions of **Capital**, in 1979 we also reprinted my 1944 **Outline of Capital, Vol. 1**.

The impact of the analysis not just of Mandel and Cliff, but of **Capital** itself, was by no means only academic. Quite the contrary. The wide sales of **Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis** in Britain were secondary to the fact that, in addition to the veteran Marxist in Glasgow, Harry McShane, a new group of youth in England had declared themselves Marxist-Humanists. By 1980 they began issuing a British supplement to **News & Letters**.

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**JUST AS NEW INTERNATIONAL** relations were developed with Chinese dissidents and African revolutionaries, so the Latin American struggles in 1979 became struggles for Latinos and U.S. Marxists in the United States. In the month of May, **N&L** carried a lead on the subject, "From Chile to Mexico, Los Angeles to N.Y.: Latino Struggles United Freedom Fighters in North and South America". My **Political-Philosophical Letter** the same month, "The Unfinished Latin American Revolutions", included, as appendix, the



exchange of correspondence between Silvio Frondizi and myself in the mid-1960s.<sup>52</sup>

The **Political-Philosophic Letter** also analyzes Gerard Chaliand's **Revolution in the Third World**. The whole question of revolutions in the Third World in the 1970s was raised anew with Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea. While at first it met with little objection from the Left both because Pol Pot's monstrous regime surely needed overthrowing and because the Vietnam invasion did have popular support in Kampuchea, it was altogether different when giant China invaded little Vietnam. Not that it was only a question of David and Goliath confrontation. Rather it was due to the fact that the invasion disclosed the class nature of state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as being equally as imperialistic as the so-called private capitalist world.

Even many of those who had not accepted the theoretical position that we live in the age of state-capitalism, could see that the division of the world into but two nuclear Titans, U.S. and Russia, each aiming at single mastery of the world, was dragging each new country into that global struggle. The world market, as world production, was compelling many who had not separated themselves from state powers and relied only on the power of the masses in their own country, to choose one or the other. The fact that the only way to struggle out of that was not to tailend any state power, focused on the question of ideology in the Third World, and nowhere more sharply than in Latin America.

Thus, when my article, "Marx's Humanism Today", included in Erich Fromm's international symposium, **Socialist Humanism**, appeared in Spanish, it created ground for new relations with Latin American revolutionaries. It was followed by Spanish editions of **Marxism and Freedom** and **Philosophy and Revolution** in the 1970s. When our first pamphlet in Spanish in the U.S. **La Lucha Latina Para La Libertad y la Filosofia Marxista-Humanista**, appeared, it helped to create new relations for Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. among Latinos.

\* \* \*

**NOTHING SHORT OF A SHIFT** in global powers climaxed the period 1977-79, from the reverberations of post-Mao China, through the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa and the Latin American revolts, to the struggles of the Iranian masses against the Shah, which assumed such mass proportion as to develop into outright revolution.

At its very beginning I had been working on a new book, the topic of which has three subjects. One is Rosa Luxemburg; the second is the relationship of Women's Liberation in her time and ours; and the third is Marx's philosophy of revolution, which had gained a new dimension with the first transcription of Marx's **Ethnological Notebooks**.<sup>53</sup> I no sooner had reached the first chapter on Rosa Luxemburg, which deals with the turning point in her life - the 1905-07 Russian-Polish Revolution - than all sorts of new facts about its extension into Persia illuminated the Iranian struggles of 1978. At the same time, Marx's **Ethnological Notebooks** cast new illumination on the philosophy of Woman's Liberation as it extended Marx's own 1844 analysis of the Man/Woman relationship to his 1881-82 analyses of the possibility of revolutions occurring in backward countries.

The overthrow of the Shah, and with it the undermining of U.S. imperialism's dominance of the Gulf region, not only opened a dramatic shift in global power, but for the first time moved the question of the Middle East from oil, to one of social revolution. What was most outstanding was that the greatest, most powerful and sustained mobilizations for months on end, including a general strike of oil workers, preceded the three-day insurrection of Feb. 9-12, 1979, which did indeed initiate a whole new epoch in world relations.

Every segment of the population had been totally involved in ridding Iran of its twin nemeses - the Shah and U.S. imperialism - and it seemed to be the eve of the greatest revolution since 1917. The workers who had been out on general strike refused to turn over

their guns even when the Ayatollah commanded it. All sorts of spontaneous organizations arose, by no means limited to former guerilla groups. Quite the contrary. There were shoras, there were workers' councils, there were anjumenis. And in all of them youth was dominant.

There was no end to the freedom of the press and the great attraction for the student youth of new Marxist translations. The most eagerly sought-after of the Marxist groups were those who were independent of any state power. The most persistent fighters for self-determination were also the most organized, and were not only the Kurds but also the Arabs. Because they were all part of the mass revolutionary outburst which overthrew the Shah, they felt confident in continuing the fight for genuine self-determination.

Finally, and no means least, the Women's Liberation movement aimed at opening up a new chapter for the revolution. They were involved for five days, beginning on International Women's Day, March 8, 1979, in continuous marches under the slogan, "We made the revolution for freedom and got unfreedom".

Ayatollah Khomeini no sooner found himself in total power than contradictions began tearing the newly liberated nation apart. The emergent retrogression was analyzed in the March 1979 **Political-Philosophic Letter**, "Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, the Iranian Revolution". This critique was translated and published in Farsi, as were my writings on Women's Liberation in a pamphlet entitled **Woman as Reason and Force of Revolution**, which also included an article on women by Rosa Luxemburg and Ting Ling's "Thoughts on March 8". The introduction to the series of essays was written by an Iranian Marxist-Humanist woman, Neda.

All through 1979 and indeed a good part of 1980 there was hardly an issue of **N&L** which did not have either eye-witness reports on the Iranian Revolution, letters from Iran, special articles on both the women's revolution and the fundamentalist Islamic betrayal of it, as well as serious articles on what type of organization, what type of shoras, what kind of relationships of religion to revolution. The whole

series of eye-witness reports and editorials, lead articles and **Political-Philosophic Letters**, were listed in the report of the National Organizer, Olga Domanski, to the 1979 Plenum.<sup>54</sup>

**Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution** greatly illuminated the events of 1979 and 1980. History had paid little attention to the 1905 Russian Revolution's extension to Persia referred to earlier, though especially the women's anjumeni (soviet) was a true historic first. Suddenly, however, another element of the revolution in Persia - its first constitution - became a focal point for the 1979 Iranian Revolution. But what the Islamic fundamentalists meant by it and what the young revolutionaries related to, were absolute opposites.

The Left revolutionaries were studying and trying to practice the dialectics of the 1905-07 Russian Revolution, Luxemburg's analysis of the General Strike as both political and economic and thus bringing on the revolution, the call for women's liberation included in Luxemburg's manifestoes, and above all, the focus on the spontaneity of the masses who were actually more revolutionary than the leaders. What the study also showed was the possibility of a revolution bursting out in a technologically backward country ahead of one that was not only technologically advanced, but one that had a great mass Social Democratic party.<sup>55</sup>

# Notes

[31](#) We further stressed the simultaneity of the wars at home and abroad by bringing out a new edition of **American Civilization on Trial** that year with a new Appendix by Charles Denby, "Black Caucuses in the Unions".

[32](#) The fact that it was not only the New Left in the U.S., but the dissidents in East Europe who were interested in Lenin's **Philosophic Notebooks**, produced articles in the Soviet press. Academician R. M. Kedrov, Director of the Institute of History of Science and Technology, did not acknowledge that it was my views he was attacking, as he attempted to keep Lenin confined in vulgar materialism, but those are the views he attacked in his article, "On the Distinctive Characteristic of Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks", in **Soviet Studies in Philosophy**, Summer, 1970.

[33](#) The "Proceedings of the First International Telos Conference, Oct. 8-11, 1970", held in Waterloo Ontario were published in book-form in **Towards a New Marxism**, edited by Bart Grahl and Paul Piecone (St. Louis, Mo., Telos Press, 1973).

[34](#) See our Pamphlet, **Black, Brown and Red** which links these movements and has a bilingual section in Spanish.

[35](#) The paper is included in **Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy**, edited by Warren E. Steinkraus and Kenneth L. Schmitz and published by Humanities Press in 1980.

[36](#) See our Editorial Article, "Politics of Counter-Revolution: Watergate and the 'Year of Europe'", in the June-July, 1973 issue of **N&L**.

[37](#) Isobel de Carmo, leader of the PRP BR, raised both this question and the relationship of theory to practice. In defining her group she

wrote: "It is also the organization capable of making a synthesis between theory and revolutionary practice". See **Portugal: Key Documents of the Revolutionary Process**, published by People's Translation Service, Berkeley, Cal. 94703.

[38](#) The various left parties, after the revolution, tried to take credit for freeing the author's of **The Three Marias** from Caetano's jails, but the truth is that it was the international women's movement that forced their release - and it preceeded the revolution. See "Maria Barreno Speaks for Herself", **N&L**, April, 1975.

[39](#) **Working Women For Freedom** was co-authored by three Marxist-Humanist working women: electrical worker Angela Terrano: office worker Marie Dignan: and autoworker Mary Holmes.

[40](#) The analyses include: (from **News & Letters** and **Political-Philosophic Letters**, 1967-1973), "The Arab-Israeli collision, the world powers, and the struggle for the minds of men" (June 1967): "Anti-Semitism, anti-revolution, anti-philosophy: U.S. and Russia enter Middle East cockpit" (February 1969): "The Middle East erupts" (November 1973): "The U.S., global politics and the Mideast War" (December 1973). Also included are: (from **The Political-Philosophic Letters of Raya Dunayevskaya**, 1976), "The UN Resolution on Zionism - and ideological obfuscation also on the Left" and "Lebanon: The test not only of the P.L.O. but the whole Left": (from **News & Letters**, 1978), "War, peace or revolution: Shifting alliances in the Middle East" and "Camp David Summit: Peace in Middle East - or extension of U.S. imperialism?".

[41](#) Indeed the new militancy of workers white and Black raised again the question that has predominated the struggles ever since Automation: what kind of labor should human beings do? It was in 1974 that a white production worker in California, Felix Martin, joined our Black worker-editor Charles Denby, as his West Coast editor.

[42](#) See the Introduction, "Today's Epigones Who Try to Truncate Marx's Capital", to my pamphlet **Marx's Capital and Today's Global**

**Crisis.** The battle of the ideas of the 1970s led to the translation of such great works as Marx's **Grundrisse**, and to a new translation of Marx's **Capital**. It did not, however, induce either academia or the New Left to give the objective, scholarly Introductions. The worst was the Introduction to the new Pelican edition of **Capital**, written by the so-called "specialist on Marxism", Ernest Mandel, who tried to saddle Marx with an approval of that state-capitalist monstrosity, Russia, as if it were a form of workers state. See also my review of Mandel's **Marxist Economic Theory** ("True Rebirth or Wholesale Revision of Marxism?", in **N&L**, May and June-July, 1970).

[43](#) This article was printed under the title, "Struggle for a Class Dictatorship of the Proletariat", in the dissident paper, **People's Voice**, in Canton. It was reprinted in **Intercontinental Press**, Dec. 10, 1979.

[44](#) See "Post-Mao China: What Now?" in **New Essays**, by Raya Dunayevskaya. This 1977 pamphlet included, as well, "Leon Trotsky as Man and as Theoretician" (published also in **Studies in Comparative Communism**, USC, 1977) and "Dialectics of Liberation in Thought and in Activity: Absolute Negativity as New Beginning" (see also footnote 35).

[45](#) This pamphlet by M. Franki and J Hillstrom revealed the untold story of the true creators of independence - the workers, yeomanry, Blacks and women.

[46](#) Terry Moon and Ron Brokmeyer had not only discovered, in their research for this study, the forgotten women Hegelian philosophers, Anna C. Brackett and Susan E. Blow, but presented the relationship both to the Black dimension, and to Marx's First International.

[47](#) See the report compiled by our Youth columnist, Peter Wermuth, carried as the Lead in our March 1977 issue.

[48](#) The film, produced by the Women's Labor History Film Project, was nominated later for an Academy Award. Our Banner, "The

Struggle Continues", which triggered the protest when it was unfurled from the balcony, is pictured on p. 20.

[49](#) This work was published by **The 70s**, 30 Queens Road West, I/F, Hong Kong, and is available from them directly, or through **News & Letters**.

[50](#) The year 1977 was an active one for the Women's Liberation Movement throughout the world. The May and June issues of **N&L** carried reports on new revolutionary movements in Italy and Portugal as well as a report from England. The following year our WL-N&L Committee (which had functioned since 1971 as an autonomous committee) issued one of its most popular pamphlets.

**Revolutionary Feminism**, which included a critique of the British SWP writer, Joan Smith: a report on International Women's Day: a view of Rosa Luxemburg on the 59th anniversary of her murder: as well as the unusual combination of "The Paris Commune and Black Women's Liberation". It was no accident, either, that our Native American columnist, Shainape Sheapwe, devoted her May, 1977 column to the issue of sterilisation abuse.

[51](#) **Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal** was published by South End Press, Boston. 1978. A British edition was published by Pluto Press, London, in 1980.

[52](#) In 1963 Frondizi had tried to get a Spanish publisher for **Marxism and Freedom** and had begun a correspondence with me. That, however, is not what gives this exchange of correspondence an historic value and connects it to 1978. Rather, it is the fact that the pull of the Cuban Revolution on Marxists in Latin America included even those who did see Russia as a state-capitalist society, but resisted labeling Cuba as such. Cuba, before and after Russia's entry into that sphere, had become a focal point for U.S. imperialism. But by 1962 it had reached the ominous, world-shaking missile confrontation between the two nuclear-armed giants - U.S. and Russia.



[53](#) Lawrence Krader transcribed Marx's Notebooks, which were published in 1972 under the title, **The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx**, by Van Gotcum. Assen.

[54](#) It must be stated here that Olga Domanski, who has been our National Organizer since 1963, has edited this whole history.

[55](#) Interestingly enough, there was also a new interest in and new translations of Luxemburg's writings. We published the first translation ever of her **Theory and Practice** by David Wolff.

## 4. 1980: "The Book" - *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* - and Perspectives for the 1980s

The reason 1980 was designated "the year of the book" was not only as a deadline for its completion,<sup>56</sup> but because of the necessity to see the three parts of the book - Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy - both as an entity that will illuminate the totality of the crises of today, and as the whole new continent of thought Marx discovered which remains **the** ground for perspectives for the 1980s.

Thus, whether articulated in the Draft Perspectives, "Tomorrow is Now",<sup>57</sup> or in the completed Perspectives, "Today and Tomorrow",<sup>58</sup> the point was to focus on Carter's drive to war, with an ever-expanding militarization and the reestablishment of registration for the draft of youth: ever-increasing unemployment with its unconscionable magnitude in the Black community, especially among the youth: the move against the ERA: and resurgent racism. All these deepening crises could hardly be described in less extreme terms than "Apocalypse Now".

The absolute opposite of that retrogressionism on the part of the ruling class was seen in the magnificent new strikes - actually occupations of the shipyards and coal mines - in Poland. Where a decade back, in 1970, the massive strikes of the shipyard workers had written a new page of freedom, the outright occupations in 1980

throughout Poland raised higher, totally new demands for both free trade unions and a free press.<sup>59</sup>

In the U.S. too, though there were no such massive strikes, there were Black uprisings from Miami to Philadelphia, and under-currents of revolt throughout the land.

Carter's intense militarization - including toying with the question of "tactical" nuclear weapons which would make nuclear war "unthinkable",<sup>60</sup> and his reinstatement of draft registration - has brought about a new anti-war movement, in which not only is there resistance to the draft, but that resistance is related to questions both of nuclear power and of imperialism. Thus, the March 1980 **N&L** carried a series of articles from around the country on "No Nukes, No Draft, No War". The following issue carried as the Lead, "American youth challenge draft, racism, poverty jobs".

Our Internationalist Marxist-Humanist Youth became interested in the revolutionary journalism of Marx, holding a class around the essay on "Marx's revolutionary journalism and the **Neue Rheinische Zeitung**"<sup>61</sup> by Eugene Walker, which he related, in his report to the 1980 convention, to the new stage we were reaching with the decision to transform N&L into a 12-page paper. He concretized it as follows:

*"Just as the draft chapters gave birth to the essay-type articles and 'From the Archives' as part of our continuing contribution toward working out Absolute Idea as New Beginnings, so it must continue to remain unseparated from how Absolute Idea as New Beginnings, as a movement from practice from below, is worked out within the pages of N&L. Here two seemingly unconnected contributions to our paper - the Draft Perspectives, on the one hand, and 'Readers' Views' on the other, show the way in which a new comprehension of the movement from practice has been reached in our paper".*

At our convention, our new stage was seen as meaning even greater intensification of activity, especially around Black reality and Black

thought. As far back as 1944 we had been active in the Black movement. "Negro Intellectuals in Dilemma"<sup>62</sup> was a critique of Gunnar Myrdal's **American Dilemma** and the dilemma of the Black intellectuals - W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Bunche, L. D. Reddick et. al. - who allowed their original works to be bent to Myrdal's bourgeois values. In the 1950s we, at one and the same time, related, in **Marxism and Freedom**, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 to the Black revolution that began with the Montgomery Bus boycott as signifying the birth of a new epoch of revolt: and became activists in it.

In 1963 we summarized the whole history of the U.S. as **American Civilization on Trial, Black Masses as Vanguard**. And these dialectical analyses of historic events - not limited to the current situation but stretching over a century or more - were never separated from our activities during the turbulent 1960s with the Freedom Rides, Freedom Schools and long marches.

The 1970s revealed a new aspect precisely because the '60s did not bring total freedom. It was at that point that Black reality related itself to Black thought, especially in Africa and the West Indies, as witness the pamphlet, **Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought**.

Now, in 1980, we see youth in Miami - really just children of 11, 12 and 13 - not only actively participating in the uprising there: but, as Reason, helping the adults reject the **established** Black leadership. This revolt against established leadership may not seem to have a similarity to Lenin's revolt against, and overthrow of, the **established** Marxist leadership in World War I, when it capitulated to the imperialist war, but in fact this is what is new about our age - its maturity, its rejection of the old, and attempt to create the new. What we saw in Angola and Mozambique was that children just as young were exercising great influence on the occupying Portuguese soldiers with the leaflets they gave them from the African revolutionaries. Indeed, the newest phenomenon that arose from the Portuguese revolution was that the new revolutionaries did fight

against established parties, be they Communist or Socialist, and created a new category - apartidarismo (non-partyism).

From a glance back at the whole quarter of a century, as an entity this time, it is beyond a peradventure of a doubt that the movement from practice was, indeed, itself a form of theory. To see that, all one needs to do is watch how Marx's Humanism fared in the following hands:

When the Christian Humanists at the end of World War II rediscovered Marx's Humanist essays, it was with the aim of bringing the masses in revolt back into the Church by showing them that membership in the Communist Party was not true to Marxism. When the Existentialists claimed that they were the Humanists, Sartre felt compelled to embellish his favourable mention of Marx's Humanism with: "It is, once again, Marx's point of view in 1844, that is, until the unfortunate meeting with Engels". (It has long been a mark of our state-capitalist age the intellectuals are more adept at rewriting history than at writing it).

Contrast what happened when Marx's Humanism was brought onto the historic stage by an actual mass movement - whether under the slogan "Bread and Freedom" or "Marxism with a Human Face". It became at one and the same time an actual revolution against Communist totalitarianism and a totally new vision of what a new, classless society really is.

For that matter, what our 25 year history has shown from the start - that is, from the break with Johnson - is that if state capitalist theory does not extend itself to Marxist-Humanist philosophy, if the theoreticians have disclosed only what they are against **without revealing what they are for**, there is nowhere to go but into the mire of tailending new state powers. Nowhere is this shown better than by Johnson's tailending of Castro, Nkrumah, plus "the bewildering profundities of Mao".[63](#)

That battle of ideas<sup>64</sup> runs like a red thread throughout the history of Marxist-Humanism in the United States. Whether we take the **Two Worlds** column of March 1980, "Automation and the Dialectic, a Critical Review of C. P. Snow's **The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution**", or the first Weekly Political Letter, April 22, 1961, "Preliminary Statement of the Crisis over Cuba" (Bay of Pigs): whether we consider the July 1975 article "Instant Marxism and the Black Intellectual" on Amiri Baraka, Owusu Sadauki and John Oliver Killens, or we take "A Second Look at Adorno and Kosik and the Movement from Practice" (March 1978): whether we take the analysis of U Nu and Ben Gurion's retreat in the Weekly Political Letter of Nov. 13, 1961, "Israel, Burma, Outer Mongolia and the Cold War", or Leopold Senghor's "African Socialism" (May 1960): at no time did we analyze world events without, at the same time, relating them to the stage of cognition.

On the other hand - whether I criticized Sartre's **The Words** in "Remembrance of Things Past in the Future Tense" (published in the **Activist**, Spring 1965), or returned to Fidel Castro, both in "The Cuban Revolution: The Year After" (Dec. 1960) and the 1978 **Political-Philosophic Letter**, "The Unfinished Latin American Revolutions" - the point was to relate criticism to actual action, both the action that arose from below and the action in which we participated. That is why, whether we dealt with today's Women's Liberation theorists (June 1976), or discussed "Lukacs' Philosophic Dimension" (Feb. and March 1973), the reason for the battle of ideas was, at all times to trace the movements in theory as we followed the movement from practice which was itself a form of theory.

As the National Organizer expressed it in her report to the 1980 Convention on "What is Theory and its Relation to Archives":

*"Theory is not just a generalization of what workers are doing. It is the practice of dialectical philosophy. That is why the pamphlets we produced all through the exciting 1960s can be seen as an extension of **Marxism and Freedom**, written by actual participants in the*

*freedom struggles, who were also participants in the battle for the minds of humanity".<sup>65</sup>*

And in the report of the National Co-Organizer, Michael Connolly, "Our Work with the Forces of Revolution: National and International", he was at all times stressing **development**, whether he was reporting on local, national or international activities. Thus:

*"Throughout the year, our activity in the Black dimension moved from fighting 'poverty conscription' to support for Haitian refugees, and from community organizing in Flint, to breaking into such publications as the **Journal of Negro History** and the **Bibliographic Guide to Black Studies**".*

It was no accident that the first part of the book to be published, back in 1979, was not Chapter 1, but, "Relationship of philosophy and revolution to Woman's Liberation: Marx's and Engels' Studies Contrasted". We began with the **Ethnological Notebooks** of Marx because they demonstrably disclosed that, far from Engels and Marx being "one", there was a sharp difference between them, by no means limited to the fact that Marx was a genius and Engels a talented collaborator. The contrast that we can now make between what the so-called "Woman Question" was in Luxemburg's day and what the new Women's Liberation movement has brought to it, and do this within the context of Marx's philosophy of revolution, will show both the depth and the urgency of the uprooting needed to clear the road to a new society.

It is this overriding question - the fact that it is only now, 100 years after the last writings of Marx, that we can first grapple with the totality of the writings of the founder of a new continent of thought - which presents a new challenge to the whole Marxist movement to face not only the relationship of philosophy and revolution, but of the philosophy of revolution.

The momentous world historic events of the 1970s extending into 1980, are sure to reach a revolutionary climax this decade. In our age, when all the forces have come together - rank-and-file labor,

Black dimension, youth, Women's Liberation - and have done so no matter what the color of the specific minority is, in all lands from Africa to Latin America, from Asia to Europe, East and West, to the United States, the truly global and actual confrontation of the crises is the absolute negativity transforming reality.

When I told the Hegel Society of America in 1974 that the "Absolute Idea as New Beginning can become the new 'subjectivity' for realizing Hegel's principle that 'the transcendence of the opposition between Notion and Reality, and that unity which is truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone', I added: "This is not exactly a summons to the barricades, but Hegel is asking us to have our ears as well as our categories so attuned to the 'Spirit's urgency' that we rise to the challenge of working out, through 'patience, seriousness, suffering and labor of the negative' a totally new relationship of philosophy to the actuality and action as befits 'a birth-time of history'. This is what makes Hegel a contemporary.

The critical question for today's "birth-time of history" is this: if there is a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory, and if there is a movement from theory that is itself a form of philosophy, it is necessary, rigorously and comprehensively to dig out the single dialectic that emerges from actuality as well as from thought.

There is a dialectic of thought - from consciousness and self-consciousness, through culture, to philosophy. there is a dialectic of history - from primitive communism, through slavery and serfdom, as well as capitalism's "free wage labor", to total freedom. As Marx put it in Vol. III of **Capital**: "Human power is its own end". There is a dialectic of liberation - from class struggle, through Spirit in Self-Estrangement, to a total uprooting through social revolution, to totally new human relations, a new class-less society.

**Raya Dunayevskaya**

**Sept. 5, 1980**



# Notes

[56](#) The planned contents of the book include:

- **Chapter 1** - Two Turning Points in Luxemburg's Life: Before and After the 1905 Revolution - **Afterword**: Once Again on the Theory of Permanent Revolution
- **Chapter 2** - The Break with Karl Kautsky, 1910-1911: From Mass Strike Theory to Crisis over Morocco
- **Chapter 3** - The Interregnum of Luxemburg, and An Excursus into Marx's New Continent of Thought - **Afterword**: Marx's Unknown Ethnological Notebooks vs. Engels' **Origin of the Family**
- **Chapter 4** - Marx's and Luxemburg's **Theories of Accumulation of Capital**
- **Chapter 5** - War and Revolutions, 1914, 1917, 1919; Russian, German, World
- **Chapter 6** - Attitudes to Objectivity - Philosophy, Spontaneity, Organization
- **Chapter 7** - Women's Liberation: Continuities and Discontinuities, 19th and 20th Centuries, with Focus on Today
- **Chapter 8** - Philosophy of Revolution: The Development of Marx from a Critic of Hegel to the Author of **Capital** and Theorist of Permanent Revolution
- **APPENDIX**: First English translation of Luxemburg's speech to the 1907 London RSDRP Congress

[57](#) Our Draft Perspectives, since 1975, have been printed directly in **News & Letters**, "Tomorrow is Now" was published in the June 1980 issue.

[58](#) The contents page of the completed Perspectives for 1980-81 reads:

- **Part One**: U.S. Capitalist-Imperialism, at Home and Abroad, especially in the Middle East and Latin America

- I. Missiles, Missiles, Missiles - But What About Jobs?
- II. U.S. Imperialism's Tentacles: From Iran to South Korea, And from El Salvador to Iraq; Also Relations with Other Capitalist Imperialisms
- III. Religion in General and Jerusalem in Particular in this State-Capitalist Age
- **Part Two:** Long March of Revolt, Long March of Philosophy: Imperative Need for New Relationship of Practice to Theory
  - I. All Roads Lead to Gdansk, Poland, And ... The Road to the Black Ghetto, USA
  - II. Today's Tasks and A Brief Glance at 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism

[59](#) Urzula Wislanka translated articles from the underground workers' publication **Robotnik (Worker)** and publications like the satirical "liberated **Trybuna Ludu**" and we published them in a bi-lingual pamphlet, **Today's Polish Fight for Freedom** in March, 1980. When the new events erupted in summer the pamphlet was completely sold out, and a new one, with additional material, was planned for publication at once. See also our Lead article in December 1979, "East European revolts spread in wake of Czech trials, Polish mine disasters" by Kevin A. Barry.

[60](#) In the June 1977 Issue I analyzed President Carter's address in NATO as a monstrous order to begin "thinking the unthinkable": "to create more precision guided missiles, at no matter what cost". It was with good reason that we titled our Draft Perspectives that year, "Time is Running Out".

[61](#) See the May 1980 issue.

[62](#) This critique, written in the midst of WWII, was reprinted in the Feb, 1961 **N&L**, because a new era bore out the validity of the Marxist-Humanist view of revolutionary Black masses vs. the "talented tenth" who, in the 1960s, while not capitulating to a Myrdal, were nevertheless not bothering to build on the new ground of practice from below.

[63](#) "The Gathering Forces" by C.L.R. James, a previously unpublished 1967 document, was printed by **Radical America** (Dec. 12, 1971).

[64](#) In 1979 a guide to 40 **Two Worlds** columns from the 1960s and 1970s was issued under the title, "Critical Essays of Raya Dunayevskaya in the Battle of Ideas". The entire collection of **Two Worlds** columns constitutes a separate Vol XII in the WSU Archives collection. See also the **Weekly Political Letters** (Vol. VII).

[65](#) See also her essay on "Women's Liberation in search of a theory: the summary of a decade", in the June 1980 issue.