

Presentation of June 1, 1987

Now return to our own situation, and think of the attacks that we will be facing in 1987, when we state openly that even the one post-Marx Marxist revolutionary who *did* reach deeply into philosophy—Lenin—nevertheless did not do so on the question of organization. In truth, he never renounced his position on the vanguard party set out in 1902 in *What is to be Done?*, though he often critiqued it himself. He profoundly extended his new breakthrough in philosophy to a concretization of the dialectics of revolution, and yet never changed his position on the need for the ‘thin layer of Bolsheviks’ as a vanguard party organization. In 1982 in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution*, we critiqued Lenin politically. To fully work out the dialectics of philosophy and organization for our age, it is now clear that that critique must dig deep philosophically.

The whole truth is that even Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Program*, which remains the ground for organization today, was written 112 years ago. What is demanded is not mere ‘updating,’ after all the aborted revolutions of the post-World War II world. ‘Ground’ will not suffice alone; we have to finish the building—the roof and its contents. This is what I am working on now in the *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy*. I would appreciate hearing from our readers on their thoughts on this.

Now then, it seems to me that in a certain sense we could call it a shock for me to have experienced this in *this year 1987*, when a great deal of research was done by others—Eugene, Mike, Peter, Cyrus, Kevin, Sheila, Olga¹⁴—on the many ways that spontaneity

¹⁴ This refers to research for Dunayevskaya’s new book prepared by Eugene Walker, Michael Connolly, Peter Wernuth, Cyrus Novcen, Kevin A. Barry, Sheila Fuller, and Olga Domanski. For

appeared in the forms of councils, soviets, committees, communes, and so forth, not only to say the generalization: Yes, the party and the forms of organization born from spontaneity are opposites, but they are not *absolute* opposites. The change in the title to *Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy*¹⁴ really means that the absolute opposite is philosophy, and that we have not yet worked out organizationally. Because...

Take Pannkoek. The Council Communists were certainly earlier on the scene and directly opposed Lenin in a friendly way on the question of a single form of organization, insisting that when it comes to production, the people at the point of production must maintain their power after the revolution. But, did they ever give up their party? Didn’t they think, along with Rosa Luxemburg, that spontaneity is no substitute for the wholeness of internationalism and theory? On the contrary, they took that for granted. What not only was not taken for granted, but never even approached in any way whatever, unless one calls “approached” a total rejection, was philosophy. Except, except, except...

The excerpt of course, refers to Lenin. But he too kept to old and Plekhanov when it came to Russia.

One must not hem in a new duality into an old reality because of the similarities of abstract opposites conflicting.

Dunayevskaya’s notes and commentary on this research, see *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, #10727, #10800-10, #10856-59, #10896-98, #10904-16, #10952, #10957-58.

¹⁴ The proposed title for Dunayevskaya’s new book developed from “Dialectics of the Party” to “Dialectics of Organization” to “Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy: The Party and Forms of Organization Born out of Spontaneity.” For Dunayevskaya’s discussion of the significance of these changes in the title of her book, see *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, Vol. 13, #10813.

It is the collision of *concrete* opposites that demands a new unity. Without that philosophic moment there is no way to hew out a new path. And for Lenin there was no philosophic moment insofar as *organization* was concerned.

In the case of organization, every Left was grabbing at some old contradictions, and with them, some old solutions. Which is why the most cogent moment for our problematic, and for showing up more than ambivalence in Lenin, was the fact that Pannkoek (and Gorter), with that creative, new concept of council communism, i.e. power in the hands of the workers at the point of production, came the old, vulgarized, abysmally narrow, materialistic philosophy of Lenin's 1908 *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, as against Lenin's great new philosophic breakthrough on the *Larger Logic*, and as if that self-movement of ideas and of people was a "betrayal" of the class struggle. And to this day, that is what Council Communists are swearing by (see *Lenin as Philosopher*).¹⁵

Lenin, too, never raised philosophy directly in relationship to organization. It was at most a phrase, like the famous reference in the Trade Union Debate, where he brings in, in a general way only, dialectics and eclecticism (see page 65 of Volume IX of Lenin's *Selected Works*, on "a glass cylinder").¹⁶

And the epigones have been busy trying to say that whereas it was correct for Lenin not to touch the

¹⁵ See Anton Pannkoek, *Lenin as Philosopher* (London: Merlin Press, 1975).

¹⁶ See Lenin's 1920 speech "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin," in *Selected Works*, Vol. 9 (New York: International Publishers, 1943), pp. 62-72; in *Collected Works*, Vol. 32 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), pp. 90-100.

question of the party when there was the great phetnonon of Soviets, "we" must no longer avoid the question of party. Whereupon, they end up just with two more reasons for being in favor of the vanguard party.

III. Conclusion:

Untrodden Paths in Organization

In a single word, we must go into these untrodden paths. We must not, I repeat *must not*, look for a crutch just because a new epigone is using the word "democracy" to mean more than one party, and a Mao is espousing at one and the same time, "bombard the headquarters" and "the Party remains the vanguard" (+ vs. bureaucratization...).

Since Marx himself laid the ground—and that, remember, is 112 years ago—in other words, the whole of post-Marx Marxism beginning with Engels has not built on that ground. And Engels, you must remember, did fight hard to have the *Critique of the Gotha Program* published, if in a "moderated" form, and yet assented to the establishment of the Second International. And the German Social Democracy had been forced to publish it, but only as a "contribution to the discussion," not as ground for organization.

Lenin did return to Marx's roots in Hegel, and did see that the *Critique of the Gotha Program* had never really been concretized as the smashing of the bourgeois state, without which you could not have a revolution. In a word, he certainly worked out the dialectics of revolution, and made it be in Russia. But, but, but—he too didn't touch the question of the party. On the contrary, it didn't even go as far as his own varied critiques of *What is to be Done?*, once the Bolsheviks gained power.

With Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, especially Chapter 11, we alone showed that Marx had created the philosophic ground for organization. But we need not only ground but a roof. And we have all these 112 years of void on organization and philosophy. There is no time in a nuclear age to put it off for another day.

1988 is the year of the book, and not as in 1980 just as challenge to post-Marx Marxists, but the actual presentation of the dialectics of philosophy and the book as one, and for that it needs a whole organization, and not just the author. The whole does not mean...

The real point is the meaning that this is not a question of the "author," but the whole organization. I want to stress the word, "the whole," not in the sense that each one is going to write a chapter, but rather that the context of each person's activity and special point of concentration—be it labor, *Women's Liberation*, youth Black, etc.—will be inseparable from the meaning of that activity, and that meaning, whether of an objective event or the subjective activity, will be projected to those not-yet Marxist Humanists, because in meaning, i.e. philosophy, is both ground and roof of all we do, survey, strive for, as we prepare for that "revolution in permanence."

The philosophic nucleus, the attempt to become "practicing dialecticians," did have a good beginning in the 1980s.¹⁷ But the test is very different now, not because that is not what we need. We certainly do. But

¹⁷ In 1980, *News & Letters* newspaper began publishing as a 12-page monthly with the aim to more fully manifest philosophy in revolutionary journalism. For Dunayevskaya's discussion of this, see her *The Myriad Global Crises of the 1980s and the Nuclear World since World War II* (Chicago: News and Letters, 1986), pp. 43-60.

because the type of need involves first the whole organization which this year has been so preoccupied with making a success of the biweekly¹⁸ that the organizational growth from which it was supposed to be inseparable was very much separated. It suffered that because what got put very much on the back burner, and back again to only me writing it, was philosophy.

I want to repeat, because philosophy has not permeated the paper, therefore it didn't permeate the organization.

Therefore, I would very strongly suggest that the Plenum consider that beginning in January, 1988 we become a monthly twelve-page paper in a very new way, where the book—*Dialectics of Philosophy and Organization*—becomes the dominant force not only in essay-articles, but in every activity we undertake, especially in discussions with subscribers, with not-yet Marxist-Humanists, not just as the recording of the events and their experiences, but the meaning of those events and experiences and their direction in a global context. That is what we will have to project when we have conversations with subscribers. That is what has been missing—the whole new concept of "post-Marx Marxism as a pejorative"—it just laid there in Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation*, and *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

To assure that such essay-articles would be forthcoming, we ought to suggest or have people volunteer in September at the Plenum, on what they would do

¹⁸ In January, 1987, *News & Letters* newspaper began publishing as a biweekly; for one of Dunayevskaya's discussions of this development, see her "The Shocking Lianison of U.S.-Iran and the need for a biweekly *News & Letters*," in *News & Letters*, December, 1986.

for the issues beginning in January, 1988. I have had a chance to speak to some on this already. By raising it this early, it means I not only want to hear from you today, but we will continue the discussion at the next Resident Editorial Board meeting, when I will bring in a draft of the Plenum Call.¹⁹ And once the Call is out, then the full Plenum discussion is open to all.

¹⁹The "Resident Editorial Board" is the elected leadership body of News and Letters Committees. "The Plenum" refers to a national gathering of News and Letters Committees, which was scheduled to be held over Labor Day, 1987. Due to Dunayevskaya's death on June 9, 1987, the Plenum was postponed to January, 1988, when this presentation of June 1, 1987 was adopted as "the central part of the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives" for 1988. The "Plenum Call" refers to a document written by the Resident Editorial Board 60 days before the holding of a national Plenum which outlines the philosophic-organizational-political perspectives to be developed at the Plenum.