

An Exploration of the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection - Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of its World Development*

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Abstract: Through an exploration of the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, major themes of Dunayevskaya's contribution to Marxist thought and action are presented. Her view of Marx as a philosopher of revolution in permanence, her interpretation of Lenin as a Hegelian-Marxist thinker-activist revolutionary, her reading of Hegel's Absolutes as New Beginning for our age, her insistence that human subjects of social transformation are not alone muscle but Mind, are revolutionary Reason as well as force, and her efforts to work out and practice a dialectic of organisation and philosophy through the Marxist-Humanist organisation she founded, News and Letters Committees, are briefly discussed using documentation from her archives, which have recently been made available on the Internet.

Keywords: Raya Dunayevskaya, Marxist-Humanism, Marx, dialectics, revolution

1. In the Garden of Marx

Jean-Paul Sartre (1958, 7 & 8) in his *Search for Method* wrote of modern philosophy consisting of only three "moments":

Between the seventeenth century and the twentieth, I see three such periods, which I would designate by the names of the men who dominated them: there is the "moment" of Descartes and Locke, that of Kant and Hegel, finally that of Marx. These three philosophies become, each in its turn, the humus of every particular thought and the horizon of all culture; there is no going beyond them so long as man has not gone beyond the historical moment which they express. [...] Those intellectuals who come after the great flowering [...] cultivate the domain [...] I propose to call [them] "ideologists."

For more than 130 years many an ideologist has sought to cultivate Marx's garden. The results have been decidedly mixed. And yet, thinker (philosopher)-activists (perhaps rather than ideologists), "gardeners", are needed more than ever if Marx's Marxism is to have viability in our present moment.

From the celebration and exploration of Marx and Marxism 150 years after the first edition of *Capital* and 200 years after his birth – not to mention a return to Marx after the economic meltdown of 2008 – it is evident that there are many "Marxs" and "Marxisms" up for discussion and debate at the present moment.

Raya Dunayevskaya's Marx and her development of the concept of Marxist-Humanism in the post-World War II world form a unique point of departure for entering the present dialogue.

From her 1940s writings on Russia as a state-capitalist society, through her 1940s-1970s exploration of Lenin's (1963) *Philosophic Notebooks* on the Hegelian dialectic as central to his revolutionary practice, to her decades of work on the inseparable

arability of dialectics and humanism in Marx as philosopher of revolution in permanence, Dunayevskaya was subjected to strong attacks from Stalinists and Trotskyists alike. Yet she persisted in developing Marxist-Humanism as a revolutionary body of ideas and practice from the 1940s to her death in 1987.

Recently, *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection – Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development (RDC)* a 17,000+ page archive of her writings, notes, and talks has been made available online¹. This is to be welcomed, as the depth and breadth of her body of ideas has not been engaged in a manner that many other Marxist thinkers have been explored. Dunayevskaya herself organised the RDC and wrote the *Guide* for it, giving her view of the origin and development of Marxist-Humanism. An ongoing *Supplement to the RDC* was prepared and organised by her Marxist-Humanist colleagues of News and Letters Committees after her death.

Here, I propose to explore a number of dimensions in the development of Marxist-Humanism with the hope of opening up dialogue and debate on her body of thought. Let me say from the beginning that I have been a follower of her ideas, and worked as one of her secretaries. I hope this gives me a point of view not simply as a partisan, but as someone who has sought to seriously explore them over decades, seeking to cast some illumination on strands of her thought and practice.

2. Origin of the Marxist-Humanist Archives

Two major determinants were present when Dunayevskaya first established the Marxist-Humanist Archives in 1969:

(1) She had experienced first-hand the lack of availability of many of Marx's writings more than three-quarters of a century after his death. It had taken the Russian Revolution to finally make available such crucial writings as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, only to have them pushed aside and reburied with Stalinism. *The Grundrisse*, the original ending of Vol. I of *Capital*, and Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* were among his works that experienced even longer delays before being made available. The failure to have the whole of Marx's writings was still evident a quarter century later, at the time of the centenary of Marx's death (1983) – a fact that Dunayevskaya continued to call attention to and to fight against.

(2) The crucial necessity of having available not alone the results of a founder's studies, but the *process* of reaching those results. Dunayevskaya strove to share the process of her work at each stage with her colleagues in News and Letters Committees, and wanted to make that process available in documents in the Marxist-Humanist Archives organised by herself.

The trajectory of writings presented in the RDC was closely tied to the development of each of her major books – *Marxism and Freedom* (1957), *Philosophy and Revolution* (1973) and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982). At the same time, the *Collection* is a reflection of what was occurring within the revolutionary Marxist organisation that she had founded – News and Letters Committees. Dunayevskaya as philosopher of Marxist-Humanism was at the same time a practicing revolutionary. It was the inseparability of philosophic-

¹ The RDC can be found online at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/>>. It can also be located on the Marxist Internet Archives at: <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/index.htm>>. The fully digitized *Guide to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection* can be found at: <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/guide.pdf>>.

theoretical labours and participating in revolutionary organisation that characterised her life.

Her first “on the record” discussion and organisation of her archives (not at that time for deposit with an institution, but for her colleagues in News and Letters Committees) came in preparation for the first News and Letters Convention after the publication of *Marxism and Freedom*².

3. Strands of Dunayevskaya’s Marxist-Humanism

The *RDC* is divided into two parts: Part I, “Birth and Development of State-Capitalist Theory,” and Part II, “Creation of Marxist-Humanism as Organisation – News and Letters Committees – and as Theory for Our Age.”

3.1. Development of State-Capitalist Theory

Dunayevskaya, writing under the pen name of Freddie Forest, is perhaps best known for developing a comprehensive economic theory of Russia as a state-capitalist society in her writings of the 1940s, which appeared primarily in the *New International*, and also in the *American Economic Review*³. She was co-leader of the Johnson (C.L.R. James)-Forest or State-Capitalist Tendency within the Trotskyist movement that was established first in the Workers Party (1941-1947), and then within the Socialist Workers Party (1947-1951), and finally as an independent tendency, the Correspondence Committees (1953-1954).

Of equal importance in the 1940s and early 1950s, was the Tendency’s determination to find new ground, *new beginnings* for Marxism in the mid-20th Century under the impact of the Soviet Union’s transformation from a workers’ revolution into a state-capitalist society under Stalin’s consolidation of power and implementation of the Five-Year Economic Plans beginning in 1928.

The Tendency turned to probing the dialectic in Marx, in Lenin, and in Hegel. Dunayevskaya took the lead, finding and eventually translating and commenting upon Marx’s *1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*, translating Lenin’s *Philosophic Notebooks on Hegel’s Science of Logic*, carrying on an extensive correspondence with James and with another leader of the Tendency, Grace Lee (Boggs).⁴

At the same time, as we will see below, the Tendency sought out and analyzed “the new passions and new forces” arising, be it with the independent Black struggles and the mineworker struggles in the U.S., as well as the new stirrings in East Europe and Russia following Stalin’s death in 1953.

² <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/9357.pdf>> . (Dunayevskaya 1969–85 [2000]).

³ *RDC*, VOLUME I: 1941-1947 – BEGINNING OF STATE-CAPITALIST THEORY (IN THE WORKERS PARTY). Among other documents see: “An Analysis of Russian Economy”, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/69.pdf>>. “A New Revision of Marxian Economics” (in the *American Economic Review*), available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/209.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).

⁴ “First English Translation of Lenin’s Abstract of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*” (Dunayevskaya 1969–85 [1949]), available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1492.pdf>> . (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). Raya Dunayevskaya, C.L.R. James and Grace Lee (Boggs), “Philosophic Correspondence, 1949-51”, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1595.pdf>> . (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). See also, *Philosophic Correspondence*, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/9209.pdf>>; and at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/9224.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1949-1951]).

3.2. Dunayevskaya's Marx

The writings of Dunayevskaya on Marx are perhaps the most extensive of all themes in the *RDC*. They begin early, within her analysis of Russian state-capitalism, particularly with an essay entitled "Labor and Society" (1942-43)⁵. Here Dunayevskaya first quoted from the *1844 Manuscripts* to contrast labour in a class society to labour in a socialist society.

Over the next four decades Dunayevskaya returned again and again to those *1844 Manuscripts*⁶, arguing that they were the birthplace of Marx's "thoroughgoing naturalism or humanism", which determined the trajectory of Marx's revolutionary developments over four decades.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s she wrote numerous letters analyzing what she would term "the dialectic of Marx's plan for *Capital*"⁷. In her emerging philosophic probing, Dunayevskaya was determined not to separate dialectics and materialism in her reading of *Capital*. In a letter of October 5, 1949, she expressed it as wanting "to write my notes of the first ch[apter] of *Capital* from the new dialectical view of it".

From 1949-50 there are a dozen extent letters of Dunayevskaya in which the major thrust is a reading of *Capital* with Hegel's *Science of Logic* in hand. Two themes predominated:

(a) a singling out of a number of Hegelian categories that Dunayevskaya saw in sections of Marx's *Capital*;

(b) a tracing of changes Marx made in the structure of *Capital* through various drafts – "the dialectic of Marx's plan for *Capital*" – undertaken in part through Marx's rereading of Hegel. Both themes were developed as Dunayevskaya established the historic circumstances for the writing of *Capital*.

These writings formed the initial basis of her analyses of *Capital* developed in *Marxism and Freedom*, in *Philosophy and Revolution*, and in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. She called these writings her "Trilogy of Revolution".

For Dunayevskaya, there was not a separation of the Marx of 1844, from the Marx of *Capital*, from the writings of his last decade. With her writings on Marx she developed an important category, the "Battle of Ideas". There, she wrote critiques of such thinkers as Louis Althusser on his division of the young Marx from the Marx of *Capital*⁸ and of the orthodox Trotskyist Ernest Mandel, whom she had debated on state-capitalism in Europe and later critiqued his interpretation of Marx in his Introduction to Marx's *Capital*⁹. Many of her critiques first appeared in her regular column "Two

⁵ <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/87.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1942-3]).

⁶ Dunayevskaya's original translation of two of the manuscripts "Private Property and Communism" and "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" can be found in the original edition of *Marxism and Freedom* (Dunayevskaya 1957). Dunayevskaya's translation of these essays has been reprinted in *Marx's Philosophy of Revolution in Permanence for Our Day – Selected writings by Raya Dunayevskaya* (Dunayevskaya 2018).

⁷ See footnote 4.

⁸ See *Philosophy and Revolution*, p. 30, fn 190. (Dunayevskaya 2003).

⁹ See Introduction to *Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis*, 1978, available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/5824.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-85). See also the Political-Philosophic Letter, "Today's Global Crisis, Marx's Capital, and the Marxist Epigones Who Try to Truncate It and the Understanding of Today's Crises", available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/5282.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1976]).

Worlds” (later called “Theory/Practice”), which appeared in the Marxist-Humanist newspaper *News & Letters*¹⁰.

Though Dunayevskaya never chose to write a biography of Marx, instead situating her writings on Marx in what she viewed as the need to create Marx’s Marxism anew for her age, taken as a whole, the range and depth of her writings on Marx form one of the most comprehensive “intellectual biographies” of Marx in the 20th century.

3.3. A View of Lenin’s “Philosophical Preparation for Revolution”

Dunayevskaya’s Lenin is sharply distinguished from the multitude of writings and critiques of Lenin, by “Leninists” and anti-Leninists alike¹¹. Her view and analysis of Lenin was founded upon what she termed as a break in Lenin’s thought driven by the outbreak of World War I resulting in the betrayal of many sections of the Second International, particularly the German Social Democracy, which chose to take sides in a capitalist war. It was in this period, the fall of 1914 through the beginning of 1915, that Lenin in exile in Zurich Switzerland, extensively studied and commented upon Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, published as part of his *Philosophic Notebooks*¹².

Dunayevskaya found these writings in the mid-1940s as she was working on her analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society. By 1949, she decided to translate them for the first time into English¹³. For her, Lenin’s return to the Hegelian dialectic at this critical moment opened a window for interpreting his theory/practice in the Russian Revolution and in the first years post the Revolution. An extensive collection of her writings on Lenin and the impact of the dialectic upon his thought and practice, as well as her view of the recreation of the dialectic in his hands can be found in the *RDC* and in each of her *Trilogy of Revolution*¹⁴.

Her focus on this philosophic break in Lenin’s thought did not mean that she didn’t deal with Lenin as practicing revolutionary pre-1914. In the 1940s she translated the greater part of his Chapter One from the *Development of Capitalism in Russia* into

¹⁰ Complete issues of *News & Letters* available at: <<https://newsandletters.org/>>. Dunayevskaya’s columns can be located in the index created for each decade.

¹¹ See for instance her critique of Tony Cliff’s *Lenin*, “Tony Cliff Degrades Lenin as Theoretician”, *News & Letters*, May 1977. Reprinted in *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution*. (Dunayevskaya, 2017). For her view of Castoriadis’ anti-Leninism see “Footnote on the Detractors of Lenin [on Cornelius Castoriadis (aka) Pierre Chaulieu or Paul Cardan]”, *News & Letters*, December 1969. Reprinted in *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2017).

¹² See Vol. 38 of Lenin’s *Collected Works* (Lenin 1963).

¹³ “First English Translation of Lenin’s Abstract of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*”. (Dunayevskaya 1969–85 [1949]), available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1492.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969–1985). Originally published as appendix to first edition of *Marxism and Freedom* (Dunayevskaya 1957). Reprinted in *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2017).

¹⁴ See especially Volumes II, III, and XII of *RDC*. See Chapter 10, “The Collapse of the Second International and the Break in Lenin’s Thought”; Chapter 11, “Forms of Organization: The Relationship of the Spontaneous Self-Organization of the Proletariat to the ‘Vanguard party’”; and Chapter 12, “What Happens After?” in *Marxism and Freedom* (Dunayevskaya, 2000). Chapter 3, “The Shock of Recognition and the Philosophic Ambivalence of Lenin” in *Philosophy and Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2003). See also *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2017).

English¹⁵. In her *Marxism and Freedom* she wrote on Lenin's *What Is to be Done?*, that is, on form of organisation. However, it was Lenin and the dialectic that she saw as the lynchpin for grasping Lenin (1915-1917 and 1917-1923), as leader of the Russian Revolution and in its immediate aftermath. As we will see shortly, it was an important catalyst for her own exploration of Hegelian dialectics.

She continued to study and comment on Lenin's Hegel throughout her life, and in the last period was beginning to write on what she saw as Lenin being philosophically only on the threshold of the Absolute Idea. Dunayevskaya viewed this limitation as having an impact on his incomplete reorganisation on the question of the Party¹⁶.

We have recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and yet despite the mountain of new books and various colloquia on this anniversary, there was a decided void in commenting upon Lenin and dialectic in relation to the Russian Revolution, a void that Dunayevskaya had sought to fill.

3.4. A Breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes: A Movement from Practice to Theory as Well as From Theory to Practice - Absolute Negativity as New Beginning

Dunayevskaya's exploration of Hegel's Absolutes sets her apart from other Marxist theoreticians' view of absolute negativity at this highest level. As against Georg Lukács, who saw in the Absolute Knowledge of *Phenomenology of Spirit* only a recollection of past stages, and an extinguishing of history¹⁷, and as against Herbert Marcuse, who argued that Hegel's discussion of the Absolutes referred to a pre-technological society¹⁸, Dunayevskaya held that the Hegelian Absolutes were key to understanding liberation movements in the post-World War II world, be it the African Revolutions, or the workers' battles against automation. How did she arrive as such a theoretical-political understanding and concretisation of the Hegelian Absolutes?

Her journey began within the State-Capitalist Tendency (SCT) in the 1940s, when the focus was not alone on analysis of state-capitalist, but on finding new beginnings for Marxism in opposition to Stalinism's transformation of Russia into its opposite, and Trotsky's failure to reorganise his view of Russia as a deformed workers' state under the impact of the new reality of Russia's economic-social transformation.

Dunayevskaya had found and began to explore Marx's 1844 writings and Lenin's writings on Hegel's *Science of Logic*. C.L.R. James wrote his "Notes on the Dialectic" in 1948. In response, Dunayevskaya decided to translate all of Lenin's 1914-1915 writings on Hegel's *Science of Logic*. As she did so in 1949, sending parts to James, she as well sent letters of her commentary on Lenin's *Notebooks*, in which she pointed to differences between Lenin's and James' reading of Hegel. In particular she

¹⁵ Lenin, "The Theoretic Mistakes of the Narodniki" (Dunayevskaya, 1969-1985 [1943], available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1926.pdf>>. Originally published as "Origins of Capitalism in Russia", *New Internationalist*, Oct. 1943, Nov. 1943, Dec. 1943.

¹⁶ See Dunayevskaya's last writings on Lenin in *RDC* vol. xiii. Excerpts from several of these writings are published in *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution*. (Dunayevskaya 2017).

¹⁷ For Lukács, Hegel's Absolute Spirit "introduce[d] no really new knowledge about the actual evolution of history..." p. 514, *The Young Hegel*. (Lukács, 1975)

¹⁸ See Marcuse-Dunayevskaya Correspondence see *RDC*, Volume 12, Section V. The Battle of Ideas Correspondence with Herbert Marcuse, 1954-1978. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

commented upon James' only having brief notes on the Notion section of dialectic in contrast to Lenin's expansive commentary¹⁹.

The leaders of the SCT – James, Grace Lee and Dunayevskaya – continued a vigorous philosophic correspondence in 1949-50 and beyond, seeking a new beginning for Marxism in the post-WWII world. Dunayevskaya drafted two preliminary writings for a book²⁰. Meanwhile, new objective-subjective events were occurring: Dunayevskaya participated in the support work for the 1949-50 Coal Miners General Strike in West Virginia, which illuminated for her the significance of a movement from practice (to be discussed in the following section). On March 5 1953, Stalin died. Dunayevskaya probed for its meaning, immediately writing an analysis of its ramifications, including collaboration with a Black auto worker, Charles Denby who was in the State-Capitalist Tendency and, who later become editor of *News & Letters*, a Marxist-Humanist newspaper.

For Dunayevskaya, Stalin's death was not alone a question of writing a political analysis. As she would express it later, it was as if an incubus had been lifted from her brain, compelling her to probe the absolutes of Hegel. The result were two letters (May 12 and 20, 1953) focusing on the Absolute Idea Chapter of the *Science of Logic* and the Absolute Mind section of *Philosophy of Mind*²¹. She would term these letters her breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes, and would later call these two letters "the philosophic moment of Marxist-Humanism"²².

As against seeing Hegel's Absolutes as pure idealism, the end of history, a conversation with God, etc., she found within the absolutes a dual movement: *a movement not only from theory to practice, but as well a movement from practice to theory*. She would later term this "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning"²³.

What did it mean that the movement from practice to theory was integral to the absolutes? For Dunayevskaya it would come to mean that the movement from below of masses seeking their freedom – be it workers fighting automation, or East European rebellion against Russian totalitarianism, or the African Revolutions, or the rise of women's liberation, or the Black Movement for civil rights and mass revolt, etc. – was itself, in its action, in the masses' desires, questions, hopes, *a form of theory itself*. Dunayevskaya saw the masses as thinkers and reason, and not alone force and muscle of revolutionary social transformation.

It did not mean there was no role for the theoretician. It meant the role of a theoretician, of theory, was not "to give consciousness to the masses" a la the vanguard party. Rather, theory, emancipatory philosophy, had to be created, forged in direct

¹⁹ Letters to James (1949) can be found as appendix to Dunayevskaya. 2002. *Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

²⁰ See fn. 4 for correspondence of Dunayevskaya, James and Grace Lee. "State-Capitalism and Marxism", first draft of what would become *Marxism and Freedom* available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/472.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985[1947]). "The Lenin Book", Second Draft of Book, 1952 available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1735.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

²¹ Letters on the Absolute Idea, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1797.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1952]).

²² See fn. 7.

²³ "Absolute Negativity as New Beginning – The Ceaseless Movement of Ideas and of History", Chapter 1 of *Philosophy and Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2003).

relation to the mass movement(s). A crucial role of dialectic philosophy was to make *explicit* what was implicit in the masses' self-activity.

These kinds of ideas, this kind of interpretation of the dialectic at the level of the absolutes, turned upside down dogmatic, orthodox Marxism post-Marx. At the same time, Dunayevskaya argued, it was a return to the Marxism of Marx, the manner in which he forged his philosophy in response to the ongoing reality of capitalism and the masses' resistance and rebellion against class society.

Thus the dialectic of Marx, of Lenin, of Hegel that Dunayevskaya explored in the 1940s and early 1950s become the basis for the *dialectic of Dunayevskaya*, which would become expressed as Marxist-Humanism from the mid-1950s forward. To reach that moment, we want to explore one additional dimension of Dunayevskaya's development as reflected in the Archives: her view of the revolutionary subjectivity of the masses. –

3.5. Concretising Forces of Revolution as Reason of Revolution

Dunayevskaya's theoretical developments were closely connected with her activity as a practicing revolutionary. In the 1920s as a young Communist she participated in distributions at International Harvester in Chicago, and in work on the Southside of Chicago with *The Negro Champion*. In the 1930s she was involved in a number of labour and Black activities, including the San Francisco General Strike of 1934, and with Black sharecroppers. In the 1940s, she wrote a number of studies on the Black Question and debated the orthodox Trotskyist position that subsumed the Black Question under labour struggles²⁴.

While a co-leader of the State-Capitalist Tendency she supported the 1949-50 Miners General Strike, where the introduction of automation in American industry with the advent of the continuous miner was an important dimension²⁵. A key ramification of the strike for Dunayevskaya was deciding that the book on Marxism she was in the process of working on needed to have as a crucial point of departure the activity of workers²⁶.

Later, with the creation of News and Letters Committees (1955) and its newspaper *News & Letters* she asked Charles Denby, a Black auto worker in Detroit to partici-

²⁴ See "Marxism and the Negro Problem", available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/259.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85 [1944]). "Negro Intellectuals in Dilemma", originally published in *New International* (Nov. 1944), available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/271.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). "Negroes in the Revolution: The Significance of Their Independent Struggles", originally published in *New International* (May, 1945), available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/282.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). "Marxism and the Negro Problem" (1946), a continuation of 1944 article by the same name, available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/286.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). "Industrialization and Urbanization of the Negro", available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/311.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1946?]).

²⁵ For a description of this strike see Philips, Andy, "A Missing Page from American Labor History"; and Dunayevskaya, "The Emergence of a new Movement from Practice that Is Itself a Form of Theory". Both found in *A 1980s View: The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* News & Letters, Chicago, 1984, available at: <https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/8123.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

²⁶ See, "Discussion led by Raya Dunayevskaya on new form of book-in-the-making from two vantage points: American proletariat and Lenin's Philosophic Notebooks", available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/1585.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).

pate in the paper. He soon became its editor²⁷, and regularly wrote a front-page “Worker’s Journal” column. Having a production worker as editor of a revolutionary Marxist paper was a step toward breaking down the division between thinking and doing, between mental and manual labour that Marx had seen as necessity for the abolition of class society. A pamphlet, *Workers Battle Automation*, written by working people and edited by Charles Denby was published in 1960²⁸. The worker dimension of Marxist-Humanism could also be found in other production worker columnists in *News & Letters*, among them Johnny Miller’s “On the Line” and articles by Felix Martin, who became the labour page editor.

The Black dimension, which as we saw was present in Dunayevskaya’s writings of the 1940s, was greatly expanded with the development of the Civil Rights movement. Not only was there a specific page in *News & Letters* devoted to the Black Question, but several new pamphlets were written around the Black dimension – *Freedom Riders Speak for Themselves*, the *Maryland Freedom Union*, the *Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*, *Black Mass Revolt*, and *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* among others.²⁹ As well, writers on the Black dimension were presented regularly in the pages of *News & Letters*, among them the “Black-Red” column written by John Alan³⁰.

Central to Dunayevskaya’s thinking and practice on the Black question was *American Civilization on Trial – Black Masses as Vanguard (ACOT)*. Written principally by Dunayevskaya, *ACOT* was a Black and labour history of the United States. She viewed it as a concretisation of the theoretical framework she had worked out in *Marxism and Freedom* for the Black dimension.

The concept of “vanguard” was not a question of the party-to-lead, but rather of masses in motion as vanguard. The pamphlet was issued on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863-1963) declared during the Civil War, and was used in Freedom Schools in Mississippi, and other Black centres during the Civil Rights Movement. It was reissued, with new introductions several times³¹.

²⁷ See also his autobiography *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker’s Journal*. (Denby 1989).

²⁸ *Workers Battle Automation*, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2843.pdf>>. See also “Automation and the New Humanism”, Chapter 15 of *Marxism and Freedom* (Dunayevskaya 2000).

²⁹ *Freedom-Riders Speak for Themselves*, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3414.pdf>>, (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1961]). *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3474.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1965]). *Black Mass Revolt*, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3526.pdf>>.

(Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1967]). *The Maryland Freedom Union, Workers Doing and Thinking*, Mike Flug, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3553.pdf>>.

(Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1969]). *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought*, 1986 edition, available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/10528.pdf>>.

(Dunayevskaya, 1969-85).

³⁰ See “Black/Red View” column in *News & Letters* by John Alan, who also wrote *Dialectics of Black Liberation Struggles* (News & Letters 2003).

³¹ *American Civilization on Trial – Black Masses as Vanguard*, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3369.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1963]). Of special importance was the fact that the work became incorporated into the Constitution of News and Letters Committees, along with each of her major books. See particularly the edition of 1983 for which Dunayevskaya wrote a special Introduction.

Dunayevskaya had written of women in the radical movement as early as the 1950s³². As women's liberation became not only an idea but a movement, she asked the women in News and Letters Committees to form a women's liberation committee and begin a women's liberation page in the paper³³. When *News & Letters* began in 1955, there were women columnists – Ethyl Dunbar a Black woman wrote “Way of the World”, and Angelo Terrano, a young white woman first wrote on the youth page, and then on the labour page.

As the women's liberation movement developed Dunayevskaya participated, giving talks at women's liberation conferences and writing articles. For Dunayevskaya the focus was of course fighting sexism, with consciousness of the dimensions of class and race as well. But central to her view of women's liberation was the concept of women as thinkers, as needed theoreticians. These dimensions of women's liberation became fully united when she decided to write a book in which women's liberation would be a central theme. Its final form was *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. The book presented Luxemburg as a feminist as well as a revolutionary and theoretician, took up various aspects of the historical and ongoing nature of women's liberation, and related all to Marx's concept of revolution³⁴.

This book would soon be followed with a second book, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, a collection of 35 years of Dunayevskaya's writings on women.

Though News and Letters Committees was small, and had few youth when it began, Dunayevskaya saw them as an important dimension of social transformation. A special section was created in *News & Letters* for them to edit independently, and they were singled out in the Constitution of News and Letters Committees³⁵.

For Dunayevskaya the question of forces of revolution as *subjects* of social transformation was not a theoretical abstraction, but responded to actual developments as they occurred. Her writing, whether on workers, or women, or the Black dimension, was tightly tied to the actual struggles occurring in the United States and internationally. For her, the concept of *subject* meant that each force of revolution was seen as

³² See “The Miners' Wives (1950), available at: <https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/1477.pdf> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). “On Women in the Post-War World, and the Old Radicals” (1953), available at #2077ff within: <https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/2042.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). Both articles were republished in *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, (Dunayevskaya 1996).

³³ Women's Liberation section in *News & Letters*, available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/4820.pdf>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [Nov. 1969]).

³⁴ *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, (Dunayevskaya 1991). See also: “Who We Are and What We Stand For . . .” issued by the News and Letters Women's Liberation Committee, May 1971, available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/4818.pdf> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). *Notes on Women's Liberation: We Speak in Many Voices*, a News & Letters pamphlet, Oct. 1970, available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/4821.pdf> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).

³⁵ Original *Constitution and By-Laws for News and Letters Committees* available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2587.pdf> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). Youth in the Constitution: “We undertake that space be made available for youth which they will write and edit for themselves in keeping with the principle that they are organizationally independent of these News & Letters Committees”.

reason as well as muscle of social transformation. Each subject was challenged by her to be thinkers as well as doer/activists.

3.6. *International*

While Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism was rooted in and primarily developed in the United States, it had many international connections. Even before the full development of Marxist-Humanism, Dunayevskaya had sought to build international relations for the State-Capitalist Tendency with a trip to Europe in 1947, speaking to different tendencies. During that trip she had met an African revolutionary from the Cameroon and had written an exciting brief report of his story of revolt in his country in the immediate post-WW II period³⁶.

The East German Revolt of 1953, followed by the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which raised the question of the humanism of Marx, profoundly influenced Dunayevskaya's thought. It signalled for her the beginning of the end of Russian state-capitalist totalitarianism. It was not a question of only one or two countries, but the whole region of East Europe under Russia's rule. Stalinism's imposition of "orthodox" Marxism (state-capitalist totalitarianism) was broken both by actual revolt, and by the development of a wide-ranging discussion of socialist humanism in East Europe. This would be reflected in Erich Fromm's important symposium, *Socialist-Humanism*, to which Dunayevskaya was invited to contribute³⁷. Dunayevskaya initiated correspondence with a number of contributors to this published symposium.

With Prague Spring 1968 in Czechoslovakia (crushed by Russian tanks and troops), Dunayevskaya developed a relationship with several Czech activists/intellectuals including Ivan Svitak and "X", a dissident in Czechoslovakia, producing a pamphlet on the movement³⁸.

The African Revolutions and protests against colonial rule in the late fifties and into the 1960s and beyond marked another crucial international development. In 1959 she wrote a pamphlet entitled *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolution*³⁹. This writing specifically responded to Mao's attempts to influence and assert leadership over the Third World revolutions.

She had met several Africa thinker-revolutionaries in the 1930s when they were students in the United States. Now a number of them were leaders of liberation movements in various countries of the African continent. In 1962, Dunayevskaya undertook a trip to West Africa traveling to several countries, meeting not only some leaders, but most crucially, being invited to witness parts of the liberation struggles,

³⁶ Eighteen letters and nine-page summary of Fourth International Conference, includes letter on meeting with the Cameroonian, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/661.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85 [1947]).

³⁷ "Marx's Humanism Today" written for Erich Fromm's *Socialist Humanism – an International Symposium*, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3565.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85 [1965]).

³⁸ *Czechoslovakia: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3940.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85 [1968]).

³⁹ *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*, first published as a special supplement in *News & Letters*, June-July 1959. Published in an expanded edition as a pamphlet, 1961, available at:

<<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2688.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

particularly in the Gambia and Ghana. The trip was documented in the *RDC*, including a number of reports she wrote for the magazine *Africa Report*⁴⁰.

In 1965, Dunayevskaya travelled to Japan for a lecture tour including meeting one section of the Zengakuren⁴¹. As well, she interviewed refugees from Mao's China in Hong Kong. This would be reflected in her writing analysing Mao's China.⁴²

Relations with Latin Americans and analysis of Latin America events can be seen in her interchange with the Argentinian Marxist Silvia Frondizi⁴³, in exchanges with Latin American feminists⁴⁴, and in her analysis and critique of the Cuban Revolution⁴⁵.

3.7. From "Battle of Ideas" and Philosophic Dialogue with Marcuse, Fromm and Hegel Scholars to the Category of "Post-Marx Marxism as a Pejorative"

Dunayevskaya was involved in an intense "battle of ideas" with other Marxists as a result of her analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society in the early 1940s. These included Max Shachtman and others in the Workers Party, as well as those who supported Russia as a workers' state even under Stalin⁴⁶.

Dunayevskaya and James had developed a position on the independent struggles of Blacks in America that differed sharply from the Communist Party's "Black Belt thesis", as well of the orthodox Trotskyist position on the Black Question. Dunayevskaya would debate the centrality of the Black Question against the official Trotskyist position⁴⁷.

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- ⁴⁰ 1962: Year of the Africa Trip: a. "In the Gambia during elections ... It's a long hard road to Independence", published in *Africa Today*, July 1962, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3184.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). b. "Ghana: Out of Colonization, into the Fire", published in *Africa Today*, Dec. 1962, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3189.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).
- ⁴¹ The New Left in Japan: Achievements and Goals, in *News & Letters*, Feb. 1966, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3727.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).
- ⁴² Hong Kong Interview: Alienation or Revolution, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/3660.pdf>>. See as well, Chapter 17 "The Challenge of Mao Tse-tung," and Chapter 18, "Cultural Revolution of Maoist Reaction," in *Marxism and Freedom*, post-1957 editions. See also Chapter 5, "The Thought of Mao Tse-tung", *Philosophy and Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 2003).
- ⁴³ See Excerpts from an Exchange of Correspondence with Silvio Frondizi, pgs. 167-72 *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* (Dunayevskaya 1987).
- ⁴⁴ See *La mujer como razon y fuerza revolucionaria*. Spanish edition of *Woman as Reason and as Force of Revolution*, published by the Peruvian feminist group, ALIMUPER, March, 1982, available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/7446.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). See also, Dunayevskaya letter to Ana Maria Portugal (Lima, Peru), written Oct. 12, 1981, available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/15305.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).
- ⁴⁵ See her Weekly Political Letters on the Bay of Pigs Invasion, April 22, 1961, and on The Cuban Missile Crisis, Oct. 22, 1962. Weekly Political Letters, by Raya Dunayevskaya, available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2906.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985). As well, see the collection of writings "The Cuban Revolution and What Happens After?", Chapter 15, in *Russia: From Proletarian Revolution to State-Capitalist Counter-Revolution*.
- ⁴⁶ See footnote 3.
- ⁴⁷ "Negroes in the Revolution: The Significance of Their Independent Struggles", available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/282.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-95 [1945]). "Abstract of Com. Coolidge's Document on Negro Question", available at: <<http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/296.pdf>> (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985 [1946]).

Her “battle of ideas” critiques continued throughout her life, often in the form of book reviews she wrote in a regular column in the newspaper, *News & Letters*. Her critiques include those on Georg Lukács, Tony Cliff, Maximilien Rubel, and many others⁴⁸.

At the same time, Dunayevskaya sought to develop a philosophic dialogue with Marxist philosophers and socialist thinkers. One of the most extensive correspondences was with Herbert Marcuse, focusing particularly on their differing interpretations of the relevance of Hegel’s Absolutes, as well as the role of the working class in contemporary society⁴⁹. Another extensive correspondence was with Erich Fromm, on socialist humanism, dialectics, and Rosa Luxemburg⁵⁰.

Dunayevskaya was a member of the Hegel Society of America, and addressed their convention in 1976, speaking on “Dialectics of Liberation in Thought and in Activity: Absolute Negativity as New Beginning”⁵¹. As well, she corresponded with several non-Marxist Hegel scholars including George Armstrong Kelly, Warren Steinkras, and Louis Dupres.

Perhaps most provocative in her development of “battle of ideas” over several decades was what Dunayevskaya developed during the writing of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution*. There, a new category emerged in her thinking about the development of Marxism post-Marx: “Post-Marx Marxism as a Pejorative.” This category which encompassed, not betrayers, but revolutionary Marxist thinkers, began with Engels. Within this category she included such revolutionary thinker activists as Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Bolshevik archivist David Ryazanov, who did so much to preserve and present Marx’s archives.

What could have driven her to create such a category, when she certainly recognised, appreciated, and wrote about each of these thinker-activists as great revolutionaries? Post-Marx Marxism as pejorative arose because of her view that no post-Marx Marxist, as great as were their contributions, had grasped *the fullness of Marx as philosopher and activist of revolution in permanence*. For Dunayevskaya, it was precisely that view of Marx that was of the essence, the lynch-pin for the needed creation of Marxism in the post-WW II world. Without that foundation, that vision, she would argue, there could not be an authentic recreation of Marx’s Marxism for the contradictory realities humanity faced in the post-World War II world of revolution and counter-revolution, including counter-revolution emerging in the heart of revolution⁵².

⁴⁸ For the fullest collection of Dunayevskaya’s “Battle of Ideas” writings see her “Two Worlds” and “Theory/Practice” columns in *News & Letters*, available at: <<https://newsandletters.org/>>. For a selection see, “A Guide to and a Collection of 40 Critical Essays of Raya Dunayevskaya in the Battle of Ideas”, available at: <<https://rayadunayevskaya.org/raya/ArchivePDFs/5888.pdf>>. (Dunayevskaya 1969-89 [1979]). As well see Part II “Alternatives” in her *Philosophy and Revolution* for analysis and critiques of Trotsky, Sartre and Mao (Dunayevskaya 2003).

⁴⁹ See *RDC*, Volume XII, Section V. The Battle of Ideas, Correspondence with Herbert Marcuse, 1954-1978 (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).

⁵⁰ See *RDC*, Volume XII Section V. The Battle of Ideas, Correspondence with Erich Fromm, 1959-1978 (Dunayevskaya 1969-1985).

⁵¹ “Dialectics of Liberation in Thought and in Activity: Absolute Negativity as New Beginning”. Presentation delivered to the Hegel Society of America. Republished in *New Essays* (Dunayevskaya 1977).

⁵² See particularly “Post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels,” *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution*, pp. 175-179 (Dunayevskaya 1991).

3.8. *Revolutionary Organisation - News and Letters Committees. The Dialectics of Organisation and Philosophy*

Dunayevskaya's development of Marxist ideas and involvement in revolutionary practice took place within Marxist organisations. When she came to the United States as a youth she became a member of the Young Communists in Chicago. Thereafter followed work in various Trotskyist organisations, particularly as a separate State-Capitalist Tendency within Workers Party and then the Socialist Workers Party in the 1940s and early 1950s. The State-Capitalist Tendency of James and Dunayevskaya and their colleagues left the Trotskyists to form Correspondence Committees in 1951. James and Dunayevskaya split at the end of 1954. At each moment Dunayevskaya wrote for and participated in revolutionary organisation.

A new organisational-philosophical moment began in 1955 with the formation of News and Letters Committees, and its newspaper *News & Letters*, which Dunayevskaya founded with colleagues. She was now free politically, and ready philosophically to undertake the labour of creating a fully Marxist-Humanist organisation to meet the challenge of helping to bring forth the possibility of the American Revolution. What was different about News and Letters Committees from various other Marxist organisations?

Form of organisation was one dimension of difference. Rejecting the vanguard-party-to-lead, News and Letters was based on decentralised committees or locals in a number of cities in the United States. The organisation did have a leadership – the National Editorial Board elected every two years in convention – and a Center – a Resident Editorial Board that met regularly in the Center, where the paper was produced⁵³. The paper was edited on a decentralised basis, with each local submitting articles for publication based on activities in their locale.

At the same time, the form of organisation was not separated from creating a philosophic basis of organisation – that is, the responsibility for developing theory in face of the ongoing objective-subjective situation, as well as being grounded in Marx's Marxism. In its fullest form, this meant restating Marxism in book form for the present moment. With the founding of the Committees, Dunayevskaya was assigned the responsibility for writing a book on Marxism for the post WW II world. *Marxism and Freedom* was drafted and published soon after.

This body of Marxist-Humanist ideas became the theoretical ground for News and Letters Committees, and was incorporated into its Constitution. Those ideas were further developed over the next two and a half decades with *Philosophy and Revolution* and then *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. Both of those works were as well incorporated into the Constitution.

What one was witnessing was the relationship between philosophy/philosopher and revolutionary organisation. Dunayevskaya as philosopher of Marxist-Humanism was not writing alone as an individual thinker, but as a founder and member of a practicing revolutionary organisation. In turn, the organisation's development in its political class struggle practice was grounded in a body of Marxist-Humanist ideas she was developing with her colleagues. It was a two-way road.

Each year the Committees met as a whole in Convention or Plenary session. In those meetings, Dunayevskaya would present a Perspectives Report of the objective/subjective situation nationally and internationally and News and Letters Commit-

⁵³ See Constitution and By-Laws for News and Letters Committees, available at: <http://rayadunayevskaya.org/ArchivePDFs/2587.pdf> . (Dunayevskaya 1969-85 [1956]).

tees' relation to it⁵⁴. Other reports were presented by members on numerous topics from the newspaper, activities of the various locals, special projects such as writing pamphlets, and finances.

In the three plus decades of News and Letters Committees existence prior to Dunayevskaya's death, what was being practiced was dialectic between revolutionary philosophy and revolutionary organisation.

In the last two years of her life, Dunayevskaya was in the process of working on a book on the relation of organisation and philosophy. It was tentatively titled "Dialectics of Organisation and Philosophy: 'the party' and forms of organisation born out of spontaneity". Though the book was not written, several hundred pages of notes, presentations, outlines were created. They have been preserved in the first Volume of the Supplement to the *RDC*⁵⁵.

4. In Place of a Conclusion: Philosophy and Philosopher of Revolution in Permanence

What one discovers in the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection* is a radical reinterpretation of Marxism in our time: her view of Marx as a philosopher of revolution in permanence, her interpretation of Lenin as an Hegelian-Marxist thinker-activist revolutionary, her provocative reading of Hegel's Absolutes as New Beginning for our age, her insistence that human subjects of social transformation are not alone muscle but Mind, are revolutionary Reason as well as force, her labours to work out and practice a dialectic of organisation and philosophy – all in the context of the ongoing objective-subjective situation before her, deserve a serious examination and hearing today.

Whether one sharply disagrees with these views or not, Raya Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism is a body of ideas worth exploring and debating. For too long Marxists and Marxologists have failed to do so. Can a new moment of discovery of this philosophy and philosopher of revolution in permanence for our day begin?

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⁵⁴ All the Perspectives Reports and drafts for Perspectives Reports can be found year by year in the *RDC*. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

⁵⁵ See Volume XIII *RDC: Raya Dunayevskaya's Last Writings, 1986-1987 – Toward the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy* [#10640-11627]. (Dunayevskaya 1969-85).

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