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# WOMAN ENDS

N.Y.C. FEMINIST NEWSPAPER AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*  
A 35-Year Collection of Essays—Historic, Philosophic, Global  
by Raya Dunayevskaya  
Humanities Press International, 1985  
294 pp., \$15.95

by Anne Jaclard

Raya Dunayevskaya is the founder of Marxist-Humanism in the United States. She is founder and Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees, and writes a column "Theory/Practice" in News and Letters newspaper. Brought here from Russia as a child, she soon became involved in the Black and labor movements of the 1920s. She was Russian secretary to the exiled Leon Trotsky in Mexico from 1937-1938, but broke with him over the nature of the Russian state.

Her earlier books—Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution (1982), Philosophy and Revolution (1973) and Marxism and Freedom (1958) are also published by Humanities Press International. For these and other writings and information about discussions, write News & Letters, PO Box 196, New York, NY 10163, or call (212) 663-3631.

The Marxist-Humanist and feminist philosopher Raya Dunayevskaya's fourth book, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*, reveals women's history in relation to many revolutionary movements over the past 35 years, often having roots in even earlier forms of self-organization. Her conclusion that masses of women's ideas are an objective force in history, when the women have constituted themselves a movement for liberation, has been central to the development of her philosophy.

Unlike Robin Morgan's one-big-sisterhood idea, which never gives us any direction for how to get rid of this increasingly oppressive society, Dunayevskaya spells out her Marxist-Humanist methodology so that we can learn to "reach for the future" in our own activities. She has founded a philosophy based upon seeing masses in motion as movements from practice to theory, and her goal of revolution is the full self-development of the individual.

The first section of the book is entitled, "Women, Labor and the Black Dimension," and begins with a 1969 speech in which she brings together Black women Abolitionists, Greek literature and the new feminist movement, Hegel's dialectic of history and Marx's call for "a new humanism." This is where she first developed the category of "women as reason as well as force of revolution."

Dunayevskaya shows us women's rebellions such as the 1929 Nigerian "Women's War," and their ideas about the kind of society they want, as high points in history. To understand the dialectics of historic moments, she shows, is to illuminate and push forward today's and tomorrow's revolts. Thus, we follow Dunayevskaya developing her philosophy by simultaneously digging deep into Marx's

"new continent of thought" and listening closely to women, recreating Marx's own methodology for our epoch. Hers is a practical philosophy, meant to help change the world, and this book illustrates how everyone can "reach for the future" herself.

Part 2, "Revolutionaries All," begins with an analysis of the Iranian revolution written in March 1979, when Khomeini's counter-revolution was first taking hold. Dunayevskaya focuses on the early attempts of the women's movement to stop him and to deepen the social revolution, demonstrating and shouting, "We made the revolution for freedom and got unfreedom." She also reveals that in the 1906 revolution, the supposedly backward Iranian women formed the first women's soviets anywhere in the world. Her consistent emphasis on "what happens after the revolution"—which concern she shows women raising in every struggle—is vital to our age of frequent revolution and counterrevolution, from Africa to Grenada.

Part 3, "Sexism, Politics and Revolution—Japan, Portugal, Poland, China, Latin America, the U.S.—Is There an Organizational Answer?" responds to questions raised by the women's movement itself. Dunayevskaya writes:

"In grappling with Women's Liberation internationally, I found that, no matter how different the group or what the country, one organizational question seemed to prevail: Could a new organizational form be the answer to women's never-ending oppression, inequality and alienation, at work, in the home, and in the supposedly neutral cultural field?"

The essays illuminate the relationship between women and men in revolutionary ferment, rather than wrenching women out of the rest of history. The Portuguese Women's Liberation Movement, for example, both helped start the revolution of 1975, and exposed its contradictions when women's demands were suppressed by the Left. There are exchanges with Mexican and Peruvian feminists on Latin America's "unfinished revolutions."

Dunayevskaya discusses her own methodology in Part 4, "The Trail to the 1980s: The Missing Link—Philosophy—in the Relationship of Revolution to Organization." Again, philosophy is immediately made concrete in the first piece, a 1984 WBAI broadcast in which she discusses love and the family "after the revolution," when, she says, the hard work of practicing "revolution in permanence" really begins.

Dunayevskaya's Marxist-Humanism is completely opposed to the chauvinists and elitists whom she includes in the pejorative category of "post-Marx Marxists," as well as to every state-power on earth. Only the re-establishment of Marx's Marxism, she says, can meet the challenge posed by the continuous revolts "from below" on the one hand, and the threat of nuclear annihilation or continued exploitation on the other. ■

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## Book review

### Dunayevskaya collection

By LAURIE CASHDAN  
Contributing Writer

*Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future—A 35-year Collection of Essays—Historic, Philosophic, Global.*  
by Raya Dunayevskaya

Over 100,000 women took the fight for control over their own bodies to Washington, D.C. just one month ago, making the March for Women's Lives on March 9 the largest women's rights demonstration ever in the United States.

The resurgence of the women's movement coincides with the publication of a new book by Marxist-Humanist philosopher and feminist Raya

Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future.*

The questions raised by women who attended the march underscore the urgency of what Dunayevskaya calls "reaching for the future." Among the thousands of students who came to the march directly from anti-apartheid sit-ins and Central American solidarity demonstrations on their campuses, many want to know why the women's movement lost so much ground to Reaganism. Why has the advancement of professional women been accompanied by what we now call the "feminization of poverty?"

How can we insure this time that abortion rights and other forms of women's freedom will be permanent and for everyone?

To Dunayevskaya questions like these signify a desire for a new relationship between theory and practice—a desire which, she insists, was raised by the modern women's liberation movement at its outset nearly two decades ago. The very first essay in this 35-year collection, written in 1969, hails that new movement as "Reason and revolutionary force."

She portrays the actions and ideas of women throughout history as an objective force, but particularly focuses on to-

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