

Why a New International Marxist-Humanist Organization? Why Now? The Economic, Political, and Philosophical Context

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It is necessary to look at Marx's work as a whole, not fragment him into the economic, political, or philosophical dimension alone. In analyzing the global economic crisis, especially in Greece, we need to ask why so many of the current critiques from the left have stressed making the rich not the workers pay, rather than the uprooting of the capitalist system itself. Here another look at Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* alongside Dunayevskaya's writings on the dialectics of organization and philosophy is crucial. We also need to develop the politicalization of philosophy in light of recent events in Iran, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine, and elsewhere. — Editors

I.

Let me welcome everyone to an historic event, the first-ever founding conference of an *international* Marxist-Humanist organization. Although we are small in number, we are rich in ideas and experience. Those gathered here represent the most outstanding activists and thinkers who have been impacted by Marxist-Humanism; together, we embody many decades of revolutionary knowledge and experience. For this and other reasons, this conference constitutes a crucial *opening* for producing a philosophic and organizational renewal of Marxist-Humanism in the twenty-first century.

The challenges facing us are many. We need to decide how to forge a new organization at a time when other efforts to develop an organizational expression of Marxist-Humanism have not proved successful. We need to do something that has never been tried—creating an *international* organization of Marxist-Humanists. We need to determine how to work and grow together when we are separated by great differences of location and geography. In meeting these challenges, there is much that we can draw on from our prior experience. At the same time, we also need to try out approaches, practices, and routines. We want to

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develop an organizational form and content with a flexible and open mind while maintaining our adherence to the *philosophic* principles that have guided Marxist-Humanism since its inception.

We are not creating a new organization for the sake of having a new organization. Organizations are not ends-in-themselves; they exist to fulfill a specific purpose. And our purpose is to renew Marxist-Humanism for the twenty-first century. This is no easy task. It requires engaging, responding to, and analyzing the specific realities of our times grounded in a creative *reinterpretation* and *development* of the thought of Hegel, Marx, and Marxist-Humanism. Let's not forget that our founder, Raya Dunayevskaya, died a generation ago. While we're not living in a totally different world from hers, a lot has changed since 1987. And the more time goes on the *more* it will continue to change.

What makes the task facing us especially challenging is that it calls on us not to *fragment* Marxist-Humanism into separate pieces. What speak to this is a comment from the French philosopher Edgar Morin, who was associated with *Arguments* in the 1950s and 1960s. In a recent discussion entitled "Back to Marx: How His Work Can Help Explain Modern Times," he stated: "The work of as great and complex thinker like Marx inevitably deteriorates among his epigones. Each picks up on a piece of the work, and tends to reduce the work's complexity to the piece that he picked up on. That's what happened to Marxism, in general. Some have kept Marx's economic doctrine; others have concentrated instead on the prediction of a classless society born of revolution, etc."(1)

This is a danger that we have to watch out for. We have already seen plenty of signs of it in post-Dunayevskaya Marxist-Humanism. It's easy to fragment a body of ideas—by emphasizing economics at the expense of politics or philosophy, or by emphasizing politics or philosophy at the expense of economics. It's much harder to restate Marx's Marxism and Marxist-Humanism *as a totality*. Doing so doesn't entail repeating or accepting all of Marx or Dunayevskaya's conclusions. We need to *critically* engage our founders. The task is not to live by the truths of a different era but to comprehend the *distinctive* contributions of a body of ideas in light of *new* realities.

No one person can achieve this. It instead requires developing ideas *as part of an organizational collectivity*. This is because *re-creating a body of thought is simultaneously an act of discovery and development*. It is a *process* and not a *single event*. It is to begin this process that we have decided to come together at this conference.

I will here identify a few economic, philosophic and political issues that we may need to focus on as part of producing a renewal of Marxist-Humanism. This is only an outline of some ideas, intended to open up discussion.

II.

What remains of overriding importance is the global economic crisis. Not only has it not passed, in some respects it is deepening—even as a jobless “recovery” with official unemployment rates of close to 10% characterizes the U.S. This *economic* crisis now coincides with a major *ecological* crisis, as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has become the gravest environmental disaster in decades.

An analysis of the meaning of these ongoing events is of great importance for demonstrating the contemporary importance of Marxist-Humanism. Neither the nature of these events, however, nor their resolution, is by any means self-evident.

Take the economic crisis. How much has changed in one year! No longer do we hear calls for stimulus packages and deficit spending. Everywhere we hear that fiscal deficits are out of control, that government spending must be drastically reduced, and that *austerity* is the order of the day. Willem Buiter, chief economist for Citicorp, claims, “the public finances in the majority of advanced industrial countries are in worse state today than at any time since the industrial revolution.”(2) Britain’s Prime Minister David Cameron announced on June 8 that Britain faces “decades” of austerity and followed it up by slashing large sectors of public spending by 25%—the largest amount at one time in British history. Even Margaret Thatcher never dared to propose such deep cuts.

As one commentator puts it, “Liberals had hoped that Obama’s election marked the beginning of a long progressive era...Instead, from the West Coast to West Europe, the welfare state is in crisis everywhere. The future suddenly seems to belong to austerity and retrenchment—and even, perhaps, to conservatism.”(3)

Why the sudden shift to consider deficit spending the gravest problem of our times, when the bailouts that supposedly led to them—to the tune of \$14 trillion—saved global capitalism from a near-total financial collapse only a year ago? The ghost of John Maynard Keynes no sooner stepped out of the grave, in the form of massive bailouts for banks and corporations in the fall of 2008, than it was quickly pushed aside by the specter of IMF and EU austerity measures aimed at *repressing* effective demand, in the spring of 2010. Is this debt crisis for real, or is it some ideological trick?

Surely, fiscal deficits have risen very sharply recent years. In the early 1930s, at the start of the Great Depression, the weighted average deficit for 24 of the world's largest countries was 4% of GDP. Today the figure is much higher; the U.S.'s deficit is over 12%; in many countries it is even higher. Greece's fiscal deficit is 13.6% —which the IMF and EU insists be brought down to 3% in only the next three years! As one economist put it, this cannot be achieved unless Greece “delivers a large fall in nominal labor costs, since Greece will need a prolonged surge of net exports to offset the fiscal tightening.”(4) In other words, the Greek workers will have to work more and consume less in order to pay off IMF and EU loans from wealthier countries.

At the same time, a lot of the talk about today's unprecedented debt levels is overblown. Global deficits as a percentage of GDP are now 6%—just 0.3% more than before the financial crisis erupted in 2008. Spain is often talked about as the next in line for a debt crisis; yet it ran fiscal *surpluses* from 2005 to 2007. Moreover, government debt in the Eurozone actually *declined* from 72% of GDP in 1999 to 67% in 2007. Based on these figures, no one can argue that high levels of debt *caused* the financial crisis of 2008. On the contrary, the increase in public debt is a *result* of the crisis. History shows that the real value of government debt tends to explode after financial crises. Contrary to what we've been told, this is *not* mainly due to the cost of bailing out the banks but rather to the overall impact of the recession itself. (5) As workers get laid off, tax revenues decline, while the costs associated with providing public services goes up.

In sum, the fiscal crisis is a result of a Great Recession that itself resulted from a financial crisis. The banks and financial institutions that helped produce the financial crisis have been bailed out, at taxpayer expense, while those suffering from the ensuing recession are being told they consume too much! The growing debt levels are being used as a pretext to reduce the relative amount of value that goes to the workers in order to allow the speculative appetites of unregulated global capital to again have free reign.

Needless to say, little is being done to seriously regulate the actions of the financial firms. Obama's “regulatory reform” that is now working its way through Congress does nothing to prevent the kinds of excesses that led to the financial crisis. How could it be different when the profits garnered from such financial transactions remain one of the only bright spots for global capital? UK banking assets jumped from 50% of GDP to more than 550% of GDP in just the past four decades. Leveraging is now the chief determinant to returns on equity. Does anyone really believe that global capital is going to regulate itself when such massive profits are still generated by speculation?

Today we face a very perilous situation. The profits of speculative capital are largely invisible to the average person—whereas the rising levels state and federal debt, and the cutbacks that come with it, are all too visible. This serves as a perfect ideological screen to convince people to become accomplices in their own oppression *by making them believe that the reason for their declining living conditions is that the government is spending too much of their money*. The rise of the Tea Party movement is only one expression of this. By getting people to agree to cutbacks in government spending and social programs on the grounds that debt levels threaten their economic well being, the system manages to redistribute value from labor to capital while deflecting attention from capital's structural contradictions. The more people buy into this—and many in the U.S. are doing so—the more prone they also become to accepting all sorts of racist imagery that blames the economic morass on factors such as “illegal immigration”—as the controversy over Arizona's anti-immigrant law clearly shows.

At the same time, today's situation presents us with a lot of promise. In many places capital's big lie isn't being swallowed so readily—as especially seen in the protests in Greece against the austerity measures. Nor is this confined to Europe. Students at the University of Puerto Rico shut the college down for over a month starting April 21 in a protest against cutbacks and tuition increases. And in many campuses in the U.S. protests and boycotts have been held to protest Arizona's racist immigration law.

What has been the reaction so far from many trade unions, leftwing parties, and radical commentators to the effort to make the masses—especially the poorest ones—pay for the rising levels of debt that afflicts global capital? The most common refrain is to demand that the rich, the banks and the financial institutions should instead pay for the crisis. Such demands are certainly reasonable: after all, there is no question that ruling elites are making use of their power and privilege to impose harsh austerity measures on the masses while they enjoy a free ride. Although Greece's debt crisis was largely a product of the tacit understanding between government and the elites that the latter need not pay the taxes that they are nominally responsible for, the austerity measures imposed by its present government emphasize cutting the wages, benefits, and size of public service workers rather than increasing tax revenues from the rich. For the rest of Europe and the U.S., the situation is hardly different in a qualitative sense. Even though 80% of the economic growth in the U.S. over the past 20 years has ended up in the hands of the wealthiest 5% of the population, no one among the ruling class—and least of all Obama—is calling for redressing the situation through a serious redistribution of income. Clearly, the political and economic power of the elites insulates them, as always, from calls to “reduce consumption” that have become so predominate today.

At the same time, however, leaving matters at demands that the rich, the bankers, and the financial institutions pay for the crisis hardly represents a comprehensive response to the present situation. This is because capitalism is facing a profound crisis in which the relative proportion of value going to capital as against labor *must* be increased in order to spur economic growth—and appropriating even the massive wealth of the rich (even on the very charitable assumption that that would ever occur) cannot by itself supply the amount of value needed for such growth. It is a staple of both vulgar bourgeois economists and vulgar “Marxism” to conceive of social wealth as being reducible to the *revenue* paid out to workers on the one hand and to capitalists on the other—without recognizing that the bulk of the value produced in capitalism is “consumed” neither by workers nor by capitalists *but by capital itself*. Economic development in capitalism primarily occurs through *productive consumption*—by *capital itself* (as against the capitalists) consuming an ever greater-share of the social wealth as it “becomes big with value.” In a word, the greater quantities of value that capital needs to get the economy moving on an ever-expanding scale can ultimately come from one and only one source—from living labor.

The capitalists are not therefore being deceptive when they suggest that a decline in living conditions is the only way that the economy can get moving again on a major scale. Their ideology actually matches the material conditions of which it is the expression. It is very appealing for leftists to demand that social wealth be re-distributed to benefit the masses instead of feeding capital’s thirst for surplus value. However, *so long as the capitalist law of value prevails* any re-distribution that *temporarily* benefits the masses would in the long run undermine productive capacity and the ability to create a surplus. Such a re-distribution would, in fact, only make the crisis *worse*.

Marx spoke to demands made for workers to obtain a greater share of the surplus product as follows: “The obscure man falsely attributes to me the view that ‘the *surplus-value* produced by the workers *alone* remains, *in an unwarranted manner*, in the hands of the capitalist entrepreneurs’In fact I say the exact opposite: that the production of commodities must necessarily become ‘capitalist’ production of commodities at a certain point, and that according to the *law of value* governing it, the ‘surplus-value’ rightly belongs to the capitalist and not the worker.”(6)

Marx’s point is that so long as value production prevails it is *necessary* for capital to generate economic growth at the expense of the masses. To call for a greater share of social wealth to go the masses without uprooting the law of value is, for Marx, a recipe for preventing capitalism from generating additional needed economic growth at all.

As Marx put it, “If [the workers] were all to succeed in keeping wages so high that profits were significantly reduced below the average profits of other countries, or so that capital would grow more slowly, the industry of a country would be ruined, and the workers together with the masters even more so.”(7)

One can therefore ask, why do so many reactions to the present crisis stop at simply demanding that the rich pay for the crisis instead of the workers? Why don’t we hear more demands for the system of value production as a whole to be overturned and uprooted? *The reason, it seems to me, is that nowhere in sight is there a viable conception of what form of social organization can replace capitalist value production.*

And isn’t this why many leftists fooled themselves into believing that “socialism” was suddenly back on the agenda just because capitalism temporarily returned to neo-Keynesian stimulus spending in response to the financial panic of 2008? There has been plenty of evidence for three decades now that capitalism can no longer afford welfare-state liberalism. So why did so many believe in 2008 and 2009 that it was obtaining a new lease on life? The answer is simple: they deluded themselves into believing in something that wasn’t there because they see no alternative to value production.

Here is where the International Marxist-Humanist Organization comes in. Obviously, we need to support the struggles against capitalist austerity wherever they occur. However, we have to *specify* what we have to say about the situation that is *distinctive*. The contribution we can make, which few others are entertaining, *is to develop a viable concept of an alternative to capitalist value production. If that concept were to be developed and projected, the struggles against capitalist austerity would be able to go much further than simply issuing demands for the rich pay for the crisis.*

Developing a concept of an alternative to capitalist value production would also go a long way to addressing struggles in parts of the world that *are* experiencing economic growth. For over a month workers at the Honda transmission plant in Foshan, China went on strike demanding higher wages. But they were not just demanding higher wages. One report states, “Most worryingly for the Chinese government, the industrial unrest at Honda and other big employers in Guangdong province is raising questions about the nature of work itself on twenty-first century factory floors. Alienated Chinese workers are signaling that they are determined to fight back.”(8)

It is precisely alienated labor—not an “act of God”—that is also responsible for the massive BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Weeks before the explosion, workers at the rig complained that they were forced to work too fast in drilling the well. This led to

overlooking safety precautions that directly led to the disaster. *What caused the accident was the need of capital to grow at the expense of labor.* We not only need to *condemn* capitalism for such inhumanity. Most of all, we need to give people the confidence that *they* can refuse to accept the dictates of value production *because* there is a liberatory alternative that can serve as the orientating principle of their struggles.

III.

We do not need to begin from scratch in trying to conceptualize an alternative to capitalist value production. We have been working on the issue for several years, as part of our response to Dunayevskaya's discovery in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* that Marx's *Critique* is the *ground* for organization. We need to take this work much further in our new *international* organization.

As we have already shown, Marx's discussion of a "lower" and "higher" phase of communism in the *Critique* provides, in outline, the *basis* a post-capitalist alternative that is much needed today. Marx shows that even in the lower phase of communism, wage labor, capital, and exchange relations based on an abstract equivalent such as money no longer exist because *freely associated workers* create new *production* relations that dispense with abstract or alienated labor. The *proof* of this new *production* relation is that "individual labor no longer exists as an indirectly but as a directly constituent part of the total labor."⁽⁹⁾ In both the lower and higher phase of communism, Marx holds, labor is no longer "measured" by an abstract, external standard—socially necessary labor time. Labor—and human activity in general—*becomes its own measure*. The replacement of *indirectly* social labor by *direct* social labor spells the end of capitalist value production.

This is a much more radical conception of a new society than has governed almost all discussions of socialism or communism over the past 100 years. For Marx, the break with capitalism is not *defined* by the abolition of private property or the market. Nor is there any room in his description of a new society for the state. He also does not indicate that a new society is defined by worker cooperatives that operate according to the law of value. For Marx, the key determinant to a new society is the *abolition* of the law of value.

However, there is much more to say about the vision of a new society found in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* than we have discussed so far. While our earlier work on the *Critique* correctly emphasized the distinction between natural labor time versus socially necessarily labor time, it contained a major *defect* in that we didn't place enough emphasis on exactly how labor itself would itself have to change in the lower phase in order to break with abstract or alienated labor. *In other words, what specific conditions*

and relations are needed to ensure that socially necessary labor time no longer serves as the measure of labor? If we cannot answer this question we cannot claim to have made a serious contribution to developing conceptual awareness of the alternative to capitalism.

As I see it, we have to explore this question in two directions. On the one hand, we need to see how Marx's work speaks to this question by exploring the indications about a post-capitalist society that are contained in his writings that precede and follow the *Critique of the Gotha Program*. The 1875 *Critique* is not an exceptional moment that stands apart from Marx's work as a whole. There are many other places where he discusses a post-capitalist society, in strikingly similar terms to the *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Exploring and discussing these writings will greatly enhance our ability to become more concrete about addressing alternatives to capitalist value production.

These works include his 1847 *The Poverty of Philosophy*, which attacks Proudhon for taking "constituted value as his starting point to constitute a new social world with the aid of this value...[but] relative value, measured by labor time, is inevitably the formula of the present enslavement of the worker, instead of being...the 'revolutionary theory' of the emancipation of the proletariat." (10) There is his 1857-58 *Grundrisse*, in which he argues that it is impossible to abolish money or exchange value without "the free exchange of individuals who are associated on the basis of common appropriation and control of the means of production." (11) There is his 1867 Volume One of *Capital*, in which he asks us to "finally imagine, for a change, an association of free persons" in which "a definite social plan maintains the correct proportion between the different functions of labor and the various needs of the associations" and in which the actual *amount* of time worked "serves as a measure of the part taken by each individual in the common labor." (12) And there is Volume Two of *Capital*, where he "there is no reason why [in a new society] the producers should not receive paper tokens permitting them to withdraw an amount corresponding to their [actual] (13) labor time from the social consumption stocks. But these tokens are not money; they do not circulate." (14)

However, we cannot assume that the *answer* to the question of the alternative to capitalist value production is simply lying there in Marx. It is one thing to say the *basis* for answering the question is found in Marx and quite another to suggest that the *answer* is sitting there all worked out by him. As important as it is for us to dig deeply into Marx's work as a whole, at one and the same time we also need to take our discussion further in the direction of exploring the dialectic in philosophy itself.

This is what I believe Dunayevskaya was driving at when she wrote in 1987, "The whole truth is that even Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*, which remains the ground for

organization, 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.”(15)

Why did Dunayevskaya say that the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, while necessary, is *insufficient* to answer the problems of our age, and what *ramifications* does it hold for our work in the International Marxist-Humanist Organization?

This is a question that, frankly, we haven’t said much about. Part of the reason is that our work on the *Critique of the Gotha Program* produced so much hostility from some in News and Letters Committees, from 2004 to 2008—who objected to both Marx’s discussion of the lower and higher phase of communism as well as our exploration of it—that it became hard for us to get to the question of why the *Critique* is nevertheless *insufficient*. This didn’t change much in period immediately following our forced departure from N&LC—not only because we got bogged down in some rather unproductive squabbling about organizational form but also because philosophy *as such* largely got put on the backburner in some of our discussions on value production.

We need to now reverse this in our present work. As Dunayevskaya wrote in 1986, “What I’m driving at, is that unless we work out the dialectic in philosophy itself, the dialectic of organization, whether it be from the vanguard party or that born from spontaneity, would be just different forms of organization, instead of an organization that is so inseparable from its philosophic ground that form and content are one.”(16)

I believe we can get some illumination on this challenge from the category of “post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels, as a pejorative,” which Dunayevskaya first elaborated in the 1980s. *Exactly what is it that the post-Marx Marxists got wrong?* It isn’t an abstract question; and we are not the only ones asking it. I recently received a letter from a friend in Beijing, who writes: “My conclusion is that we [in China] have been strongly influenced by Lenin’s thought up to today and if we want to pursue [genuine] socialism, we have to go beyond Lenin and back to Marx’s concept of ‘the association of free individuals’.” He makes a very important point. By *why* do we need “to go beyond Lenin,” given that he was not only a great revolutionary but one who directly returned to Marx’s roots in Hegel in his 1914-15 *Philosophic Notebooks*?

The answer is that Lenin stopped at the *threshold* of the Absolute in his Hegel Notebooks in stressing that practice is higher than theory. For Lenin there was no philosophic moment in so far as organization was concerned; he continued to uphold the “vanguard party” to lead as the practical form that could surmount contradictions, which he kept

totally separate from dialectical philosophy. Nor was this true only of Lenin, since post-Marx Marxism *as a whole* kept philosophy and organization apart.

Marx, however, went much further than Lenin and other post-Marx Marxists, since he did not prioritize practice over theory but instead worked out a new *philosophy, a new humanism*, rooted in the integrality of materialism and idealism. It is certainly true that Marx's early work in particular castigates Hegel's Absolutes as "the acme" of abstraction," since Hegel dehumanizes the dialectic by reducing it to the movement of abstract conceptual categories. This does not mean, however, that Marx counterpoised philosophy to reality or "idealism" to "materialism"—which became the standpoint of post-Marx Marxism. For when it came to his positive elaboration of a new continent of thought, Marx *re-created* Hegel's philosophy *as a totality* in light of the realities of his era. Needless to say, this involved putting dialectics through a *profound change*, since Marx does not restrict dialectics to the movement of abstract conceptual categories. What may be harder to see, but which is the case, is that in doing so Marx made *a new beginning* from Hegel's concept of absolute negativity, which poses (albeit in abstract form only) *the transcendence of alienation* that defines the contemporary world.

It wasn't easy to see this, of course—and not just because Marx never got around to writing his booklet on the Hegelian dialectic. It wasn't easy to see because even though Marx's *practiced* a distinctive concept of organization in refusing to separate philosophy from reality, he never made that explicit by developing a *theory* of organization. It took a different age, for a thinker dealing with a new set of problems that Marx didn't encounter—foremost of which is Stalinism, the emergence of counter-revolution from *within* the revolution—for Dunayevskaya to make explicit what is implicit in Marx: namely, the importance of the vision of freedom that is found in Hegel's Absolutes.

In her 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," she explored aspects of Hegel that Marx had not commented on, such as the chapter on "Absolute Mind" in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*, in which she discerned a vision of a new society. As she later said of the 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes," "It becomes necessary to stress here, over and over again, that [in discussing the final paragraphs of Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind*] I had not a single word to say then about Party or the Soviets or any form of organization. On the contrary. Here is what I then concluded: 'We have entered the new society.'"(17)

What is therefore new and distinctive with Marxist-Humanism is that it poses a *relation* between revolutionary organization and the vision of the new society *found in Hegel's Absolutes*. True, the vision of freedom in Hegel's Absolutes may be "estranged" in some sense—at least Marx thought so! Yet the realities of our age enable us to appreciate

aspects of Hegel's abstract concepts that may have escaped the attention of earlier generations, *Marx's included*. At the same time, returning to Marx on the basis of the insights Marxist-Humanism has developed regarding Hegel's Absolutes is of critical importance in grasping the unique contribution of *Marx's* Marxism. Herein lies the importance of working out the *dialectic in philosophy itself*. It is not a *replacement* for the *Critique of the Gotha Program*—any more than the *Critique* is a *replacement* for Hegel's dialectic. We are in need, as Dunayevskaya said, of both the *ground* and the *roof*.

Yet it isn't easy to avoid fragmenting a body of thought as rich and complex as Marxist-Humanism. It's not hard to emphasize economics at the expense of philosophy, or philosophy at the expense of economics. The determinant to whether we succeed as an organization, in my view, hinges on avoiding the tendency to fragment the body of ideas that has so far tended to characterize post-Dunayevskaya Marxist-Humanism.

This will require a new kind of collectivity and collaboration, since it isn't as if one person is going to fully grasp or embody all of Marx or Marxist-Humanism. In fact, the gravest defect in all prior organizational expressions of Marxist-Humanism, N&LC included, has been the tendency to sit back and wait for someone to come along to put it all together for us. There are some bad habits that we have yet to get out of our system. Our aim is come together in a new *organizational* collectivity with a *singular* mission: namely, to re-state Marxist-Humanism for the twenty-first century by showing that there *is* an alternative to capitalism. To achieve that “you need new forces of revolution, new passions, a new vision of totally new human relations, be they Man/Woman, master/slaves, the end of alienated labor, and the end of the fetishism of commodities.”(18) But live human beings are needed to articulate such a vision, which is why we need the IMHO to become a philosophic nucleus that is clear on its purpose and aims and in which its members are in constant and direct communication with one another.

IV.

There is another component of creating a philosophic nucleus: the political analyses of ongoing events. Just as economics cannot be separated from philosophy, neither can we ignore specific analyses of ongoing events.

So far we have made an important contribution by issuing three statements on unfolding world events on our website: on the freedom movement in Iran, which has not run its course despite brutal government repression; on Obama's escalation of the war in Afghanistan; and against Israel's murderous blockade of Gaza.

One advantage of having a regular publication is that it disciplines one to respond rapidly to emerging events. We may not be in the position as of this moment to do more than issue occasional statements. However, it may turn out that some of these will have to be written on short notice—perhaps within 24 hours.

Political analyses are crucial in demonstrating the extent to which we are rooted in and actively developing the distinctive contributions of Marxist-Humanism. It's of course easy to write a political analysis out of one's own head; but what we're talking about is *the politicalization of philosophy*. It doesn't do much good to just repeat the conclusion that we ought not repeat conclusions. Political analyses of major events are one way in which we work out "how to begin anew when two totalities—reality and revolution—are in such drastic collision as to search for a totally new beginning." In this sense, it is a crucial component of the organizational growth needed for all our work.

The three statements issued so far can each become the basis for *further* work. Our statement on Iran not only condemned Ahmadinejad's stolen "election" but also singled out the creativity of the democracy movement in Iran, without sowing illusions about the extent to which it has yet reached the point of taking an explicitly anti-capitalist or revolutionary perspective. We do not ignore the contributions of the movement, but neither do we ignore the fact that the idea of revolution remains very much in crisis in a land that has suffered so much from the so-called "Islamic Revolution" of 1979.

At the same time, there is much more for us to say. China's role in Africa and the Middle East is taking on added significance; its support of the Iranian regime has clearly strengthened Ahmadinejad. We need to develop a serious analysis of China, both in terms of its internal conflicts and its more assertive role in world affairs. Though materially less significant, Hugo Chavez's support for the Iranian regime has provided ideological ammunition for those on the Left who refuse to support any movements against regimes that claim to oppose "U.S. imperialism." For these and other reasons we need to develop a serious critical analysis of the "Bolivarian Revolution." This directly impinges on the question of alternatives, since Chavez's illusion that worker cooperatives under state control that are governed by the capitalist law of value is "socialism" threatens to seriously disorientate a generation of radical activists and thinkers around the world.

Developing these analyses will require careful attention to world events, active engagement in ongoing debates and discussions in the Left, and being rooted in our body of ideas. We can gain a lot of direction from our statement on Gaza, which not only sharply condemned the Israeli government but also made it clear that we oppose Hamas as well as (though for different reasons) the Palestinian Authority. Perhaps it is going too far

to suggest that our statements come out of being rooted in such Hegelian concepts as the “negation of the negation”—though I would not rule that out. What clearly made them possible was the rich body of writings developed by Marxist-Humanism over the past half century. Few tendencies can claim as comprehensive a series of writings on Iran as those penned by Marxist-Humanists from 1978 onward. And no one on the Left can claim to have as distinctive and comprehensive an analysis of the Israeli-Arab conflict as found in the writings on the subject by Dunayevskaya, which span 40 years. The Marxist-Humanist body of writings on the Middle East takes issue with counter-revolutionary anti-imperialism; the shortcomings of secular Arab nationalism as well as efforts to fuse religion with politics; the contradictory history of Zionism, which is neither reducible to some imperialist plot nor an untarnished effort to reclaim a “promised land”—at the same time as emphasizing the creative potential contained in the struggles to expand the freedoms of women as well as national minorities in the Middle East. There is a very distinctive tone as well as set of positions in these writings that is very important to continue to convey as we work on new analyses in coming weeks and months.

We may now be excluded from being able to publish the works of Dunayevskaya that are controlled by the handful individuals who in N&LC who have hijacked the Raya Dunayevskaya Memorial Fund, but that does not mean we aren't the inheritors of the archives of Marxist-Humanism. Of course, we don't *prove* that by issuing a declaration. We have to get to know the distinctive analyses and positions taken by Marxist-Humanism over the past half-century and *demonstrate* that we have internalized them in our analyses of present-day realities. This does not mean simply repeating past positions or formulations but rather further *developing* and *rethinking* them, which is crucial in order to attract others to join us organizationally. We need to focus on developing our areas of strength so as to be able to over win new friends to our philosophy.

We have a lot of work to do this weekend to decide on what form of functioning can help realize these and other aims. That deciding upon the proper form of organization is not the whole answer does not mean it isn't critically important. Form can be a universal when connected to philosophic content. I look forward to hearing a lot of discussion about how to develop a form of functioning that is adequate to the content of the Marxist-Humanist body of ideas. In the spirit of helping to get us going on doing so, *I declare this conference of the IMHO to be open.*

Notes

- 1) “Back to Marx: How His Work Can Help Explain Modern Times,” *l’Humanité*, May 16, 2010 [<http://www.humaniteinenglish.com/spip.php?article1530>].
- 2) Quoted in “Fears Intensify That Euro Crisis Could Snowball,” by Nelson D. Schwartz and Eric Dash, *The New York Times*, May 17, 2010.
- 3) “The Agony of the Liberals,” by Ross Douthat, *The New York Times*, June 16, 2010.
- 4) “A Bailout for Greece is Just the Beginning,” by Martin Wolf, *Financial Times*, May 5, 2010.
- 5) See “The Aftermath of Financial Crises,” by Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, *Working Paper 14656*, May 2009 [www.nber.org].
- 6) “Notes on Wagner’s *Lehrbuch des politischen Ökonomie*” [1881], in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 24* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), p. 558.
- 7) “Wages” [1847], in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 6* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 420.
- 8) See “Factory Workers Swap Angst for Anger,” by Tom Mitchell, *Financial Times*, June 1, 2020.
- 9) See *Critique of the Gotha Program*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 24*, p. 85.
- 10) See *The Poverty of Philosophy*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 6*, pp. 123-125.
- 11) See *Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 28* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), pp. 83, 96.
- 12) *Capital, Volume One*, translated by Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1977), pp. 171-172.
- 13) I have inserted the word “actual” here to make it clear that by “labor time” Marx is referring the actual *amount* of time worked and not *socially necessary* labor time. In capitalism it is not “labor,” but “currently necessary labor *time* that determines value.” See Marx’s *Grundrisse*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works, Vol. 28*, p. 73.
- 14) *Capital, Volume Two*, translated by David Fernbach (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 434.

15) “Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy” [June 1, 1987], in *The Power of Negativity*, edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 9.

16) “Notes on Organization and Religion in Hegel,” in *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 10788.

17) “On the Battle of Ideas: Philosophic-Theoretic Points of Departure as Political Tendencies Respond to the Objective Situation,” in *The Power of Negativity*, p. 240.

18) The quote appears in “Part II of ‘Why Hegel’s *Phenomenology*? Why Now?’ in *Supplement to The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection* [April 1987], 10899-10900.

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