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Irving fetscher

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Dear Raya Dunayevskaya,

I had a long look at your very fascinating book and read especially the chapter on the phenomenology and the chapters on Trotsky, Mao Tse-tung and your last chapter. I am very much impressed by the "unity" you succeeded to see in this whole history and I very much agree with the values of liberty, selfdevelopment and socialist solidarity which inspire you. Nevertheless I have some serious objections which of course I could formulate only very insufficiently on the three pages I am joining. Unfortunately I will not have time for much more. Please tell me if you see my point or if you think I was completely missing the core of your argument.

Sincerely yours

P.S. some pages (177, 246, 259) were missing.

On page 174 you speak of the resistance of austrian workers to nazism, but I think you should speak of their battle against austrian fascism (which was a clerico-fascism) under Dollfuß in 1935 (if I am not mistaken). There has been in fact very little resistance after the "Anschluss".

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Ering Fetscher

Some short comments on "Philosophy and Revolution" by Raya Dunayevskaya :

1. Yours is an impressive construction of 150 years of world history starting from Hegel's concept of the selfdeveloping subject (which he calls "absoluter Geist" or "Geist" in its different metamorphoses). I can accept the connection of Hegel and Marx which I myself have always stressed, but I am less convinced of your presentation of Lenin and his "ambivalence", and of your interpretation of Mao tse-tung's "cultural revolution", although I come quite near to your judgment.

*Dunayevskaya
+ culture*

2. My principal objection is, that you nowhere try to expound the socio-economic (i.e. "material") roots of the "mistakes" or "errors" made by both Stalin and the Stalinists and Mao and his followers. On reading you all seems to be the consequence of a neglect of marxist-humanist and dialectical (hegel-marxian) thought. But what has to be explained is: why this thought was neglected (and maybe had to be...). This attitude of yours is rather widespread nowadays and it is possible that it reflects a characteristic of our time and its revolutionary thought. But if this is so and if one refers back to Marx one should make clear that (and why) one departs from marxism (which may be necessary).

3. Your idea that the peasants (as the industrial proletariat) should be accepted as a revolutionary self-developing subject and that Trotsky's failure to understand that has been one of the reasons for his defeat (or his incompetence as a monitor for world revolution), is certainly not in line with Marx and Lenin. Lenin never thought the Russian peasants to be "more" than the indispensable allies of the working-class and its party. I think even that the fatal strengthening of the party and its "hegemonical role" (Gramsci) which in fact became a ruling function was due to the presence of peasant masses which started to transform Stalin into a new "czar" before the working-class (and party elite) accepted to do so. In other words

Trotsky

Gramsci

completely

where I agree with your criticism I cannot agree with your explanation. True Stalin barred the "negation of the negation" from marxist philosophy; but this was not the "origin" but the consequence of his (maybe in part inevitable) departure from marxism (in practice). How else could the "party-rule" and with it

but by bureaucratic rule

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the new social system be maintained? Of course one could argue that those were not the (genuine) aims of a socialist revolution. But do you really think that -given the overwhelming majority of peasants - a socialist society (I mean a genuine and democratic one) could have been built-up? Industrialisation was certainly indispensable and the only workable alternative to the state-capitalist construction of an industrialised Russia would have been a more or less capitalistic one (in the continuation of the NEP), *As does not of course eliminate the question of Stalin's crimes, and those of his followers.*

4. The same could be said for Mao's China. (Certainly the "great cultural revolution" did not bring freedom and self-determination to the working masses. But, could this be done? It would have been fantastic to have a real democratic communes all over China, but given the international situation, would this not have been an enormous risk? And the fact that in the end the army came to play a decisive political role can be regretted (but had some "logic") in it. The army being in all backward (technologically China is certainly backward even now) countries an element of "advanced" technological rationality and of relative higher level of competence. This is certainly not true for the developed countries, where the army necessarily plays always a politically doubtful role. But armies in states like the southamerican can be both instruments of class-repression, when in the pay of the social elites and instruments of transformation and (relative liberation) when acting on their own or in connection with organisations of the toiling masses (labour-unions or labour-parties).

Your quite necessary point: that ~~the guerrilla warfare~~ cannot be ~~the~~ new form for a revolution in the USA or Europe is not dependent on your presentation of China, which I think is doing no full justice to the chinese communist leaders. * The cult of Maos personality may have (I am not sure of that) a quite different function from that of Stalins. His so-called "dialectics" may be pedagogical simplifications, but I very much doubt whether Shang Wu-lien had "objectively" (besides the political obstacles raised by Mao and his followers) any chance. You seem to assume (for China as for the USA) that where spontaneously certain movements and ideas arise there

CC
I've written

I am inclined to think

When criticized by the new left

??

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(in how many individuals or groups etc)

the existence of the "objective conditions" for revolution ^(must) also exist, or ~~are~~ at least ^{be} in the making. I do not think that this is sufficient.

4. But after so much doubts and questions ⁽²⁾ let me say that I very much liked and appreciated your last chapter on "new passions and new forces" especially your singling out the womens liberation and black liberation "grass-roots" thoughts and actions. It is in fact almost a miracle that in the middle of all the cynicism and all the overwhelming amount of ideological manipulation these generous and humanistic thoughts and aspirations ^{could} arise, and I very much hope with you that they may prevail. But whatever optimism I am likely to muster I do not get it from the thought of Marx or Hegel. Your humanist and democratic conception of socialism and communism comes very near to that of Rosa Luxemburg by the way who did not know Hegel and had no clear idea of dialectics but was convinced ⁽¹⁾ that real socialism could be brought about only by the masses themselves and that the party should be an instrument not for "leading" the masses but at the service of the masses, who would make use of it and be in a continuous interaction with it all the way. Verbally this is not so very different from what Lenin (and even Mao) said, but she really meant it and ~~acted~~ acted on it. The last thing which a party-leader in her opinion should do was to become "master" over the masters and to indoctrinate them with ^{an} ideology giving infallibility to the very leaders.

That however it is always possible to deteriorate Hegel's dialectical thought and transform it into a means for justifying bureaucratic rule has been shown by history from Hegel's concept of the rational prussian state of civil servants ⁽²⁾ to the Stalinian and post-Stalinian bureaucracies. It is true that marxism-leninism has become "idealistic" in the degree in which it was transformed into an ideology justifying the party-monopoly-rule, but this was not the "origin" but only the consequence of the establishment of the new autocracy and this has to be accounted for (in a marxian way) by an analysis of the sovjet society and the capitalist societies of our time.