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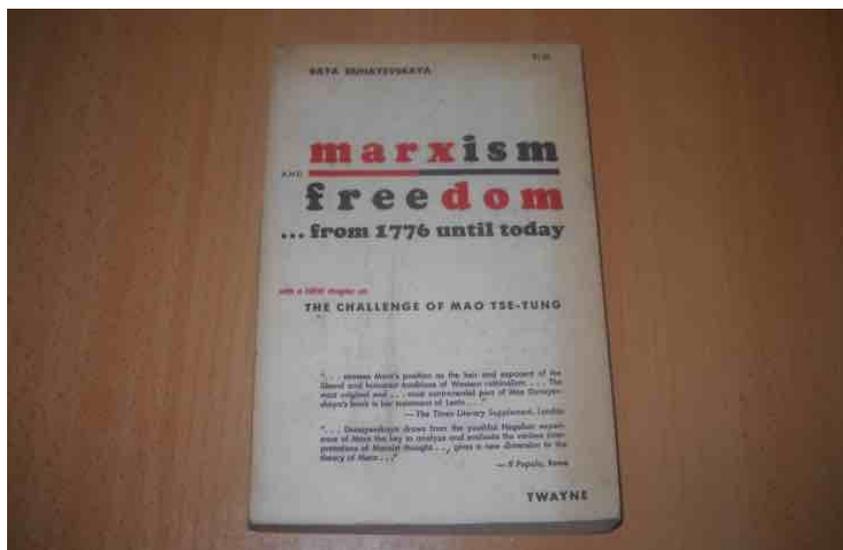
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Summary: White nationalism's roots in the present state of global capitalism are explored on the 60th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom*. Why is creating a humanist alternative to capitalism central to finding a way out? Presented at the Chicago Convention of the International Marxist-Humanist Organization in July - Editors

Marxist-Humanist Perspectives on the Alternative to Capitalism in Light of Anti-Immigrant White Nationalism

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Part I: The Objective Situation in Trump's America

Small children torn from their parents and sent to detention centers as their families cross the U.S.-Mexico border in response to horrific persecution...Over 3,000 refugee and migrant children kidnapped by ICE since May, producing tremendous trauma in parents and children alike that will last for years...

How could this be happening, and what can explain it? Clearly, it is due to Trump's anti-immigration policies, implemented by Attorney General Jeff Sessions and enthusiastically supported by tens of millions of their followers. But how is *that* possible? How could a country have sunk to such a level of depravity?

There is a political answer, an economic answer, and a philosophical answer. We need all three in order to fully come to grips with what is happening today.

First, the political: Clearly, what drives anti-immigrant policies in the U.S. and Europe today is *racial animus*. Many of Trump's supporters hate people of color and want to ensure that America "remains white" (as they put it) for as long as possible. This is why they will continue to support him even when it is shown that fewer migrants are crossing the border than before, that Central American and Mexican migrants commit fewer crimes than U.S. citizens, and that his policies are doing irreparable harm to children. *None of*

that matters because it is race that above all that matters to them.

The positive in this negative is that mobilization against this dehumanization have reached a new level, as seen in the nationwide protests against ICE's systemic child abuse, the stunning victory of Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez in the New York primary, and women's marches against sexual harassment and for abortion rights that the next Supreme Court will almost surely strike down. Since racism has once again shown itself to be the Achilles heel of U.S. society, people of color, *and especially women of color*, have been at the forefront of many of these unfolding protests and developments.

But let's not underestimate Trump's support. It is not weakening. One reason is "White Extinction Anxiety"—the fear that people of color may soon outnumber whites. In May the Brookings Institute reported that *for the first time in U.S. history*, the white non-Hispanic populace declined in *absolute terms*. In 2016 more non-Hispanic whites died than were born in 26 states—a record.^[1] Reaction to this has a lot to do not only with the Administration's policies on immigration but also its voter suppression and gerrymandering—which will also be greatly facilitated by the new Supreme Court.

However, that some whites *fear* becoming a minority doesn't mean they *actually will become* the minority. Whites

without a BA will be 44% of the eligible voters in 2020; college educated whites will be 23%. Thus, “The Republican Party can still win elections while losing the popular vote through 2036 if they do even better among whites who had not graduated from college, while other voting patterns held steady.”^[2] Moreover, the Census Bureau lists those of mixed racial ancestry as “non-white”—even though a significant percentage of those in this category eventually define themselves as white. And “an estimated net 1.2 million of the 35 million Americans identified in 2000 as of ‘Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin,’ changed their race to ‘white’ between 2000 and 2010.”^[3] This tendency is likely to continue in the future, as some—not most but *some*—Hispanics try to obtain the privileges of whiteness that define U.S. society. This option is excluded for African-Americans for reasons explained by Frantz Fanon: they are “over-determined from without”^[4] by virtue of how society views those whose skin is “black.” It may therefore be quite a while before non-whites actually outnumber whites.

Clearly, today’s racial animus isn’t based on facts. So what *is* it based on? Raya Dunayevskaya spoke to this in writing, “Racism is not only anti-Semitism, or only against blacks, be that in South Africa or the U.S., or just a Middle Eastern phenomenon. Racism, after all, arose in the heart of Western Europe. Because racism is integral to all class exploitative

societies and reaches its most vitriolic expression during hard times, it is imperative to look at it comprehensively, focusing on why at any time it takes this or that specific form.”^[5] So why is it taking *this* specific form at *this* point in time?

It’s no easy question to answer, and I can’t claim to have one. What may help us *collectively work out the answer* is to turn for a moment to the situation in Europe.

Europe is awash with far-Right governments and parties touting racist agendas. Hungary, Poland, Austria, and in part Italy, are controlled by the far-Right, while anti-immigrant parties are growing in Germany, The Netherlands, even in Scandinavia. What is going on? A key factor is that neoliberal capitalism has produced an unprecedented level of instability and insecurity, as market relations invade every aspect of life, tearing apart the bonds that connect people to each other. Abstract forms of domination based on value production predominate, while intersubjective connections between individuals dissolve. For years, the administrators of this process were centrist and leftist parties that accepted neoliberalism. They became some of the most drastic champions of cutbacks in social services and wages (consider Angela Merkel’s policies against Greece). And then came the crash of 2008, which destroyed the livelihoods of tens of millions. Europe’s economy gradually recovered but the benefits didn’t go to the working class.

And then came 2015, with a massive influx of immigrants from the global South. Who strongly defended unrestricted immigration? Neoliberals like Germany's Merkel, who famously declared "Wir Schaffen Das!" Anti-immigrant hysteria, under the surface all along, took off as many looked for simplistic answers to the increasingly unstable nature of their lives. That some of the same leaders who supported immigration also endorsed economic austerity made it all the easier for many to falsely conflate the two positions.

Here is where it gets interesting: The rightwing governments in Poland and Hungary (as well as Le Pen's National Front in France and other anti-immigrant European parties) *oppose* austerity, *defend* the welfare state, and in many cases call for its *expansion*. They want a *larger* role for the state in the economy. The governments may be doing more to care for the elites than the masses, but they at least promise a reversal of neoliberal austerity. It's a big reason they have a mass base. Nationalism and racism play a big role in their appeal, but that isn't the only reason they have won a lot of support.

Compare this to the U.S. Here too, the political elites, Republican and Democratic, embraced neoliberalism. Then came the 2008 crash; millions had their lives pulled out from under them. Many white workers who later voted for Trump were so distraught over the economic collapse that they

voted for Obama not once but twice. The economy recovered, but the benefits went not to workers but to the banks and corporate elite. Hillary Clinton then runs as the pro-establishment candidate defending now-discredited neoliberalism...and guess who sneaks into power! Is it such a surprise?

But there is a *big* difference between Trump and European far-Right Populists. Trump is no less for austerity than the “classic” neoliberals: just look at his tax cuts for the rich, gutting of social services and environmental protections, and ending government regulation of financial abuses. But he is not a classic neoliberal, since he opposes free trade and globalization. Initially, that made the Republican Party establishment wary of him (that it also upsets the Wall Street plutocrats that still run the Democratic Party goes without saying—don’t believe for a minute that the main reason they hate Trump is his racism and sexism). But the Republicans surely love him now, because he has succeeded in doing what they never could: just when much of the U.S. working and middle class got fed up with neoliberalism, he got them to support the Republican agenda with a fervor never seen before by coupling it with xenophobic nationalism — expressed in “buy American” campaigns and imposing tariffs on imports, on the one hand, and demonizing immigrants, minorities, feminists, the disabled, and LBGTQ people, on the other.

When viewed objectively, it is a remarkable political achievement. What we have with Trump—or Trumpism, since his banner can easily be picked up by a successor—is a curious hybrid of the worst elements of xenophobic nationalism and neoliberalism. It has a particular “American” stamp with deep historical roots. Rightwing movements in European history have almost always been pro-statist (Bonapartism, fascism, Gaullism); but rightwing movements in the U.S. have almost always been anti-statist. Not anti-statist in the sense of opposing the military-industrial complex, the police, or the national security state, but anti-statist in the sense of enabling the market to “freely” organize economic matters irrespective of government control (a perspective that no European fascist could ever endorse). This marriage of free market mania with nationalist and racist xenophobia—along with a huge dose of misogyny—is what makes Trump so dangerous.

Of course, the entire project is extremely unstable. His attack on public sector unions, now enshrined by the Supreme Court’s decision in the Janus Case, will seriously erode the power of the one part of the U.S. labor movement that still has legs; but it may also result in a more militant push-back from labor, as seen this year in the strikes by teachers in six states (all of which Trump won in 2016—thereby calling into question the claim that white workers always identify with white capitalists against their class

interests). The majority of the U.S. public actually *opposes* Trump's attack on immigrants and favors *more* rather than less immigration. And the tariffs he is imposing on allies (Canada, the EU) and competitors (China) can backfire and have dire consequences on the U.S. economy. Still, there is an advantage to being the debtor nation that imports more than it exports when a trade war breaks out—there aren't many U.S. products that Canada, the EU, or China can slap tariffs on! Tariffs on U.S. exports of bourbon, toilet paper, and motorcycles only gets you so far—especially when Trump can slap tariffs on high-value imports like steel, aluminum and automobiles.^[6]

The key question is whether Trump's policies (or a combination of events with it) will cause a recession. It's hard to say, though many economists think we're overdue for one. But there is no reason to assume that it will be our savior even if it happens. If so many are turning to resurgent racism and sexism when the economy is doing relatively well, how many more may turn in that direction when it hits bottom?

History provides plenty of evidence that a society's descent into inhumanity does not necessary lead to a humanist alternative. Hitlerism was the apex of inhumanity, but its defeat was followed by an era dominated by Stalinism and "free market" capitalism. Humanist alternatives were shunted to the margins. And when a New Left arose in the

1960s to make a fresh start, after a few years it devolved into uncritical Third Worldism, Marxist-Leninism, and Social Democratic reformism. The neoliberalism from the 1980s on arose from their ashes. Will history repeat itself, or will there be a new beginning?

Wolfgang Streeck spoke to this in his book *How Will Capitalism End*: “Capitalist society is disintegrating from within, from the success of capitalism and the internal contradictions intensified by that success, and from capitalism having overrun its opponents and in the process becoming more capitalist than is good for it.” But why, he asks, “is there no new social order waiting to succeed” capitalism? The reason, he states, “is the absence of a vision of a practically possible progressive future [capitalism’s] enemies, when it comes to the crunch, have to admit that they have no idea how to replace neoliberal capitalism with something else...Before capitalism will go to hell, then, it will for the foreseeable future hang in limbo, dead or about to die from an overdose of itself but still very much around, as nobody will have the power to move its decaying body out of the way.”^[7] This is not a future we can accept. But if we refuse it, there is only one course of action: to fill the void in developing a vision of “a practically possible progressive” alternative to capitalism. Without that, comrades, we are lost.

Part II: The ‘Moment’ of *Marxism and Freedom*

In the absolute method, the concept maintains itself in its otherness, the universal in its particularization, in judgment and reality; at each stage of further determination, the universal elevates the whole mass of its preceding content, not only not losing anything through its dialectical advance, or leaving it behind, but, on the contrary, carrying with itself all that it has gained, inwardly enriched and compressed.

—G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*^[8]

We have access to what greatly facilitates the working out of a humanist alternative to capitalism—*the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism*. As the Call for Convention states, “Marxist-Humanism is better equipped than any other standpoint to speak to the present moment,” because its more than six-decade long development provides vital insights into how humanity can free itself from the power of capital.

However, a body of thought is helpful only to the extent that it is taken seriously, studied, debated, and re-developed in light of new realities. Attempts to develop alternatives by neglecting history—either actual history or the history of thought—go nowhere. You are only as tall as the shoulders you stand upon.

This has nothing to do with any “omnipotent view” of theoreticians. No thinker is omnipotent—including Marx,

who never got to finish his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*. Yet think of what was lost by the generations of revolutionaries who never got to know *Marx's* Marxism. Liu Binyan, the great Chinese dissident who joined the Communist movement in the 1940s and remained a committed Marxist until his death in 2005, once told me that the greatest tragedy of the Chinese Revolution was that “none of us, even the brightest, really knew Marxism. We didn't have access to Marx's most important works.” It is only now, in the twenty-first century, that we have access to all of Marx—and can therefore claim that we are *beginning* to know Marx.

Marxist-Humanism presents us with an even steeper curve, since even its existence is not widely known. It is a massive body of thought that remains to be explored—including by us, whether we've been members for 40 years or 40 days. Here too, the task at hand is not to get beyond it as much as catch up to it. That is why we decided to devote this Convention to the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth and the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Marxism and Freedom: from 1776 Until Today*.

Marxism and Freedom was written at a time when many intellectuals—from George Orwell to Hannah Arendt—viewed Hitler and Stalin's totalitarianism as a new kind of society that threatened to stifle internal resistance. *Marxism and Freedom* was written as a direct rejection of such

claims. Its 1958 Preface states, “From the philosopher in the ivory tower to the man on the street, the world is preoccupied with this question: *Can* humanity be free in this age of totalitarianism?” It then says, “We leaped generations ahead to the *affirmative* answer with the 1953 [East German Revolts] and again with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956”—and adds, “The road to a new society was *no less* illuminated by the Negro struggles [in the Montgomery Bus Boycott] of 1956-57.”^[9]

Three points are worth noting here: 1) Dunayevskaya held that no form of oppression can stifle the struggle for freedom. Against those who claimed that the Jews went to the gas chambers like sheep, she singled out their heroic resistance in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, arguing at the time “All Roads Leads to Warsaw!” Against those who claimed that Stalinism crushed all possibility of revolt, she singled out the uprisings in East Berlin and at the Vorkuta slave labor camp in Russia in 1953 as “the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism.” In a word, she held that there are “Two Worlds” in each country, rulers versus the ruled—and the latter can never be completely silenced *no matter how severe the repression*. 2) She took as her theoretical point of departure not the horrors of totalitarianism, but the new forms of revolt that arose against it. Critiques of alienation and oppression that are not rooted in new subjective strivings by the masses cannot aid the

creation of a new society. 3) She held that the struggle of Black Americans in the Montgomery Bus Boycott was every bit as revolutionary as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which first pruned Marx's Humanism from the Archives. Which means the path to a new society arises not just from the class struggle; at certain specific historic junctures the struggle against racism can do the same.

This is what we get from just the first three pages of *Marxism and Freedom*. Let's reflect further on the implication of these points for today:

First, so many horrors are being committed by Trump that people around the world are asking, what has happened to America? Where is the internal opposition? We know there is one, as the ongoing protests here show. But far too many have forgotten that there are "Two Worlds" in *every* country. Many leftists today excuse their failure to speak out against Assad's Syria on the grounds that everyone opposed to his regime is a reactionary. Marxist-Humanism tells us that that simply cannot be so.

Second, many theoretic tendencies in the twentieth century—existentialism, the Frankfurt School, postmodernism—took defeat, instead of new turning points in liberation, as their point of departure. *Failed* revolutions set the mood for their thought. By no accident, they had little to say about an alternative to capitalism. In contrast, *Marxism and Freedom* asks in its first chapter: "What

happens *after* a revolution succeeds? Are we always to be confronted with a new form of State tyranny against the individual's freedom?" It continues, "the totality of the present world crisis" summed up in this question "compels us to turn to Hegel and his Absolutes."^[10] And when we "turn" there we find that "In Hegel's Absolute is the vision of the future."^[11] Then comes the real shocker: She writes, "the workers have been *acting out* Hegel's Absolute Idea and have thus concretized and deepened the movement from practice to theory."^[12] In raising the question of *what* kind of labor should people do, instead of limiting the class struggle to a "fairer" distribution of value, the vision of the future contained (in abstract form) in Hegel's Absolutes, she claimed, is now gaining material expression.

She extends this in turn to Blacks and other minorities struggling for freedom, women aspiring for a transformation of human relations, and youth. Long before the concept of intersectionality began to make the rounds, Marxist-Humanism had a view of multiple forces of revolution. *But it also went further* by viewing these forces in revolt as *forms of theory*—as *subjective embodiments of dialectical reason*. This does not show up in most discussions of intersectionality, but it surely can add much to them.

Third, *Marxism and Freedom* holds that *Marxism is a philosophy of liberation*. This is a break from the dominant interpretation, which holds that Marx dispensed with

philosophy in favor of a critical theory of society. To this day this remains the prevailing view, including among those who contend that Marxism after Marx failed to live up to his emancipatory vision. *Why is it that Marxist-Humanism turned to philosophy, when other tendencies that are also sharply critical of post-Marx Marxists fail to do so?*

This is also spoken to in the Preface, which states: “Until the development of the totalitarian state the philosophic foundation of Marxism was not fully understood.”^[13] Why is this? I noted that radical theory suffers when it takes defeat and failure as its ground. But defeats surely happen and need to be understood. At issue is *how* one learns from them.

Take the Russian Revolution of 1917. Some argue that there is a straight line, without variation or contradiction, between Lenin and Stalin. Bad politics, the argument goes, were pursued by Lenin, and had better politics been pursued, Stalin would never have come to power. Without getting into the details of this debate here, one thing is clear: *There is no need whatsoever to rethink Marxism as a philosophy of liberation if one takes such a position.* The argument posits good politics versus bad politics, good men versus bad men; *philosophy need not enter the picture at all.*

In contrast *Marxism and Freedom* holds that a *transformation into opposite* occurred between October 1917 and Stalin’s rule. That doesn’t mean Lenin doesn’t deserve criticism. Instead, the question becomes how could

such a great revolution become consumed from within by a new despotism. Grappling with *that* question forces you to think hard, very hard; so hard that it led Dunayevskaya to discover Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* and go beyond the theory of state-capitalism in developing Marxism as a philosophy of liberation. *By no accident, none of the independent Marxists who equated Lenin with Stalin ever got to make that move from theory to philosophy.*

Grasping “transformation into opposite” isn't just a political question; it has profound *philosophical* ramifications. That's not just true for the past but for today. Take the Israel-Palestine conflict. Israel has moved so far to the Right as to invite comparisons with neo-fascism. Given how horrid Israel has become, it is tempting to read its entire history as a path straight to Netanyahu. That, however, requires ignoring a lot of history (to know more of it please read Dunayevskaya's writings on the Israel/Palestine conflict). Even more, it trivializes the depth of the historical tragedy represented by Zionism. If there is a straight, unwavering, line of reaction that leads from Jews moving to Palestine in the 1940s (many of whom were socialists and communists) to the politics of today's Israeli government, one does not need to ask how one of the most oppressed groups in the history of humanity could become the oppressors of another nationality, the Palestinians. If it is simply a matter of them all being colonialists then and all being colonialists now,

there's no need to even ask the question. But there's a price to be paid for that, which extends further than the Israel-Palestine conflict, for what drops from sight is the question we all have to confront, sooner or later: Why do the oppressed of one group so often become desensitized to the suffering of the oppressed of another group?

Marxist-Humanists have always taken great care to craft its political positions in such a way as to distinguish ourselves from variants of Marxism that do not represent emancipatory alternatives. That is especially the case when it comes to the Middle East, whose Left has been dominated by narrow nationalist, Islamist, and Stalinist tendencies. Surely, all three concur in denying Israel's right to exist. Of course, our view of the Israel-Palestine conflict, as with all political issues, has to be rethought and developed as demanded by changing realities. But we must do so by holding firmly to the philosophical principles that are embodied in works like *Marxism and Freedom*.

Part III: A *Humanist* Alternative to the Logic of Capital

Its one thing to view Marx's thought as a philosophy; more challenging still is to define a Marxist organization as being responsible for philosophy. The latter gets us to what is unique about Marxist-Humanism. *Marxism and Freedom*, however, discusses the relation of philosophy and organization only in passing. It was not until the 1980s, with *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's*

Philosophy of Revolution and her work on “Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy” that the relation between philosophy and organization took center stage. Why only then? That’s another question I’m not sure I have the answer to, but it may have something to do with the fact that by then it had become urgent to develop a philosophically grounded alternative to capital.

Dunayevskaya died before her work on this was completed; thus, Marxist-Humanism too is an unfinished project. It is therefore up to us to “make something of it.” As part of taking organizational responsibility for a philosophy that can help develop a viable alternative to capitalism, we have decided to issue a pamphlet containing a new edition of Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Program* with an Introduction by ourselves. In doing so we do not presume that Marx’s 1875 *Critique* provides an answer for what society can be like after capitalism. But it provides *ground* for getting there, and you can’t build anything without a proper ground. That is why we will issue this pamphlet—assuming we raise the funds to do so at the end of this Convention.

The Introduction—parts of which I will present here—will be completed in August. I wish to make it clear that the Introduction will *not* try to speak for Marx. It will provide some background and clarification to the *Critique*, but we’re not going to tell folks what Marx “really meant.” Therefore, it will be brief. The *Critique* is 7,000 words; our

Introduction will be much shorter. I see it as addressing the following six issues:

First, Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* didn't come out of the blue, since its discussion of a new society is consistent with what is said in the *Grundrisse* and the three volumes of *Capital*. What is *new* with the 1875 *Critique* is: 1) It distinguishes between a lower and higher phase of socialism or communism; 2) It discusses a new society in an *organizational* context, in attacking his followers for merging with the party of Lassalle.

Second, it is impossible to grasp Marx's concept of communism without understanding his critique of capital. The defining feature of capitalism is that labor assumes a *value-form*. Value, or wealth measured in money, is the expression of a specific form of social labor—abstract or homogenous labor. The value of a commodity is determined not by the *actual* amount of time taken to produce it but by the *socially necessary labor time* established on a global level. This average varies continuously, due to technological innovations that increase the productivity of labor. As capital accumulates, concrete labor—the varied kinds of labor employed in making use-values—becomes increasingly dominated by abstract labor, which is the *substance* of value.

Third, abolishing abstract labor and value production requires common ownership of the means of production.

This does not refer to a formal transfer of private property to collective or state entities. Transferring property deeds is a *juridical* relation, which does not end class domination. Marx refers to “free human beings” owning the means of production, which means they exert effective and not just nominal control over the labor process. *And that is not possible unless workers democratically control the labor process.*

Fourth, Marx’s critique of capital is inseparable from *humanism*. Value may be a rather *abstract* category, but it depends upon a *concrete* kind of human activity: *labor that is constrained by an abstract time determination outside of the workers’ control*. Abolishing capitalism requires uprooting the alienated human relations that make value production possible. *There is no other way out.*

Fifth, the 1875 *Critique* specifies this by stating that in the initial, lower phase of communism the producers “do not exchange their products; just as little does the labor employed on the product appear here *as the value* of these products, as a material quality possessed by them, since now, in contrast to capitalist society, individual labor no longer exists in an *indirect* fashion but *directly* as a component part of the total labor.”^[14] Generalized commodity exchange comes to an end in the first, initial phase of communism, since abstract labor, the substance of value that enables products of labor to be universally

exchanged, no longer exists. With democratic, freely associated control of the means of production, the producers themselves, and not some external force like socially necessary labor time, governs their interactions. And since labor loses its dual character, value production comes to an end *from the very inception* of the new society.

But labor itself does not come to end, since *actual* labor time serves as a measure for distributing the products of communal activity. Marx writes, “The individual producer receives back from society—after the deductions have been made—exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual *quantum* of labor.” Individuals receive from society a voucher or token that they have “furnished such and such an amount of labor” and from it obtains “the social stock of means of consumption as much as the amount of labor costs.”^[15] Marx is *not* suggesting that the worker’s labor is computed on the basis of a social *average* of labor time. Here, labor time simply refers to the actual number of hours of work performed by the individual in a given cooperative.

The distinction between actual labor time and socially necessary labor time is absolutely crucial, since conflating them leads to the erroneous view—shared by both market and statist socialists—that socially necessary labor time is an inevitable part of human existence that will always be with us. But if that is so, it follows that abstract labor, with all its

alienated and dehumanizing characteristics, will always be with us. In that case, the “new” society becomes defined by the principles that govern the old one.

Of course, this is only the lower phase—which is defective. But by ending abstract forms of domination the material conditions are established that enable a higher form of communism to come into being, in which actual labor time no longer serves as a measure of social relations. In the lower phase, people learn how to master themselves and their environment on the basis of a time-determination that does not confront them as a person apart. We must learn to relate to each other unmediated by such abstract formations as wealth expressed in monetary terms. Only when this is achieved does it become possible to reach “From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.” With the end of the division between mental and manual labor and the achievement of the “all-round development of the individual,” a higher phase is reached in which labor becomes “the prime necessity of life”—that is, an end in itself instead of a mere means to an end.

Sixth, Marx’s conception of the first phase of communism should not be confused with “the dictatorship of the proletariat,” which he defines as a *political* transitional stage *between* capitalism and the new society. As the *Critique* clearly states, “Between capitalist and communist society

lies the period...in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.*”^[16] This signifies democratic control of society by the “immense majority,” the producers, who use political power as a lever to eliminate the oppressive classes by revolutionizing the social relations of production. Once socialism or communism is reached the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes superfluous, since with the end of class society the proletariat is abolished alongside all other classes. *And at that point the state as such comes to an end.*

Many fail to see this, in part by misreading Marx’s comment, “What change will the form of the state undergo in communist society?” This is a mistranslation. The original does not speak of the “form of the state” in communism; it speaks of former state functions (*Staatswesen*—not *Staat!*) that can readily be employed without a state. But many miss the point. For example, Michael Lebowitz writes in *The Socialist Alternative: From Gotha to Now*, “We build communist society *upon its own foundations* by developing new communal relations of production that subordinate the private ownership of labor-power *by creating a new state.*”^[17] This is completely ridiculous. Lebowitz not only imports the state into the lower phase of communism—he claims it also exists in a higher phase, in which communism “stands on its own

foundations”! The state is fetishized to the point of making it an eternal fact of human existence.

How, you may ask, can he write this, when it is the *absolute opposite* of Marx’s position? It’s not hard to see why.

Lebowitz was an advisor of Chavez’s regime in Venezuela, which despite its accomplishments in redistributing oil revenue to the masses, built up a highly centralized state while refraining from abolishing the private ownership of labor power. So he seeks to justify Chavez’s politics by reading them back into Marx! It reflects a problem that goes way beyond him. Leftists repeatedly fail to grasp what is staring at them on the written page because they insist on “re-reading” Marx through the lens of their own politics. Misrepresentations of Marx’s concept of a post-capitalist society will therefore not go away just because we issue a new translation of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*. We have an interminable *battle of ideas* before us.

In entering this battle, we must not forget history—the history of mass struggles as well as the history of *bodies of ideas*. The effort to get us to forget such history is at the heart of the dummied-down of U.S. culture and politics today. Hence, we will not forget the moment when the Communards stormed the heavens in 1871, or when white and black workers came together against capital in forming the CIO in the 1930s, or when the African masses overthrew colonialism in the 1960s, or when the Hungarian workers in

1956 tore down the statues of Stalin and discovered Marx's humanist essays. Nor will we forget the philosophical expressions of these turning points in human liberation. For this reason, I end with a poem, written on the eve of that 1956 Revolution:

Don't talk to me about space ships, a trip to the moon, or Marx, about life in the atomic age.

We live like this. In darkness, in mud, far way.

Don't tell me it is worse in Africa. I live in Europe, my skin is white. Who will embrace me to make me feel that I am human?^[18]

[1] See Sabrina Tavernise, "Whites a Minority in the U.S.? The Transition is Accelerating," *The New York Times*, June 21, 2018.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Nate Cohn, "More Hispanics Declaring Themselves White," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2014.

[4] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), p. 95.

[5] Raya Dunayevskaya, “The UN Resolution on Zionism—and the Ideological Obfuscation Also on the Left” [January 24, 1976].

[6] See Ian Austen, “Canadians’ Pride Mixes with Retaliatory Tariffs. Just Add the Tomato Paste,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 2018: “It is impossible for Canada to inflict significant economic pain on a neighbor ten times its size.” He compares the planned Canadian tariffs against the U.S. to a “pinprick.”

[7] Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), pp. 35-6.

[8] G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, translated by George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 750.

[9] Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 Until Today* (Amherst, NY: Humanities Books, 2000), p. 23.

[10] *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 39.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[14] Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*. In *Marx-Engels Collected Works* Volume 24 (New York: International Publishers), p. 85.

[15] Ibid., 86.

[16] Ibid.

[17] My emphasis. The italicized phrase is highly significant since it makes it clear that Lebowitz is referring to Marx's discussion of a *higher* phase of communism (in Marx's words) "as it has developed on its own foundations."

[18] This poem by Karoly Jobbagy, written in Budapest in April 1956, serves as the frontispiece quote to Raya Dunayevskaya's last published essay, "A Post-World War II View of Marx's Humanism, 1843-83; Marxist-Humanism in the 1950s and 1980s." See *Praxis International*, Vol. 8 (3), October 1988, p. 360. When it was reprinted in the memorial issue of *News & Letters* devoted to her in June 1987, the quote was left out—for reasons that remain to be explained.

