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**ROSA LUXEMBURG,  
WOMEN'S LIBERATION,  
AND MARX'S PHILOSOPHY  
OF REVOLUTION**

*Raya Dunayevskaya*

*From 1776 until Today*

*From Hegel to Sartre and*

*Marxist-Humanism and the*

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Marx's philosophy of revolution.

Marx, Karl  
Revolutions  
SI-24063

*I'm telling you that as soon as I can stick my nose out again I will hunt and harry your society of frogs with trumpet blasts, whip crackings, and bloodhounds—like Penihesilea I wanted to say, but by God, you people are no Achilles. Have you had enough of a New Year's greeting now? Then see to it that you stay human. . . . Being human means joyfully throwing your whole life "on the scales of destiny" when need be, but all the while rejoicing in every sunny day and every beautiful cloud. Ach, I know of no formula to write you for being human. . . .*

Rosa Luxemburg, 1916

*Everything depends upon the historical background in which it finds itself. . . . If the Russian Revolution becomes the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that both complement each other, the present Russian common ownership of land may serve as the starting point for a communist development.*

Karl Marx, 1881, 1882

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ED STATES OF AMERICA

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quotations from Mikhail Lifshitz, *The*  
Roman Rosdolsky, *The Making of*

quotations from Leon Trotsky, *1905*,

for quotations from Leon Trotsky,  
translated by Max Eastman;  
for quotations from *The Letters of*  
Lenin.

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## Introduction

Three very different types of events. One. The transcription of the last *Notebooks of Karl Marx*, creating Marx's *œuvres* as a totality. This (1844) historic-philosophic conoanalysis, as to undermine the last Frederick Engels's *The Origin of* was a "joint" work of Marx and Engels. The archives had come Marx's was Marx's concept of permanence same time, how very deep must be the view of the forces of revolution the possibility of a revolution occurring in the technologically advanced

Two. It cannot be altogether at the period of the emergence of and of Women's Liberation as an Ide Movement. However, it is not only author to focus on Rosa Luxemburg who raised so forcefully the que impinges on an urgent question spontaneity to both consciousness feminist dimension of Rosa Luxemburg calls for the record to be straight. Moreover, there is a need for to absorb Luxemburg's revolutionary their demands of the day, including

Today's Women's Liberation Movement aspects, previously raised neither fact that the task remains unfinished Luxemburg's works both as female grappling with Marx's works, not revolution. To do anything short Women's Liberation Movement to

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## Introduction

Three very different types of events in the 1970s have prompted this work. One. The transcription of the last writings from Marx's pen, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, created a new vantage point from which to view Marx's *oeuvre* as a totality. This cast so new an illumination, on both his first (1844) historic-philosophic concept of Man/Woman and his last (1881-82) analysis, as to undermine the long-held view of post-Marx Marxists that Frederick Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* was a "joint" work of Marx and Engels. What became as translucent, when out of the archives had come Marx's unpublished draft letters to Vera Zasulich, was Marx's concept of permanent revolution. This made clear, at one and the same time, how very deep must be the uprooting of class society and how broad the view of the forces of revolution. It led Marx to projecting nothing short of the possibility of a revolution occurring in a backward land like Russia ahead of one in the technologically advanced West.

Two. It cannot be altogether accidental that those writings came to light in the period of the emergence of an historic objective event—the transformation of Women's Liberation as an Idea whose time had come into a worldwide Movement. However, it is not only the objectivity of this event that has led this author to focus on Rosa Luxemburg. First and foremost, it was Luxemburg who raised so forcefully the question of spontaneity of the masses that it impinges on an urgent question of our day: what is the relationship of spontaneity to both consciousness and "the Party"? The total disregard of the feminist dimension of Rosa Luxemburg by Marxists and non-Marxists alike calls for the record to be straightened on that dimension in Luxemburg. Moreover, there is a need for today's Women's Liberation Movement to absorb Luxemburg's revolutionary dimension, not for history's sake but for their demands of the day, including that of autonomy.

Today's Women's Liberation Movement has introduced new and unique aspects, previously raised neither by non-Marxists nor Marxists. But the very fact that the task remains unfinished points to the need to study further Luxemburg's works both as feminist and as revolutionary. And that means grappling with Marx's works, not just as "writings" but as a philosophy of revolution. To do anything short of that impedes the development of the Women's Liberation Movement to its full potential as Reason as well as force.

Three. In this age when the myriad crises reached a global climax with the 1974-75 economic crisis, there is no doubt whatever that, far from being a question of the 1970s, it is a question of what Marx called "the law of motion of capitalist society" to its collapse, the rise of the Third World, and the imperative need for a totally new society on truly human foundations. Even matters such as the publication of newly discovered unpublished works and new English translations of old works—including a new translation of Marx's greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, restoring to it Marx's own "Hegelian" language in "economics"—point to the intense, continuous interest in Marxism. It far transcends any single decade's preoccupation, or any single revolutionary force's aspirations, be it Labor or Woman, Youth or the Black Dimension. It discloses a passion for revolution, as well as for a philosophy of revolution, that would assure its continuance also after the conquest of power.

It is because Marx discovered a whole new continent of thought and of revolution and because he so creatively held together in unison both concept and practice that grappling with Marx's Marxism has become a matter of global urgency. Whether one looks at the economic crises or their opposite—not only class struggles but the national liberation movements, even where they now are forced to function under the whip of counter-revolution—the fact is that new forms of revolt keep emerging. They have erupted in Portugal, and in China in "the year of great troubles under heaven," when nevertheless there was the spontaneous great mass outpouring even before Mao had said his last hurrah. They have erupted in Iran, and in benighted South Africa, where the Black Dimension is forever rising from the ashes. They have erupted from under Communist totalitarianism, as in Poland, and from under Latin American oligarchy propped up by United States imperialism, as in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

The greatest contradiction in all these crosscurrents stems from the very depth of the economic-political-social crises, which produce a great desire for shortcuts to freedom. Instead of grappling with the working out of a philosophy of liberation for our age, theoreticians look only for "root causes" of oppression. This is good, but hardly good enough. It narrows the whole relationship between causality and freedom; it impedes the dual rhythm of revolution that demands not only the overthrow of the old, but the creation of the new. In place of hewing out a road to total freedom, it gets hemmed in by one form or another of economic determinism. This is why it is necessary not to be diverted from a return to the totality of *Marx's* Marxism, which never separated philosophy of revolution from actual revolution: each by itself is one-sided.

What Marx developed in his discovery of a new continent of thought is that Mind is free and, when tightly related to the creativity of the masses in motion, shows itself to be self-determined and ready for fusion in freedom. Indeed, before he openly broke from bourgeois society, Marx in 1841, though still a

"Prometheus Bound" in academic relationship of philosophy to reality.

As against the familiarly-held philosophic critique to an economically developed Historical Materialism, merely by standing Hegel "right" dialectic, but by going back to the problem which determined the French Revolution. It is the negation of the creative force and Reason Feuerbach failed to grasp, and Hegel. In saving the Hegelian dialectic "invention" of the Idea, as if its self-determination of human beings thinking and acting in revolution. Marx's unyielding *praxis*—revolutionary ruthlessness of philosophy was the basis of the theory, but in practice, and in both the transformation of reality remains. This dialectical principle will show three parts of the book, that is to say From Critic of Hegel to Party of Permanence"—but also Party of Critic, as Activist, as International Movement as Revolutionary Force.

Gathering together the threads of a relatively easy by gathering the threads of a we become witness, at one and the same time Hegel's revolution in philosophy, sensitively Marx had his ears attuned to what he had named his philosophy—"a new philosophy." Just as the young Marx, in first discovering the proletariat as the agent of capitalism" and the leader of the proletarian revolution, Marx made still newer discoveries in his studies like Morgan's *Ancient Society* and the Orient and the carving up of the world.

From the study of primitive communism, including, at one and the same time, the concept and of the way he had singled out as its greatest achievement, clear from Marx's letters to Zasulich, working on the *Ethnological Notes*.



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society, Marx in 1841, though still a

"Prometheus Bound" in academia, posed the problematic of the day: the  
relationship of philosophy to reality.

As against the familiarly-held view that Marx developed from providing a  
philosophic critique to an economic basis for his theory of revolution, Marx  
developed Historical Materialism as a theory of permanent revolution, not  
merely by standing Hegel "right side up" and "taking over" the Hegelian  
dialectic, but by going back to *history's* root of the Hegelian dialectic—the  
problem which determined *Hegel's* dialectic, i.e., the dual rhythm of the  
French Revolution. It is the negation of the negation which Marx singled out as  
*the* creative force and Reason of dialectic methodology. It is that which  
Feuerbach failed to grasp, and Hegel himself had covered with a "mystic veil."  
In saving the Hegelian dialectic from what Marx called Hegel's "dehumaniza-  
tion" of the Idea, as if its self-determination were mere thought rather than  
human beings thinking and acting, Marx dug deep into revolution, permanent  
revolution. Marx's unyielding concentration on revolution, on revolutionary  
*praxis*—revolutionary ruthless critique of all that exists—reveals that dialectical  
philosophy was the basis of the *totality* of Marx's work, not only in philosophy  
but in practice, and in both politics and economics. This being so, the  
transformation of reality remains the warp and woof of the Marxian dialectic.  
This dialectical principle will show itself, I hope, to be the unifying force for all  
three parts of the book, that is to say, not only of Part Three—"Karl Marx:  
From Critic of Hegel to Author of *Capital* and Theorist of 'Revolution in  
Permanence'"—but also Parts One and Two—"Rosa Luxemburg as Theoretician,  
as Activist, as Internationalist," and "The Women's Liberation  
Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason."

Gathering together the threads of the three parts of this work was made  
relatively easy by gathering the threads of Marx's development because there  
we become witness, at one and the same time, to "how" Marx transformed  
Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution, and to how  
sensitively Marx had his ears attuned to the voices from below, so that what he  
had named his philosophy—"a new Humanism"—was continuously developing.  
Just as the young Marx, in first turning to what he called "Economics," had  
discovered the proletariat as the Subject who would be the "gravedigger of  
capitalism" and the leader of proletarian revolution, so, at the end of his life,  
Marx made still newer discoveries as he turned to new, empirical anthropological  
studies like Morgan's *Ancient Society* as well as to the imperial incursions into  
the Orient and the carving up of Africa.

From the study of primitive communism Marx made still newer discoveries,  
including, at one and the same time, a substantiation of his early Man/Woman  
concept and of the way he had, in his summation of the Paris Commune,  
singled out as its greatest achievement "its own working existence." As will be  
clear from Marx's letters to Zasulich, in the very period during which he was  
working on the *Ethnological Notebooks*, he viewed the peasants not only as a

"second edition" of the Peasant Wars to assure the success of the proletarian victory, but also as possibly instrumental in still newer revolutions. As Marx dug into the history of the remains of the Russian peasant commune, he did not think it out of the question that, if a union with Western technologically advanced society was possible, a revolution could actually come first in backward Russia. This was in 1882!

No wonder that our age too feels the impact of the problematic Marx grappled with in his day: the new revolutionary forces that do not easily arise and are not easily imagined, which were so profoundly posed in Marx's new continent of thought and of revolution. Whether or not our age rises to the historic task of transforming reality, of one thing there is no doubt: Marx had hewed out a road, not only for Luxemburg's generation, but for ours.

May 5, 1981  
Detroit, Michigan

Raya Dunayevskaya

## PART ONE

*Rosa Luxemburg  
Theoretician,  
Internationalist*