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

A 35-Year Collection of Essays—Historic,
Philosophic, Global

by
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Introduction and Overview

Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future

A 35-Year Collection of Essays—Historic, Philosophic, Global

What distinguishes the newness and uniqueness of Women's Liberation in our age is the very nature of our epoch, which signified, at one and the same time, a new stage of production—Automation—and a new stage of cognition. The fact that the movement from practice was itself a form of theory was manifested in the Miners' General Strike of 1949-50,¹ during which the miners battling Automation were focusing not on wages but on a totally new question about the *kind* of labor man should do, asking why there was such a big gap between thinking and doing. It was also seen in the new kind of activities on the part of the miners' wives, although, in the immediate post-World War II world, Women's Liberation was only an Idea whose time had come and not yet a recognized Movement.

Our age of Women's Liberation is distinguished from all others—whether that be the ancient pre-capitalist societies when women like the Iroquois had some freedoms greater than women in the technologically advanced industrial societies; or the 19th century when women, although they named one of their papers *The Revolution*,² concentrated on the elemental right to the vote; or whether it be the early 20th century when revolutionary women Marxists fought alongside the men against the whole capitalist system but never raised the question of male chauvinism, though they were subjected to its brunt.

The movement from practice that is itself a form of theory which marks our age burst forth fully on June 17, 1953 in East Berlin in the first mass strike ever against Russian totalitarianism. That political strike was directed both against the state-capitalist rulers calling themselves Communist and against increased work-norms (speed-up). Developing under the slogan: "Bread and Freedom," the revolt spread

to Poland and to Hungary. There the dissidents dug out from the dusty archives Marx's Humanist Essays on "Alienated Labor," "Private Property and Communism," and his "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic"—which had been penned when Marx broke with private capitalism, as well as with what he called "vulgar communism."

These revolts did not stop in the 1950s and were not only against state-capitalism calling itself Communism. Quite the contrary—the post-World War II world witnessed the birth of national liberation revolts against Western imperialism in Asia, in the Middle East, in Africa. Out of these emerged a whole new Third World.

The essays collected here cover the whole 35 year span since this movement from practice arose. They are not presented here in a chronological order. Rather, each of the four Parts into which the essays have been divided comprises the whole three decades; thus, each includes the totality. Part I, "Women, Labor and the Black Dimension," begins with an article written in 1969, when "Woman as Reason as well as Revolutionary Force" was first created as a category. It ends with a talk given in the Marx Centenary year, 1983, to a Third World Women's Conference, after having returned to a 1950 article on "The Miners' Wives."

I had singled out the wives of the miners on strike as I was reporting from the field because I had felt strongly that *new* forces of revolution were emerging—not only in labor, but in women and youth who were not in production. "Women in the Post-War World and the Old Radicals," an excerpt from an unpublished essay written in 1953, discusses women both in and not in production, while another excerpt from that same essay, "The Abolitionists and Their Relationship to the Black Dimension," focuses on the crucial nature of the Black dimension—crucial because, as far back as slavery days, it was the Black revolt that gave impulse to the creation of a whole new dimension to the American character—the birth of Abolitionism.

Naturally, I do not limit the essays either to the past or to the U.S. It is our age and the whole world that preoccupies me. It was in the 1960s that, in both independent and *apartheid* Africa, women, inspired by the Montgomery Bus Boycott, rose up in new revolts there; it was likewise in the 1960s that Black women helped to shape the new Women's Liberation Movement in the U.S.; and it was in the 1960s that I travelled to both West Europe and West Africa, to Hong Kong (as near as an American could get to China at that time), and to Japan. Some of my writings from these trips are included both in Part I and in Part III.

Each of the Parts that follow "Women, Labor and the Black Dimen-

sion"—whether it concerns a concrete organizational form or a seemingly abstract, philosophic category—discloses a passion for a total uprooting of this exploitative, racist, sexist society, stretching from the anti-Vietnam War movement and the beginnings of a New Left within socialism to the present search for a philosophy of revolution to meet the challenge of the ongoing revolutions of our day. Take education and youth. The new Black dimension in the South and its Freedom Schools stimulated so new a look at the educational system in elite universities in the North that the Free Speech Movement was born at Berkeley.

The point is that every one of the historic periods recorded here discloses the existence of both a new revolutionary force and a new consciousness—Reason itself—no matter how different the situation or the country in which the events unravel, and no matter how hidden from history, past or in-the-making, it has remained.

The Southern Black dimension saw women Freedom Riders encountering a most unique organization in Mississippi called "Woman Power Unlimited."³ As the movement of the '60s developed, the dissatisfaction of the women activists with the male leaders—in the Black revolt and in the anti-Vietnam War movement—led to new tensions within the New Left itself, resulting in the development of Women's Liberation not only as an Idea but as a Movement. Which is why today's Women's Liberation Movement, as I put it in *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, declared:

Don't tell us about discrimination everywhere else; and don't tell us it comes only from class oppression; look at yourselves.

Don't tell us that "full" freedom can come only the "day after" the revolution; our questions must be faced the day before. Furthermore, words are not sufficient; let's see you practice it.

None of your "theories" will do. You will have to learn to hear us. You will have to understand what you hear. It's like learning a new language. You will have to learn that you are not the font of all wisdom—or of revolution. You will have to understand that our bodies belong to us and to no one else—and that includes lovers, husbands, and yes, fathers.

Our bodies have heads, and they, too, belong to us and us alone. And while we are reclaiming our bodies and our heads, we will also reclaim the night. No one except ourselves, as women, will get our freedom. And for that we need full autonomy.

*We will not open an escape route for you by pointing to the middle-class nature of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Outside of the fact that the trivialization of housework is also demeaning to the "well-paid"*

housewife, we haven't seen you involved in the struggle of the domestic workers. Our movement didn't begin with *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. In 1961 we were on the Freedom Ride buses with you, got beat up and thrown in jail, and found that the Black women in Mississippi had organized "Woman Power Unlimited."

Stop telling us, even through the voices of women (of the old left), how great the German Socialist Women's Movement was. We know how many working women's groups Clara Zetkin organized and that it was a real mass movement. We know how great the circulation of *Gleichheit* was, and that we have nothing comparable to it. We demand, nevertheless, to be heard, not only because your implication seems to be that we had better hold our tongues, but because her superiority in organizing women on class lines left hidden many aspects of the "Woman Question," most of all how very deep the uprooting of the old must be. And we also know that none of them, Zetkin and Luxemburg included, had brought out the male chauvinism in the party. They had followed the men in considering that nothing must be done to break up the "unity" of the party by diverting to "strictly personal, strictly feminist" matters rather than be lumped with the bourgeois women.

Now let us ask you: Is it accidental that the male leaders in the SPD so easily plunged into those malodorous, male-chauvinist remarks when Luxemburg broke with Kautsky and Bebel? And could it be accidental that the male Marxists of this day, with and without female support, first resisted the establishment of an autonomous women's movement and now try very much to narrow it by forever bringing out the priority of the party, the party, the party? There is the rub.

Too many revolutions have soured, so we must start anew on very different ground, beginning right here and now. Under no circumstances will we let you hide your male-chauvinist behavior under the shibboleth "the social revolution comes first." That has always served as excuse for your "leadership," for your continuing to make all decisions, write all leaflets, pamphlets, and tracts, while all we do is crank the mimeo machine.

Finally, the most important thing we must all learn to hear are the voices of the Third World. The real Afro-Asian, Latin American struggles—especially of women—are not heard in the rhetoric at the Tri-Continental Congresses, but in the simple words of people like the Black woman who spelled out what freedom meant to her: "I'm not thoroughly convinced that Black Liberation, the way it's being spelled out, will really and truly mean my liberation. I'm not so sure when it comes time 'to put down my gun' that I won't have a broom shoved in my hands, as so many of my Cuban sisters have."

Part II, "Revolutionaries All," turns to the impact on the East of the first Russian Revolution, 1905-07. In Persia (today's Iran) not only did the impact last through 1911, but it became the reference point for the 1979 Iranian Revolution. I here include excerpts from a Political-

Philosophic Letter I wrote as that revolution unfolded. To this day not only has the role of women in the early Persian Revolution been glossed over, but even when the activity of the women in the Russian Revolution has been recorded (and in his *History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky did write a moving chapter on the "Five Days" that shook Tsarism in February 1917), it is the courage and not the Reason of the women that stands out. Indeed, Reason is nearly totally denied as Trotsky holds that the women really didn't know what they were doing in the February revolution, and that it was only in November, when the Bolsheviks were pre-dominant, that theory was equal to the practice and that power was won.

The truth is that what initiated the actual overthrow of Tsarism was the action of the women in February. Further, the truth is that in February all the revolutionaries—Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries—were advising against that action on International Women's Day.⁴ The women dismissed their advice. Marching during wartime against the Tsar, as well as against their factory conditions, produced such massive, spontaneous support, not only from other working women but from housewives and women on the streets, that it finally impelled the male politicians to join them, and the revolution fully unfolded. That was fact and philosophy—but it didn't make the politicians look at the activity of the women as Reason.

Because I held that masses in motion, women as well as men, are the ones who "make" revolutions, transform reality, I had no need to denigrate the so-called role of women. On the contrary, I singled out when they, and they alone, initiated the actual revolution, as witness the milkmaids in what became the Paris Commune. (See footnote, p. 110.) In my "In Memoriam: Natalia Sedova-Trotsky," I take up the whole question of "The Role of Women in Revolution."

One of the unique features of our age is that the attitude to the activity and thought of women is different today from what it had been in other ages. At the end of the 1960s, when Women's Liberation had moved from an Idea whose time had come to a Movement, I gave a series of lectures at the University Center for Adult Education of Wayne State University and the University of Michigan in Detroit. These were delivered without any written text, and were summarized by my colleague, Olga Domanski. I include in Part II both that summation and her essay on "Women's Liberation in Search of a Theory: Summary of a Decade."

The Part concludes with excerpts from "New Passions and New Forces," the final chapter of my work, *Philosophy and Revolution: From*

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Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao. This final chapter reconnects with the first chapter of that work, where I note: "It was as if Hegel's Absolute Method as a simultaneously subjective-objective mediation had taken on flesh. Both in life and in cognition, 'Subjectivity'—live men and women—tried shaping history via a totally new relationship of practice to theory" (p. 42).

Gramsci expressed that thought most succinctly in his essay, "Problems of Marxism": "The philosophy of praxis is consciousness full of contradictions in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an entire social group, not merely grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradictions and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action."

Part III centers on "Sexism, Politics and Revolution—Japan; Portugal; Poland; China; Latin America; the U.S.—Is there an Organizational Answer?" In grappling with Women's Liberation internationally, I found that, no matter how different the group or what the country, one organizational question seemed to prevail: Could a new organizational form be the answer to woman's never-ending oppression, inequality, and alienation at work, in the home, and in the supposedly neutral cultural field?

Marx's new continent of thought and of revolution, grounded in the concept of "revolution in permanence," may seem unconnected to the organizational question. And the whole question of organization as non-elitist and demanding the practice of new relations between men and women was not connected by the Women's Liberationists to Marx's philosophy of "revolution in permanence" as ground for organization. Nevertheless, for the male Left to see the women's demand for new organizational relations as only a question of small vs. larger organization and of decentralization vs. centralization, to consider this only a desire for being "anarchistic" or for talking of "personal" rather than political matters, rather than seeing in it the question of new beginnings, exposes more than the pragmatism of our age. It discloses not only the male chauvinism inherent in the Left but their insensitivity to the key question of Marx's concept of the dialectics of revolution itself—which Marx made inseparable from his concept of the principles of organization, with his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

The essence of an organizing Idea (with a capital I)—that is to say, the philosophy of revolution—is that the uprooting needed cannot divide theory from practice nor philosophy from organization.⁵ There can be no new society short of abolishing the division of mental and

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manual labor, thereby creating the conditions needed for the self-development of a whole person.

It isn't only Women's Liberationists or today's Left who do not see a connection between Marx's philosophy of revolution and his view of organization. This has characterized the whole post-Marx Marxist world. The greatest illumination of that is the attitude of the revolutionaries in the Russian Revolution of 1905-07. The phrase, "revolution in permanence," was so much in the air then that Trotsky's analysis of the 1905 St. Petersburg Soviet was dubbed by others "the permanent revolution," and Trotsky accepted it. It was the period when the solidarity of Marxists in Japan and in Russia was firmly established as the Japanese Marxist Sen Katayama shook the hand of the Russian Marxist Plekhanov at the International Congress during the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War. Why then did "revolution in permanence" not sink in as strategy for revolution as well as ground for organization, even when, by 1917, 1905-07 was seen as having been the "dress rehearsal" for 1917?

Consider, too, the New Left in Japan in our age—specifically the section of Zengakuren, which had broken with the Communist Party because they considered Russia a state-capitalist society and which had gone back to the beginning of Marx's Marxism, when he had named his philosophy a "new Humanism." This group was the first to translate and publish, in Japanese, Marx's 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, in which the Man/Woman relationship is so central. Yet not only did they disregard that point in Marx's Essays, but they acted as if the concept of Alienated Labor meant only class relations. Their insensitivity to Marx's concepts of the Man/Woman relationship persisted even after a woman became the first to die during the historic snake-dances that kept Eisenhower from landing in Japan in 1960.

When I got to Japan in 1966, I was shocked to find that not only were there no women in the leadership, but women did not take the floor in the meetings the New Left had sponsored for me. It was that fact among many others which I raised in my critique to them for not creating room for the new force of Women's Liberation. While this debate is not included in the report of my trip to Japan which appears in this Part, I have appended to it the discussion of that question I felt compelled to raise in my talk to WRAP (Women's Radical Action Project) in 1969.

The whole question of objectivity and presence of the Women's Liberation Movement is so crucial a mark of our age that, whatever the country, and whether there was a recognized autonomous movement

or whether the voices were silent, there is absolutely no doubt that deep opposition to sexism exists.

We can see it in the Portuguese Revolution where, even before the mass revolt against fascism burst forth, a book called *The Three Marias* gave notice of an opposition which the authorities thought they could stifle by imprisoning its three authors. So powerful was the protest pouring forth from the Women's Liberation Movement internationally, that not only did the authors gain their freedom but an autonomous women's movement became integral to the revolution itself. Despite this fact, Isabel do Carmo—who headed the revolutionary group, PRP/BR (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat/Revolutionary Brigades), which had raised the question of *apartidarismo* (non-partyism) for the first time within the Marxist movement—dismissed the autonomous Women's Liberation Movement as purely petty-bourgeois—that is to say, non-revolutionary. But the women who, during her own imprisonment, came to her defense so impressed her that she said: "I'm beginning to think our whole struggle, the struggle of the Revolutionary People's Party, was really a fight carried on by women."⁶ That extreme a declaration when you are talking of the revolution as a whole—and being mindful that the Portuguese Revolution really started in Africa—is as wrong as her previous denial of the WLM; but the objectivity of the women's movement as a new revolutionary force and Reason is undeniable.

Still another form of this newness is seen in Poland. I include here, therefore, a report I received from a young Polish exile on the women who were so crucial in the creation of that new world stage of Polish revolt—*Solidarnosc*.⁷ Part III also shows two very different attitudes on the part of two women revolutionaries in China to the relationship of philosophy and revolution. One is the autocrat, Jiang Qing; the other is a Chinese refugee I call Jade, whom I interviewed in Hong Kong on the eve of the Cultural Revolution.⁸ At the same time, I critique the attitude of the American feminist, Roxane Witke, who, far from comprehending the revolutionary essence of Women's Liberation, has forgiven Jiang nearly all her crimes.

At that point we return to the United States, specifically the International Women's Year Conference in Houston, Texas in 1977. This conference was especially important because it made manifest the existence of the Third World within the U.S. It is that which cast a new illumination on the whole question of Latin America. Part III thus ends with "The Latin American Unfinished Revolutions," whether

that be the 1960s (and my correspondence with Silvio Frondizi during that decade is included here); or whether it be the 1970s (and I include both my Political-Philosophic Letter after a tour where the relationship of Eritrea and Cuba was raised, and my exchange with the Mexican feminists); or whether it be the 1980s and my dialogue with the Peruvian feminists.

It became clear to me that the question: "Can there be an organizational answer?" could not be answered without dealing with the whole question of philosophy, the missing link not only for the pragmatists but for all of post-Marx Marxism. It is to that question that I turn in the final Part of this collection.

Part IV—"The Trail to the 1980s: The Missing Link—Philosophy—in the Relationship of Revolution to Organization"—attempts to gather together all threads, both those of our age of myriad crises and those of Marx's day, especially the last decade of Marx's life as he reached for the future and left a trail to the 1980s. The first of the Part's two sections—"Reality and Philosophy"—begins with an interview with Katherine Davenport, "On the Family, Love Relationships and the New Society," which was aired on radio station WBAI in New York on International Women's Day, 1984. I consider it significant because there is no doubt that the Women's Liberation Movement has imparted a new intensity and a very different, new direction to an old question.

Today's reality—the totality of the crises, economic and political, national and international—confront us with so terrifying a possibility of a nuclear holocaust and create so total an impasse that all too many are looking for an escape, which has reduced philosophy to a religion and the homilies of the family. It was that type of reductionism that Marx attacked when he threw down the gauntlet to bourgeois society with his *Communist Manifesto*:

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution. The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital . . .

The bourgeois claptrap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of modern industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

The second essay in this section was my response to a challenge to deliver, as a single lecture, an analysis of "The *Grundrisse* and Women's Liberation." This 1974 lecture was transcribed and published that year in the *Detroit Women's Press*. I accepted the challenge because Women's Liberation is an illumination of Marx's vision of human development which he articulated as "an absolute movement of becoming" in the *Grundrisse*. In truth, from his very first break with capitalist society in 1843, when he wrote his Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts and declared labor to be the universal class, Marx extended the concept of Alienation to the Man/Woman relationship and to all life under capitalism. This is why he concluded that the system needed to be totally uprooted—that is to say, needed nothing short of a "revolution in permanence." Clearly, that little word, dialectic, which comprised a critique of "all that is"—that is, the "negation of the negation"—opened a whole new continent of thought and of revolution.

Thus, his 1843-44 Humanist Essays did not stop at calling for the overthrow of the system. Instead, he once more articulated the dialectics of revolution, the "revolution in permanence," in his concept of historic transcendence even after communism had been achieved. "But communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society," he wrote in "Private Property and Communism." And he rearticulated it in his "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic" this way: "... communism is humanism mediated by the transcendence of private property. Only by the transcendence of this mediation . . . does there arise positive Humanism, beginning from itself."

This is what he expressed in 1857-58 in his manuscripts on "Economics" (which we know as the *Grundrisse*) as "the absolute movement of becoming." In a word, far from being all on economics and a departure from philosophy, these manuscripts proved all over again that Marx's new encounter with Hegel's *Logic* and his acceptance of "absolute movement of becoming" was a deepening of his transformation of the Hegelian dialectic from a revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution.

When, in that 1857 *Grundrisse*, Marx first projected the Asiatic Mode of Production as so fundamental a path of human development that he added it as a fourth form to the three forms he had previously identified—slavery, feudalism, capitalism—he was keeping his mind's eye on the possible future pathways to a new society while studying the historic form of human development. Indeed, he never diverted from that view of "absolute movement of becoming." To make sure that his fundamental fourth form would not be glossed over just because he

decided not to publish those manuscripts on "Economics," he included the concept in the Preface to his 1859 *Critique of Political Economy*. To this day, that paragraph remains the most oft-quoted definition of Historical Materialism.

The crucial decade of the 1970s—when for the first time there was finally an opportunity to view Marx's oeuvre as a totality, with the publication of his *Ethnological Notebooks*, his final major writings—was the decade when Women's Liberation had moved from an Idea whose time had come to a Movement. What the *Ethnological Notebooks* revealed was how radically different Marx's views were on the dialectics of Women's Liberation from those of Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which Engels had published as a "bequest" from Marx. While the third essay in this section concentrates on the "Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies," the final section concentrates on the *Ethnological Notebooks* as a challenge to non-Marxists as well as to all post-Marx Marxists.

What prevails in that final section on "The Challenge from Today's Global Crises" is the need to overcome this stifling nuclear reality; indeed, it motivated the entire collection. The "why" of so many aborted revolutions has led dissidents, even in this pragmatic land, to search for the missing link of philosophy to revolution as well as to new forms of organization. Thus, today's Women's Liberationists began their discussion of dialectics and forms of organization through a criticism of the male Left. I had been feeling that the whole post-World War II generation had been raising totally new questions ever since the end of that war had solved none of the myriad crises brought on by the Depression and the rise of fascism which had led to the war.

Put another way, new forces of revolution were challenging the theoreticians to come up with nothing short of a new form of cognition, a new way of life. Instead, they were being saddled with new political tyrannies, new forms of mass destruction, a new stage of production, and a total way of nuclear terror and death.

The first essay in this final section on the "Relationship of Philosophy to Revolution," which contrasts Marx's and Engels's studies, had originally been conceived as the first chapter in a new work I was projecting on Women's Liberation. I intended to deal, on the one hand, with new forms of organization, and, on the other, to critique Women's Liberationists for disregarding Rosa Luxemburg, the great woman revolutionary from whom we today could learn a great deal on the dialectics of revolution and the spontaneity of the masses which involved a new approach to organization. In the process of my research,

I found that Marx's heretofore unknown *Ethnological Notebooks* disclosed a deep gulf between Marx and his closest collaborator, Engels, whose unilinear view has nothing in common with Marx's multilinear view of human development. All too many of today's Women's Liberationists have rejected "Marxism" as if Engels's *Origin of the Family* was Marx's view, without ever digging into Marx's Marxism. I felt this to be a challenge to all post-Marx Marxists as well as to non-Marxists. My analysis of Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks*, appearing here, was the first draft chapter written for Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*.

Because this analysis has proved to be the most controversial part of that book, it is necessary to stress the process by which Marx came to his *Ethnological Notebooks*. Post-Marx Marxists have treated Marx's Marxism either as a dogma or as a mere description of his age with no ramifications for ours. None of the conclusions that Marx drew, however, no matter how well-founded, seriously researched, or profoundly projected, were ever stated as a *given* conclusion, never to be reviewed—as is obvious from his letter answering the Populist critic, Mikhailovsky, on that most fundamental principle of the accumulation of capital, which climaxes Marx's description of the "law of motion of capitalism" as leading to its doom. Marx denied that this description of what held true for Western Europe had been analyzed as a Universal. He insisted that, indeed, technologically backward lands (such as Russia) could follow a different path, and even have the revolution ahead of the West. Nor was this something written only in a letter to an editor, that was never sent. He developed it also in four long unpublished letters to Vera Zasulich.

In those letters he cites the fact that "an American writer" who was no revolutionary or historical materialist (he was referring to Lewis Henry Morgan) had written a most exciting book which disclosed all sorts of new findings about pre-capitalist society, the Iroquois especially. He was at that time working on what we now know as the *Ethnological Notebooks*—and Morgan's *Ancient Society* was the central point, but Marx's notes included a great many other anthropological studies, by Maine, Lubbock, and others. Clearly, it was those studies, when set in the context of his philosophy of revolution and human development, that led to the conclusion that revolution could come first in a backward land, *provided* the historic conditions were ripe and the revolution related itself to the rest of the world. Indeed, this was proclaimed openly in nothing less than the 1882 Introduction to the Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto*.

In this author's mind an entirely different element relates to the question of the attitude the author has to what others think of the problem that is preoccupying her. It is not only academics or like-minded colleagues, in my mind, who should be brought into the process of working out the ideas of a book. Rather, ideas have to be submitted to the scrutiny of workers, intellectuals, women, youth—that is to say, the forces of revolution—both as one develops a book and after it reaches completion. This was done with every one of my major theoretical works. The final section of the last Part of this collection presents letters written during the process of writing *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. It likewise presents the first lecture given (on Dec. 13, 1981) when the book was completed.

After the book was published I embarked on a national lecture tour during the Marx centenary year, 1983, and there was confronted with new questions on the relationship of philosophy to reality and to revolution. The final selection included here consists of my answers to the new questions posed. What seemed to me to be crucial was the missing link of philosophy in relationship to revolutions both in theory and in fact. That is what is meant by the dialectics of revolution. Indeed, it appeared to me that this is what is missing in all those who have been writing on the new moments in Marx's last decade *not* as a continuity of Marx's whole philosophy of revolution, but as if they were a break in Marx's development. It is no accident that they do not relate any of the "new moments" which they discuss to the new forces of revolution, especially Women's Liberation.

It is imperative to look anew at other historic turning points and in that way to grasp how the practicality of philosophy can be seen when objective crises are so total as to bring on actual world wars. It was precisely at such critical points that two such disparate historic figures as Sartre, the professional philosopher, and Lenin, the revolutionary practitioner, each felt the need to turn to philosophy—Lenin at the outbreak of World War I and Sartre on the eve of World War II.

In his *What is Literature?* Sartre wrote: "Metaphysics is not a sterile discussion about abstract notions which have nothing to do with experience. It is a living effort to embrace from within the human condition in its totality."¹³ Unfortunately, when it came to *practice*, Sartre tailented the Communist Party instead of adhering to Marx's definition that: "The practice of philosophy is itself theoretical. It is a critique that measures the Individual existence by the Essence, the particular by the Idea."¹⁴

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When Lenin was faced with the extremes of the Second International's betrayal and collapse at the outbreak of World War I and turned to Hegel's *Science of Logic*, he hailed that dialectic work of abstract notions for including a chapter on "Life"—and including it in the final part of the Doctrine of Notion at that. Lenin wrote, in his *Philosophic Notebooks*: "The idea of including *Life* in logic is comprehensible—and brilliant—from the standpoint of the process of the reflection of the objective world in the (at first individual) consciousness of man and of the testing of this consciousness (reflection) through practice..." (Lenin's *Collected Works*, Vol. 38, p. 202).

Lenin praised the whole section of the *Science of Logic* on "The Idea" as containing "the very best of the dialectic," and dug deeper into the chapter on "Life," writing down: "Schmerz ist 'eine wirkliche Existenz' des Widerspruchs" in the living individual." Lenin stops to note especially what Hegel emphasized on "process," "kind," "intersubjectivity," "intoreflexion," and "totality" as the chapter on "Life" was moving to "transcendence" and "transition." Hegel ended Chapter I and introduced Chapter II on "The Idea of Cognition": "The Idea, which... transcended its particularity which constituted the living generations..." (*Science of Logic*, p. 415).

Lenin spent even more time on the chapter, "The Idea of Cognition," where he singled out: "Man's cognition not only reflects the objective world, but creates it," calling attention to the fact that Hegel himself, instead of proceeding with the word, "Notion," suddenly used the word, "Subject." Lenin finally "translated" the whole concept of the "actuality" of oneself and the "non-actuality" of the world" as: "i.e. the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity."

No one, of course, was more creative than Marx, who had discovered a whole new continent of thought as he grappled with his "Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic," where, as we have showed, he transformed Hegel's revolution in *philosophy* into a philosophy of *revolution*. The task is to unchain the dialectic.

This, this precisely, stamps the uniqueness, the originality, the continuity in Marx's development of the dialectic. We can see his Promethean vision in the last decade of his life as he projected the possibility of a social revolution coming first in a technologically underdeveloped country before the so-called advanced economies. This was the same period when he also wrote the *Critique of the Gotha Program*—a sharp critique of the organizational form of a proposed

*Pain is 'actual existence' of contradiction

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new Party, the proposed merger of those who considered themselves Marxists with the Lassalleans. That *Critique* was a theoretical differentiation between Marxism and Lassalleism, which he extended also against the practical points they would engage in. Marx dismissed these five points of action as nothing but "bourgeois twaddle."

As was evident throughout this book (which covers 35 years of writings on a single subject, Women's Liberation), the sharp differentiation between Marx's Marxism and post-Marx Marxism is not limited to that one question. A deep gulf existed between Marx's multilinear view of all human development and Engels' unilinear view. Which is why this single subject—Women's Liberation, whether viewed as it relates to philosophy or to form of organization—is inseparable from the dialectics of revolution. Both of these questions were raised anew during my 1983 lecture tour. Specifically, I was questioned about what appeared contradictory to some in my audience, when I had written (on p. 109 of *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*) that social revolution comes first "provided it is not—indeed revolutions cannot be—without Women's Liberation or behind women's backs, or by using them helpmates." I therefore elaborated that concept as follows:

History proves a very different truth, whether we look at February 1917, where the women were the ones who initiated the revolution; whether we turn further back to the Persian Revolution of 1906-11, where the women created the very first women's society; or whether we look to our own age in 1970s in Portugal, where Isabel do Carmo raised the totally new concept of apartheidismo. It is precisely because women's liberationists are both revolutionary force and Reason that they are crucial. If we are to achieve success in the new revolutions, we have to see that the uprooting of the old is total from the start.

The Absolute Method allows for no "private enclaves"—i.e., exceptions to the principle of Marx's Dialectics, whether on the theoretical or the organizational questions. As Marx insisted from the very beginning, nothing can be a private enclave: neither any part of life, nor organization, nor even science. In his Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts he proclaimed that: "To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie."

The truth of this statement has never been more immediate and urgent than in our nuclear world, over which hangs nothing short of the threat to the very survival of civilization as we have known it.

— Raya Dunayevskaya
Chicago, Illinois
September 17, 1984

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