

(Introduction to Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution)

NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Introduction

Three very different types of events in the 1970s have prompted this work. One was the transcription of the last writings from Marx's pen -- The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx -- which created a new vantage point from which finally to view Marx's oeuvre as a totality. This cast so new an illumination, both on his 1844 historic-philosophic concept of Man/Woman and on his 1880s analysis, as to call into question the long-held view of post-Marx Marxists that Frederick Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State was a "joint" work of Marx and Engels. Not only that. The centerpoint, the heart and soul of Marx's Marxism -- proletarian revolution, became translucent, as out of the Archives came also the unpublished draft letters from Marx to Vera Zasulich which, in referring to Morgan's Ancient Society, projected the possibility of a revolution occurring in a backward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 these publications have appeared in the very period of the emergence of a historic objective event -- the transformation of Women's Liberation as an Idea whose time as come into a Movement. The greater focus on Rosa Luxemburg, as compared to attention given to other post-Marx Marxists, is most deliberate. It is due, at one and the same time, to the fact that, as a great revolutionary, she is the one who raised so forcefully the question of the spontaneity of the masses that it

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impinges on an urgent question of our day: what is the relationship of spontaneity to "the Party"; and to the total disregard of the feminist dimension of Rosa Luxemburg by Marxists and non-Marxists alike. While today's Women's Liberation Movement has introduced new and unique aspects that had previously been disregarded by all, the Movement's neglect of Luxemburg, as revolutionary, as feminist, not to mention the total neglect of the late as well as the early works of Marx not just as "writings" but as a philosophy of revolution, cannot but impede 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, and the imperative need for a totally new society on truly human foundations. There have been new publications of both newly discovered unpublished works of Marx and new English translations of his old works -- including a new English translation of his greatest theoretical work, Capital (despite the fact that the original 1886 English translation had been edited by none other than Engels), restoring to it Marx's own philosophic language also in "economics." What has brought about the renewed intense interest in Marx's Marxism far transcends any one decade's preoccupation.

It is because Marx discovered a new continent of thought as well as of revolution; it is 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 --

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 appearing. They have erupted in Portugal; and in China in "the year of great troubles under heaven," when nevertheless there was the first 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 arising from the ashes. They have erupted from under Communist totalitarianism, as in Poland; and from under Latin American oligarchy propped up by U.S. imperialism, as in El Salvador.

The greatest contradiction in all these cross currents stems from the very depth of the crisis which seems to produce so great a desire for shortcuts to freedom that, at best, theoreticians, instead of grappling with the working out of a philosophy of liberation for our age, keep looking 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 or another form of economic determinism. Which 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 academia,

posed the problematic of the day: the relationship of philosophy to reality.

This is where Part Three -- "Karl Marx -- From a Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of Permanent Revolution" -- begins. It is not separate from Part One -- "Rosa Luxemburg as Theoretician, as Activist, as Internationalist", or from Part Two--"The Women's Liberation Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason." The three parts of the book are a totality.

In gathering together the threads of the three parts, as in gathering together all the threads of Marx's works, one becomes witness not only to "how" Marx transformed Hegel's revolution in philosophy into a philosophy of revolution, but how profoundly he 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," the leader of proletarian revolution, so at the end of his life, he made still newer discoveries as he turned to new, empiric anthropological studies, to a study of imperialism's incursions into the Orient as well as to what was still referred to as "the New World" and what Morgan called "Ancient Society" -- the American Indian.

From the study of primitive communism he 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 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 prole-

tarian victory, but also possibly instrumental in still newer revolutions. Put differently, this author found that it is Marx's Marxism that gathers together the threads of all three parts -- especially those of Marx's whole life. The problematic of our day -- the new forces that do not easily arise, and are not easily imagined -- were gathered so profoundly by Marx's new continent of thought and of revolution that its ramifications impinge on our age. Whether or not our age rises to that historic task, of one thing there is no doubt: Marx has laid out new stepping stones for us.

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-- Raya Dunayevskaya

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