

August 26, 1983

To all N&L Committees:  
Dear Comrades:

Because I think it is incumbent upon a Constitutional Convention which has as a focal point the inclusion in its very constitution of the latest theoretical work, Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, to see in it a great deal more than just a paragraph, I would like to explain all the paragraphs that were added after its publication, in the following context:

- 1) That it is no accident that it is the Marx centenary which prompted the new publication of our other two fundamental works, Marxism and Freedom and Philosophy and Revolution, and
- 2) That this led us to call the theoretical foundations of Marxist-Humanism, as a totality, a trilogy of revolution.

Here, then, are the paragraphs as they were added to each section:

In the Introduction just before the final paragraphs, I saw a need not to have the reader wait for the final chapter to know that we are challenging post-Marx Marxists. With that in mind, the added paragraph makes clear at once that the very first point misunderstood by post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels, was Marx's work in the last decade regarding what we now call the Third World, and what Marx called, in the Grundrisse, "the Asiatic mode of production" as well as commenting on it as he read Morgan's Ancient Society. In the new paragraph, we also ask: Isn't the Marx centenary high time to challenge the post-Marx Marxists on their understanding of Marx's last writings? And we point to the fact that we do just that in the last chapter.

(The new paragraph is added on p. xi, just before the para. which begins: "From the study of primitive communism...")

That seems to have been the first point so misunderstood by post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels, who, without having known all of the massive Ethnological Notebooks Marx had left behind, undertook to write his own version of Morgan's work -- his Origin of the Family -- as a "bequest" of Marx. When Ryazanov discovered these notebooks, he rushed -- before he ever had a chance to decipher them, to characterize them as "inexcusable pedantry." If an Engels, who was a close collaborator of Marx and without whom we would not have had Volumes II and III of Capital, could nevertheless so suddenly have become overconfident about his own prowess of interpreting Marx as to assume he was speaking for Marx; if an archivist-scholar like Ryazanov could, at a time when he was actually publishing those magnificent early essays of Marx (the 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts), spend a good deal of his first report on the Archives of Marx in asking for 20 to 30 people to help him sort these manuscripts out, and yet pass judgement before he dug into them -- it says a great deal about literary heirs but nothing whatsoever about so great an historic phenomenon as Marx's Marxism.

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Isn't it time to challenge all of the post-Marx Marxists when even those who have achieved great revolutions (and none was greater than the 1917 Russian Revolution) did not, in thought, measure up to Marx? Isn't it time to dig into what Marx, who had discovered a whole new continent of thought, had to say for himself? (Chapter XIII concentrates especially on the last writings of Marx, in which this author found a trail to the 1980s.)

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Chapter III of Part One jams up the different views of Luxemburg and Marx on "Accumulation of Capital" in order to show that the new events which Luxemburg called "reality", which she contrasted to Marx's "theory", could have been so contrasted because she failed to fully work out dialectic methodology -- which would have revealed a single dialectic in both objective and subjective worlds. To that end, the whole subject of methodology was expanded to reveal the difference between how Absolute appeared in the phenomenal world (and the phenomenon she had in mind was imperialism) and how Absolute was worked out in Philosophy of Mind, where it cannot possibly be separated from Subject, i.e. revolutionary force as Reason. As the added paragraph puts it: "Therein is the nub of the Great Divide between Phenomenology and Philosophy -- and because it is no abstraction, but a live Subject, it unites rather than divides theory and reality."

(The new paragraphs are added on p. 45, immediately after the paragraph that ends with the italicized sentence: "This, indeed, is the nub of Luxemburg's error.")

Methodology being the dialectic movement both in the Phenomenology of Mind and in the Philosophy of Mind, let us look deeper into their difference. While it is true that in the Phenomenology we speak not just of appearance, much less of mere show, but of a philosophy of appearance, it is not true that the methodology, as we follow the movement of the dialectic in Philosophy of Mind, is either the philosophy of phenomena or even of essence. Rather, the dialectic in the Notion is that the Absolute there opens so many new doors in both the objective and subjective spheres as to reveal totality itself as new beginning.

Thus, as against the phenomenology of imperialism being merely a reflection of new surfacings of oppression, new appearances surface as so profound a philosophy of revolution as to disclose that what inheres in it is a living Subject that will resolve the great contradiction of its absolute opposites, imperialism and national oppression. It is this which Marxist-Humanists call the new revolutionary forces as Reason. Therein is the nub of the Great Divide between Phenomenology and Philosophy -- and because it is no abstraction, but a live Subject, it unites rather than divides theory and reality.

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In Part Two on the Women's Liberation Movement, especially the section on the "Unfinished Task", the point I chose to elaborate was, once again, the conception of Women's Liberation not just as force but as Reason. The new here, however, was that the "proof" came from history itself -- February 23, 1917. This was for purposes of showing that the women were the ones who initiated that revolution. Even now I am not sure that we totally understand that that, in turn, depends on women practicing the immediate problems inseparable from the philosophic context. This is why I have two final suggestions: 1) Do, please, consider the paper worked out for the anthropology conference, "Marx's 'New Humanism' and the Dialectics of Women's Liberation in Primitive and Modern Societies," as well as the talk I gave at the Third World Women's Conference, as integral to and expansion of Part Two.

2) The second and key suggestion is the imperativeness of a study of Part Three without which there can be no total comprehension not just of Part Three, in and for itself, but of the fact that it is that Part that informs the whole work. It is Marx's Marxism as a totality after it has gone through combat with the greatest revolutionaries of the post-Marx period -- Lenin and Luxemburg, without whom we could not have reached the new stage we have achieved.

(The paragraph is added on p. 109, immediately after the paragraph which ends: "...or by using them only as helpmates.")

Quite the contrary. 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 soviet; or whether we look to our own age in the 1970s in Portugal, where Isabel do Carmo raised the totally new concept of apartidarismo. 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.

(And to the end of the next, the penultimate paragraph, one sentence is added, after the sentence ending: "...which do not separate practice from theory.")

Which is what Luxemburg meant when she defined "being human" as "joyfully throwing your life on the scales of destiny."

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It is no accident that the paragraph that was added to Chapter XII on the Black Dimension is the one that at once became urgent to the National Tour itself -- so much so that I read it out as if it actually were in the book, in my talks on the Black dimension. Nor is it an accident that Charles Denby suggested it be the center of the new introduction for American Civilization on Trial. At the same time, by considering all that Marx had said in a single place rather than separately as they had been expressed in each specific decade, you could see the totality, so that it became inseparable from his concept of "revolution in permanence," including his very last work, the Ethnological Notebooks.

(The paragraph is added on p. 194 immediately after the para. that ends: "...backward lands ahead of the advanced countries.")

With this dialectical circle of circles, Marx's reference in the Ethnological Notebooks to the Australian aborigine as "the intelligent black" brought to a conclusion the dialectic he had unchained when he first broke from bourgeois society in the 1840s and objected to the use of the word, "Negro", as if it were synonymous with the word, "slave." By the 1850s, in the Grundrisse, he extended that sensitivity to the whole pre-capitalist world. By the 1860s, the Black dimension became, at one and the same time, not only pivotal to the abolition of slavery and victory of the North in the Civil War, but also to the restructuring of Capital, itself. In a word, the often-quoted sentence: "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black skin it is branded," far from being rhetoric, was the actual reality and the perspective for overcoming that reality. Marx reached, at every historic turning point, for a concluding point, not as an end but as a new jumping off point, a new beginning, a new vision.

(Finally, on p. 195 just before the final paragraph of the entire text, please add the following:)

This is the further challenge to the form of organization which we have worked out as the committee-form rather than the "party-to-lead." But, though committee-form and "party-to-lead" are opposites, they are not absolute opposites. At the point when the theoretic-form reaches philosophy, the challenge demands that we synthesize not only the new relations of theory to practice, and all the forces of revolution, but philosophy's "suffering, patience and labor of the negative," i.e., experiencing absolute negativity. Then and only then will we succeed in a revolution that will achieve a class-less, non-racist, non-sexist, truly human, truly new society. That which Hegel judged to be the synthesis of the "Self-Thinking Idea" and the "Self-Bringing-Forth of Liberty," Marxist-Humanism holds, is what Marx had called the new society. The many paths to get there are not easy to work out.

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We have entitled the Perspectives "What To Do" -- and we didn't mean by that only when facing objective crises, but in the need to single out the new moments in Marx and the "trail to the 1980s" which we discovered there. Put differently, that "discovery" was possible because: 1) finally we had all the writings of Marx as a totality; 2) we had lived through a 30-year-long movement from practice; and 3) our unique contributions to these three decades were inseparable from the objective movement. It becomes necessary now to spell out the hieroglyphic "three books, not one," which has created the ground for the challenge to all post-Marx Marxists, and to develop the moment the masses have reached in their search for a philosophy of revolution which would enable them to succeed in an actual revolution.

With this final addition we have come to the question of Organization as likewise inseparable from the concept of "revolution in permanence." By using that as ground for organization, we must under no circumstances fall into the trap of substitutionism -- as if the ground was the actuality of organizational growth. Without becoming a dogma, "revolution in permanence" must at one and the same time underline the imperativeness of organizational growth at this crucial period.

Yours,

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