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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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Marx's philosophy of revolution.

Marx, Karl,
Revolutions

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*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

7632

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

otations from Leon Trotsky, *1905*,

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
<i>Part One: Rosa Luxemburg as Theoretician, as Activist, as Internationalist</i>	
Chapter I	Two Turning Points in Luxemburg's Life: Before and After the 1905 Revolution 1
Chapter II	The Break with Kautsky, 1910-11: From Mass Strike Theory to Crisis over Morocco—and Hushed-Up "Woman Question" 17
Chapter III	Marx's and Luxemburg's Theories of Accumulation of Capital, its Crises and its Inevitable Downfall 31
Chapter IV	From the "National Question" and Imperialism to the Dialectics of Revolution; the Relationship of Spontaneity and Consciousness to Organization in the Disputes with Lenin, 1904, 1917 51
Chapter V	War, Prison, and Revolutions, 1914-19 67
<i>Part Two: The Women's Liberation Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason</i>	
Chapter VI	An Overview by Way of Introduction; the Black Dimension 79
Chapter VII	Luxemburg as Feminist; Break with Jogiches 89
Chapter VIII	The Task that Remains to be Done: The Unique and Unfinished Contributions of Today's Women's Liberation Movement 99
<i>Part Three: Karl Marx—From Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of "Revolution in Permanence"</i>	
Chapter IX	Marx Discovers a New Continent of Thought and of Revolution 115
1.	A Preliminary Note on the Dialectic: In Marx of the Early 1840s; in Luxemburg, 1902; in Lenin, 1914 115
2.	Prometheus Bound, 1841-43 122
3.	Prometheus Unbound, 1844-48 124

7633

Chapter X	A Decade of Historic Transformation: From the <i>Grundrisse</i> to <i>Capital</i>	133
1.	"Economics," 1857-58: Only Class Struggles, or "Epochs of Social Revolution"?	133
2.	<i>Capital</i> : Significance of the 1875 French Edition of Volume 1	139
Chapter XI	The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Creates New Ground for Organization	153
1.	<i>Critique of the Gotha Program</i>	153
2.	Marx's Theory of Permanent Revolution, 1843-83	158
Afterword:	Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution	165
Chapter XII	The Last Writings of Marx Point a Trail to the 1980s	175
1.	Post-Marx Marxists, Beginning with Frederick Engels	175
2.	The Unknown <i>Ethnological Notebooks</i> , the Unread Drafts of the Letter to Zasulich, as Well as the Undigested 1882 Preface to the Russian Edition of the <i>Communist Manifesto</i>	180
3.	The New Moments of the Revolutionary Philosophic-Historic Concepts Discovered by Marx in the Last Decade of His Life	188
4.	A 1980s View	192
Appendix:	First English Translation of Rosa Luxemburg's Address to the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, London, 1907	199
Selected Bibliography		207
Index		223

Introduction

Three very different types of events. One. The transcription of the last *Notebooks of Karl Marx*, creating Marx's *oeuvre* as a totality. This (1844) historic-philosophic conoanalysis, as to undermine the by 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 one in the technologically advanced

Two. It cannot be altogether at the period of the emergence of an 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 a guide grappling with Marx's works, not revolution. To do anything short Women's Liberation Movement to

Transformation: From the	133
Only Class Struggles, or	133
"Revolution"?	133
the 1875 French Edition of	139
Permanent Revolution Creates	153
a Program	153
Permanent Revolution, 1843-83	158
Permanent Revolution	165
A Point a Trail to the 1980s	175
Beginning with Frederick Engels	175
<i>Capital Notebooks</i> , the Unread	175
Zasulich, as Well as the	175
to the Russian Edition of the	180
Revolutionary Philosophic-	180
altered by Marx in the Last	188
of Rosa Luxemburg's Address	192
to the Russian Social-Democratic	199
Party	199
of	207
of	223

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 "fiction" of the Idea, as if its self-determined 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 Author of Permanence"—but also Parts Critic, as Activist, as International Movement as Revolutionary Force.

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

From the study of primitive conditions, including, at one and the same time 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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"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 "dehumanization" 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*