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## 25 years of East European revolt and of the re-creation of Marx's Marxism

### THEORY / PRACTICE

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and *Marxism and Freedom*

(This year—the eve of the 100th anniversary of Karl Marx's death—Humanities Press in the U.S. and Harvester Press in England will publish Raya Dunayevskaya's new work, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. It will appear in early Fall. In Spring they will also republish *Marxism and Freedom* and *Philosophy and Revolution*, each with a new Introduction by the author. Below are brief, selected excerpts from a lecture on all three works in relationship to the Polish events, which was presented by the author on Feb. 14, and which she had entitled: "From Revolution to Revolution to Revolution — in Actuality, in Thought, in Vision."—Charles Denby)

It may sound stratospheric to give a talk called "From Revolution to Revolution to Revolution," when we are witnessing a counter-revolution as brutal as that against the Polish people by their own state-capitalist rulers, propped up by Russia, and, on our own continent, the genocide against the Salvadoran people by a Junta Reagan is not only propping up but training in that genocide. Nevertheless, it is not stratospheric. The truth is that we cannot forget that, for 18 long months, the Polish workers, women and youth have been creating a union that is not just a union, but combines economics, politics and ideology. Nor can we forget that, before Poland, there was the Iranian Revolution. Between them, they opened so many new doors to the transformation of reality that they have given us a different vision of the future.

Let us take one single district—Silesia—one of the most active not only in 1960, but in 1970. It was there that many lives were taken when the counter-revolution opened its attack on Dec. 13. But you cannot kill the idea of freedom; you can only drive it underground when a revolution is that deep. And it is precisely that depth, and that concreteness, that both allows us to see a bit of the future, and makes it necessary to turn back 137 years, to that same district of Silesia when it was not the miners but the weavers who were in revolt. Because Marx had discovered a whole new continent of thought and of revolution, and named his philosophy a "new Humanism," he was able to see in that weaver's revolt a new stage of revolution that challenged private capitalism.

**PHILOSOPHY BECOMES CONCRETE** for each age in a new way. I had begun to study the nature of the Russian economy as state-capitalism when the world was suddenly confronted with the Hitler-Stalin Pact. By the time of Stalin's death in 1953, the study became not just an analysis of the monstrosity Russia had become but a search for a philosophy of liberation as well as for the struggles that would be fighting against totalitarian state-capitalism. When the 1953 East German revolt brought

Marx's 1844 Humanist Essays onto the historic stage with its slogan "Bread and Freedom," it illuminated the struggle against Communist totalitarianism as a struggle against both economic exploitation and political tyranny. Theoretically, too, Marx's new Humanism had to be made concrete for our age. That search, for me, began several weeks before the East German uprising, with three letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea I wrote in 1953.

Their pivotal point was the concept that the Absolute Idea meant not only a new unity of theory and practice, but a movement from practice to theory. It was this breakthrough on the Absolute Idea that presented the challenge for a new relationship of theory to practice and provided the vantage point for the emergence of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S. in two ways:

1) By no means had it first appeared in our age. It had always characterized that relationship of objective to subjective.

Specifically, our analysis of the immediate situation became the form for viewing all historic struggles from 1776 to our day and determined the structure of *Marxism and Freedom*.

2) My translation of Marx's Humanist Essays became the first to be published in English when they were included as an Appendix to *Marxism and Freedom*.



1953

**WHAT BECAME MOST** exciting in 1979, when the Iranian revolution erupted, was that some of the young revolutionaries not only began to translate into Farsi

Marx's Humanist Essays as they found them presented in *Marxism and Freedom*, but decided to translate also the chapter on "Worker and Intellectual at a Turning Point in History: 1848-1881." They didn't need help in being opposed to Khomeini, but they felt they would not be able to win if their opposition was only activity and not philosophy.

1848 had become a crucial point of reference also for those who participated in the 1905-07 Russian-Polish Revolution. It is this which I deal with in my latest book on Rosa Luxemburg, *Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. Luxemburg saw, through her experiences in that revolution, that it wasn't the leadership of the German Social-Democracy but the masses in motion who transformed her little Polish party of "seven and a half" people into a mass organization of 30,000 overnight. She also saw new forms of revolt: the General Mass Strike of trade unions whose demands were not only economic, but completely political.

In 1907, when the Russian revolutionaries held a Congress in London, it was not only the events of 1905 but their relationship to 1848 that was up for discussion. It was Luxemburg who said: Yes, 1848 was very great,

but something was new in 1905. It was not only that politics and economics had been united in the General Mass Strike. It was that 1905 was not the last of the 19th century, but the first of the 20th century revolutions—with many more to follow.

**THE 1960s PRESENTED US** with a similar problem: How are the new rebellions of our day—of the youth, Blacks, women, the Third World—related to the Marxism of Marx? As we listened to the new voices from below, we felt a compulsion to "translate" Marx's Marxism for our age. It was the period, also, of the sudden appearance of the Sino-Soviet conflict and of our raising the question: Could there be war between two state-capitalist societies calling themselves Communist?

Just as a new chapter on that Sino-Soviet conflict was added to a new edition of *Marxism and Freedom*—and was preceded by the pamphlet, *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions*—so *News & Letters* published *American Civilization: A Trial*, an analysis of American history from its earliest days. There we contrasted the triangular trade of slaves, between Africa, the West Indies and the U.S., to the triangular exchange of the ideas of freedom. At the same time, *News & Letters* published a whole host of new pamphlets—from *Workers Battle Automation to Freedom Riders Speak for Themselves* and *The Free Speech Movement and the Negro Revolution*—where the new voices of the youth, workers, Black revolutionaries in the U.S. as well as in Africa, could be heard.

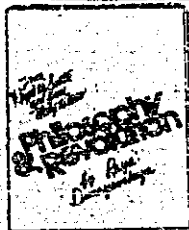
In a way, all these pamphlets could be considered a "second book" on Marxist-Humanism in the context of an actually developing new revolution from below.

**ONE HISTORIC FACET** keeps us returning to the question of Poland. In Marx's day it was the 1833 rebellion which became ground for establishing the First Workingmen's International Association in 1864. When that period came to a climax with the 1871 Paris Commune, Marx did more than just refer to the Poles as the greatest fighters of the Commune. He found further illumination for his *Capital* in the chapter on the fetishism of commodities, even as the Civil War and the struggle for the 8-hour day had led him to restructure his greatest work.

In our day, it is again the Polish struggle for freedom that so integrates the objective and subjective needs that it eliminates the division between theory and

practice. I am especially proud of the chapter on East Europe in *Philosophy and Revolution*, which begins with a description of Poland, December 1970 that reads as if it were describing 1980, including even the city, Gdansk. The reason it can sound so current is because so many East European dissidents helped me to write that chapter. But that is not the point now. The point today is what to do now that the counter-revolution has moved to crush that revolution.

It is easy to express our solidarity with Solidarity in the form of demonstrations or sending food. What is



1973

not as easy is to grapple with the also-needed critique. What did it mean for Jacek Kuron to think that, if they had a "self-limiting revolution" then maybe they could win? The counter-revolution will not stay its hand just because you say you don't really mean an all-out revolution. They know that, once unleashed, the masses in motion will move to full freedom. What must be ended is the separation of theory from practice.

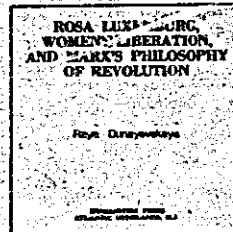
It is such concrete life-and-death struggles as these that make it necessary for us to dig into what Hegel meant by "second negativity" and what Marx meant by "revolution in permanence." It is precisely that which is the thesis of the new book.

**WE MUST SKIP** A good deal of the new book, both as it concerns Rosa Luxemburg and today's Women's Liberation Movement and concentrate, instead, now that we have all of Marx's major works, on what is not only new but especially unique in Part Three of the work: "Karl Marx—from Critic of Hegel to Author of *Capital* and Theorist of 'Revolution in Permanence.'" We will see there, for the first time, that two years before Marx broke with bourgeois society, he had, in his doctoral thesis of 1841, already begun the search for where to begin anew when you break with Hegel's Idealism and want to create an entirely new unity of idealism and materialism: as you turn to the real world and the workers' actual battles.

We will also see there, in Marx's study of Ancient Society, not only a fourth form of society, the Asiatic Mode of Production; not only a discovery of Primitive Communism; and not only a new view of Women's Liberation; but so sharp a distinction from his closest collaborator, Engels, as to re-evaluate the whole question of post-Marx Marxism. And for the first time, we will return from Marx to Hegel—on, however, Marx's new ground of movement from below as well as the self-determination of the Idea for one's own age—and see how this means taking on the responsibility for the task of our age: the transformation of reality. Permit me, therefore, to quote my conclusion:

"It isn't because we are any 'smarter' that we can see so much more than other post-Marx Marxists. Rather, it is because of the maturity of our age. . . . Only live human beings can re-create the revolutionary dialectic forever anew. And these live human beings must do so in theory as well as in practice. It is not a question of meeting the challenge from practice but also being able to meet it from the self-development of the Idea, the deepening of theory to the point where it reaches Marx's concept of the philosophy of 'revolution in permanence.'"

"What is needed is a new unifying principle, on Marx's ground of humanism, that truly alters both human thought and human experience. Marx's Ethnological Notebooks are an historic happening that proves, 100 years after he wrote them, that Marx's legacy is no mere heirloom, but a live body of ideas and perspectives that is in need of concretization. Every moment of Marx's development, as well as the totality of his works, spells out the need for 'revolution in permanence.' This is the absolute challenge to our age."



1962