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# REVOLUTIONARY FEMINISM - Women as Reason



Left: International Women's Day march in New York.

Below: Women hold club meeting during the Paris Commune.



Rosa Luxemburg

Contents include:

- International Women's Day, then and now
- Women in the Paris Commune and Black Women's Liberation
- Rosa Luxemburg, revolutionary theoretician
- Critique of "Women and the Family"
- Correspondence from Nigeria and Hong Kong

Women's Liberation-News & Letters Committees

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## INTRODUCTION

This bulletin is being published by Women's Liberation-News & Letters Committees as a contribution to the discussion on revolutionary feminism. There is currently much discussion on what revolutionary feminism is, and these articles present concretely what we as Marxist-Humanist women mean by "Women As Reason," in thought and in activity.

In spite of the strides the Women's Liberation movement has made, the full scope of women's contribution to human history has still not been recognized. When women's history is told, it is often as isolated "facts" or in terms of individual "outstanding" women. There has been little attention given to the thought, activity and organization of masses of women, which have played a crucial role in every freedom struggle.

What we want to discuss is Women's Liberation as one of the "new passions and new forces" Marx predicted would arise and be the possible spark for world revolution. Women's Liberationists are saying that the basis of any revolution has to be new human relationships and we have to see proof of it, beginning now. We see ourselves not just as the objects of oppression, but as revolutionary Subject which can tear down this racist, sexist, exploitative society and which also knows better than anyone else how to rebuild a totally new one.

Women's rights and those of minorities are again under attack precisely because our demands are so total that they challenge the entire capitalist system. The first place we might expect to get help in stopping these attacks is from those in the socialist movement who say they are revolutionaries. But most of them are still telling us that the main struggle is the class struggle (which to them means "raising the consciousness of the working class") and that Women's Liberation is only an "aspect" of this larger struggle, or worse, that we are diverting from it. Some even act as if we are trying to pit women against men, when it is not men but male-chauvinism and sexism (and some women are male-chauvinists) that we are against. This kind of sexism is a barrier to even beginning to change human relationships and unless we can overcome it, we will never achieve a complete revolution.

The struggle for Women's Liberation is not a struggle for women only-- it is a struggle for total human freedom. We invite you to read the articles in this bulletin and ask that you join in the discussion. If you would like to work with us, please write to Women's Liberation-News & Letters Committees in any of these areas:

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--Women's Liberation-News & Letters  
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ON THE ORIGINS OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY — A speech presented  
at Wayne State University on March 8, 1978

We are meeting tonight to celebrate International Women's Day, which had its origins over 70 years ago in the struggles of thousands of American garment workers—70 to 80 percent of whom were women—who declared March 8, 1908, Working Women's Day and marched on New York's Lower East Side demanding the 8-hour day, an end to sweatshop conditions, an end to child labor and the right to vote.

The period from 1908-1910 was a period of tremendous organizing and bitter strikes in which women garment workers—the majority of them Russian Jews and Italian immigrants—displayed a militance that no one—especially their employers—expected of them. This came out particularly in the 1909 "Uprising of the 20,000" in which 20,000 garment workers went out on general strike—at the suggestion of 15-year-old Clara Lemlich—in support of locked-out strikers at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company.

But it was not only their militance and bravery, but the socialist content of the American working women's demands that inspired Clara Zetkin, herself a leader of the German socialist movement and the strongest working women's movement in history, to ask at the Second International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen in 1910 that an International Working Women's Day be established. It was first celebrated in 1911 and in 1913 was set as March 8 in solidarity with the American working women. It was not celebrated in the U.S. until the '70s when the women's movement revived it, and it is celebrated in Russia and China—with the original content removed—the way we celebrate Mother's Day here.

Today I heard that a group of Russian Jewish women protested in Moscow against the lack of religious freedom in Russia and the state's not allowing them to leave. It was no accident that they chose this particular day to show how women are treated in this so-called socialist state. It was on International Women's Day in 1917 in Russia that women garment workers sparked the general strike which led to the February revolution by going out on strike against the advice of their trade union and party leaders. Perhaps that is why the day is now celebrated more like Mother's Day.

The history of the American working women's movement is so rich that it is a crime that it has been denied to us for so long that it is very difficult now to even dig out dates and "facts," much less what the women were thinking at that time. In our pamphlet, Working Women For Freedom, we tried to show the continuity of women's struggles and bring in those "long hidden from history and philosophy"—the Black women, Chicanas, Native American and Asian working women who are rarely ever heard about—and show how we see in their self-organization, a movement from practice that is itself a form of theory and not just isolated activity.

For example, the banner we have hung up here is from a demonstration we held in Flint, Mich., last year at a celebration held by the UAW of the 1937 Flint Sit-Down Strike. They did not have one woman on the program, even though Genora Johnson Dollinger who had been one of the organizers of the Women's Emergency Brigade which was crucial to the strike had flown from California just to sit in the audience (or so they thought.) She had gotten in touch with Women's Liberation-News & Letters in Detroit and we reached members of Flint NOW and CLUW and finally got Genora to speak.

I would like now to read a few quotes from American garment workers and to look at them not as if history is dead but with the eyes and ears of today's International Women's Movement.

The first quote is from Rose Schneiderman, a member of the Women's Trade Union League who was a very active organizer in the garment industry. She is speaking on the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in which 143 workers were burned to death because of unsafe working conditions and the owners' locking the workers in to keep them from stealing material.

This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in the city. Each week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers. Every year thousands of us are maimed. The life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred. There are so many of us for one job it matters little if 143 of us are burned to death. (From America's Working Women, ed. by Baxandall, Gordon and Reverby, p. 203.)

The second quote is from Lucy Warner, who is asking why people look down on "working girls." When a 'lady' asks her if she has not discovered that there is a difference between brain work and manual labor, she replies, Yes, we have discovered it, to our sorrow. . . Is one kind of work more honorable than another? . . . Have you ever considered that 'brain work' enters into every department of manual labor? Isn't it a work of art to make a dress? It is just as necessary that a cook should mix her bread with 'brains' as it is that an artist should mix her colors with the same materials. (America's Working Women, p. 215-6)

And the final quote is from an editorial in the journal of the Women's Trade Union League, Life and Labor:

But the best part of the union is that it makes you think! And we working women have got to do some thinking. Long hours, working for barely enough to live on, make it hard to do any thinking! And the boss knows it. That is why he wants us to work long hours. If six million working women should really think, something would happen. . . (We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America, by Barbara Wertheimer, p. 272.)

The questions these women were raising 70 years ago are the questions women today are still raising. Women are challenging a society in which we are seen as sex objects and in which all human relations are made into relations between things--where women's and workers' lives are still things easily replaceable. One of the first and most fundamental demands the WL movement made was for control of our own bodies and especially taking our heads back and thinking our own thoughts.

Millions of women are thinking and things are happening as a result. Women everywhere have realized that there is no simple solution to our oppression and that nothing short of a social revolution will end the sexist, racist exploitation that all of us live under. As Raya Dunayevskaya, the National Chairwoman of News and Letters Committees, wrote in her analysis of the International Women's Year Conference in Houston, a new banner of woman as Reason and Revolutionary has to be raised now because it is precisely the revolutionary totality that women's liberationists have raised, and not one single issue--whether abortion rights or the ERA--which has brought out the counter-revolution in force in the form of the right-wing of the Catholic and Mormon church; Right-to-Life groups who care little for those lives once they are out of the womb; in the form of Anita Bryant and renewed attacks on the Gay movement and in the resurgence internationally of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi Party.

The Bakke case is yet another attack on any gains which were won by Blacks during the Civil Rights Movement and women and minorities and which is already

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being felt everywhere—even here at the Wayne State University Med School as we have recently heard, where they are trying to eliminate several Black students, and one Black woman in particular, on the basis of subjective interviews.

But women are fighting this counter-revolution and thinking their own thoughts—but it is not in the unions or even in much of the socialist Left with which the garment workers felt such affinity that anything is happening today. Women have had to organize their own groups as socialists or as workers, outside of established groups, because the separation between leaders and rank and file grows more every day—not to mention the fact that unions have never given women equal representation. (Here I mentioned the case of the 4 women workers from Automatic Retailers of America who recently won their suit on charges of sex discrimination and non-representation against their union local here in Detroit. We also had pictures from a sweatshop in the 1900s and some of a toy factory in New York today where women workers make stuffed animals and the two looked almost alike. One of our members of AL-NAL in New York said that the Puerto Rican garment workers they work with say that the only time they know they have a union is at dues time.)

The best example is the recent Essex strike in Elwood, Ind. It was a bitter 9-month long strike. The majority of the workers were women who after 11 years as UAW members made \$2.76 an hour. Women were shot and beaten on the picket line, and one, Carol Frye, the mother of 2 small children, was permanently disabled when she was shot in the back. Her husband has since divorced her. One of the strikers, Georgia Ellis, said that the only help they got was from women's groups like NOW, Women's Liberation-News & Letters and Union WAGE.

When the strikers asked our Chicago Committee to get us here in Detroit to organize a picket at Solidarity House in November, we called every women's group we knew. NOW was too busy making an abstraction out of the ERA and needed to have anything approved by the Board so she wouldn't lose their "clout" and "credibility." What does support for the ERA mean if not supporting women on strike for recognition? The only women who did come—two from International Socialists (IS), said our line was too small and would look like a defeat so left right away. Small as we were, we did make the 6 p.m. evening news.

The next day, the United National Caucus, which IS supports, at least called a meeting where two strikers, Georgia and Anita, spoke. When we asked why after 11 years they were only making \$2.76 an hour and wasn't the fact that they were women probably why the union cared so little (which the strikers themselves said over and over), we were told to be careful and not criticize the union. Now that the union has sold them down the river the UNC held a conference to see that it never happens again. Small consolation to Carol Frye and over half the workers who will never be called back since over 100 scabs were allowed to stay in.

This is the kind of separation of mental and manual labor—upon which capitalism has its very foundation—that women especially are fighting. Whether it's the Henry Fords and the intellectuals who do all the planning and impose their plans on the workers or whether it's the labor bureaucrats or those vanguard groups on the Left who see themselves as the ones who will do the thinking and raising of workers' consciousness, and who tell Blacks and women that their struggles are only splitting up the movements for freedom and that if they will only string along (i.e. wait), the revolution



will automatically insure their freedom, women are fighting that attitude.

Women everywhere are saying that if we have to face such tremendous sexism within the revolutionary movement itself, not only will our problems not magically disappear after the revolution but indeed there will be no revolution since this kind of sexism denies women full participation in the revolutionary movement and not only do we know best how to destroy the system that oppresses us so, but no one knows better than we what kind of human relations we want in the new society to come after.

We have been studying Marx's Capital and have learned how you become so blind under capitalism that without a dialectic method that sees the opposite within everything, Subject and not just Object of oppression, that you can blame women's oppression on the nuclear family and say that the destruction of the nuclear family alone will bring about an end to capitalism. As for myself, I think that whom I live with, whether a man or a woman or alone, and the kind of family I choose to have, is no one's business but my own. I don't care if it's the state, or a party, or other feminists. And this is what I think is at the heart of women's liberation and the question of revolution.

Unless each individual has control of his or her own conditions of life and conditions of labor, then the revolution has not been complete. Women know this more than anyone because we have seen aborted revolutions and the existence of "socialist" countries in which the conditions of life and labor for workers--especially women workers--are more like forced labor than the "freely associated labor" which was revealed and singled out by Marx in the Paris Commune. I'd like to quote from "Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Mao's China," from an interview that Raya had with a young Chinese refugee in Hong Kong:

Although I had volunteered for the job, I now began to feel as if all our labor was forced labor. I kept my tongue, but you couldn't always keep quiet since, if you kept silent, your team leader would see you afterwards and ask what was the matter. I began to feel like I was nothing more than an ant, and that not only because of the unthinking mass labor, but because you so often said, yes, when you meant, no, that you lost all confidence in yourself. Every day it got harder to think any thoughts of your own. There was many a day when I wanted to bury myself in that dam.

Because of the sexism in the Left, which reached its height in actual physical attacks on women marchers by men from Lotta Continua in Italy, women have been organizing themselves, just as they have always done in the labor movement, (and by this I do not mean CLUW which both of the books on working women that I mention end with as if it would be a solution) but they have been demonstrating in their activities that it is not enough to destroy the old system, but that you must begin working on the new human relations you hope to establish at the same time. This is evident in women's activity worldwide.

For example in the Portuguese Revolution in which the activity of the women played such a crucial role and which has gone practically unrecognized as revolutionary by the Left. The women established Crechos (nurseries), laundries, took control of factories and organizing among domestic workers is still continuing today.

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Or this December in Bolivia--Four women and their 10 children began a hunger strike demanding amnesty for exiled miners and labor militants who had been specifically excluded from the amnesty declared by the Benzer government. It quickly grew to include 1300 and led to a general strike by 77,000 tin miners. It was initiated by Domitila Chungara, the leader of Siglo Veintiuno, an organization of miners' wives active since 1967. Does this sound like a divisive struggle to you? It was initiated by women and children but achieved solidarity among 77,000 workers.

Or in Argentina, where over 100 women meet daily and are called "Las locas de Mayo" (the crazy women of Plaza de Mayo) in defiance of the dictatorship to demand news of their relatives who have been taken away without notice as political prisoners. Or recently in Nicaragua where women from all classes were beating on pots and pans between 8 and 9 at night to demand an end to the Somoza regime. Or the Crunwicks strike in England which brought together Asian women workers who had always been considered quiet and docile by employers.

Or in Spain and Italy where thousands of women demonstrate and gather signatures, and give support to each other who have been victimized by the incredible laws against abortion and divorce and which give no solace to women who have been raped but help the men who are now using gang rape as a weapon against the feminist movement there. And even in Saudi Arabia, which many on the Left cheered during the oil crisis without paying attention to the masses there, where as high in position as a princess was executed along with her fiancé for the crime of having violated her status as her father's property by deciding to flee the country so that she could marry someone of her own choosing.

Just as the Paris Commune, which Tommie Hope will speak on, and the celebration of International Women's Day in Russia in 1917 involved women from segments of the population who had never been called upon before, so today's women's movement is seeking new alliances with those other forces of revolution from whom the capitalists have tried to keep us separate for so long--workers, Blacks and youth. To raise a banner of Women as Reason and as Revolutionary, we must continue to fight for the unity of mental and manual labor, philosophy and revolution, so that perhaps our women's movement will provide the spark for a world revolution that will be complete.

What I hope we can talk about in the discussion is your own ideas and ways in which those of us in Women's Liberation-News & Letters and those of you who are interested in seriously working out some of the ideas we will be discussing can organize ourselves so that this meeting can be the beginning of a new women's movement here in Detroit.

--Suzanne Casey,

Women's Liberation-News & Letters  
Detroit Committee

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"WOMEN IN THE PARIS COMMUNE, 1871, AND BLACK WOMEN'S LIBERATION TODAY"

by Tommie Hope

--A presentation given at Wayne State University, Detroit, on International Women's Day, March 8, 1978.

Today we are celebrating International Women's Day, and I would like to begin with the women of the Paris Commune, the first time and place in the history of the world where workers took the power into their hands. For two months, those who were supposed to have no thoughts and were called "animals" showed more of what human society could be than all the leaders of government and industry. I am talking about the workers of Paris, and especially the women of Paris, not only because they were brave and strong, but because they showed a new way to think and to act.

The experience of the Commune was so powerful on the minds of the people who lived through it, that when Louise Michel, the great woman leader of the Commune, was on a prison ship, thousands of miles from France, on her way to serve a sentence of life in prison, she still wrote:

"Life itself becomes too dear  
So vast, here, are one's dreams..."

I am also talking about Karl Marx, the revolutionary thinker in his time who grasped and totally understood what the Paris Commune represented. He wrote about it in a way that people like us, more than 100 years later, can gain a new direction from studying what happened then.

In my opinion, we need that direction today. The women's movement is at a critical stage. There are many forces of counter-revolution fighting "to keep women in their places." At the same time, the women's movement has developed a schism within itself. We have gone to many meetings and conferences to determine how far the movement has advanced, and where do we go from here? Until this day, the question is still being asked by each and every woman who is fighting for her freedom.

I participated this year in the National Alliance of Black Feminists, that gears their membership around professional women. They have totally separated themselves from working women and welfare mothers. In their bourgeois mentality they have become so narrow-minded by thinking that the answer is to become an integral part of this society, that it limits their capacities and mental capabilities to develop and express their ideas on what feminism means and what to do.

I was also involved in supporting the women who were on strike at the Essex Wire Company in Indiana. They organized themselves to keep going for over a year, and spread the story of what they were fighting for all over the country. They found out who were their friends and who were their enemies. The company fired them, beat them, and shot them. The union said they would help, but instead sold them down the river. Even within the women's movement, there was a division. The strikers asked us to picket at the UAW's Solidarity House headquarters, and we called NOW and the other groups, but they didn't come. It is a question



of whether you are a part of "bourgeois feminism" or "revolutionary feminism."

Even when they say they are revolutionary, there are so many Left groups who try to convince women to follow the vanguard party line, which is that women should wait until after the revolution to begin to fight for their freedom.

This attitude is also true in the plants, as I am sure the Essex workers know. One man from the Spartacists came up to me and argued with me, saying workers are backward in their consciousness. He said, "If you ask a worker what he is, he will tell you everything but a worker."

What I am saying is that they have gotten so far away from workers' thinking and from genuine revolutionary theory, that nothing can help them. It is up to those who do see workers as thinkers, women as thinkers. It is up to us to fully understand the method of revolution. For that, let's go back to the Paris Commune and its relation to revolutionary thought--Marx's thought.

What sparked the beginning of this great revolution on March 18, 1871, was the order by Thiers, the head of the reactionary government, that the cannons which were protecting the city of Paris be sent to Versailles, where the government was staying then. The men were not on the street at the break of dawn, but the women were, because they were the milk maids. These women had already organized themselves in the months before, and now they were the ones who stopped the soldiers from carrying out the government's orders.

Louise Michel was among the thousands of women who ran up the hill right at the soldiers. In her book on women in the Paris Commune, The Women Incendiaries, Edith Thomas quotes a bourgeois general to tell what happened:

The women and children came and mixed with the troops. We were greatly mistaken in permitting these people to approach our soldiers, for they mingled among them, and the women and children told them: "You will not fire upon the people." This is how the soldiers...found themselves surrounded and did not have the power to resist these ovations that were given them.

Raya Dunayevskaya takes up this point in News & Letters' new pamphlet, Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis. She says that "As in every real people's revolution, new strata of the population were awakened. This time it was the women who were the first to act."

Once arms were in their hands, the people of Paris created the first workers' state in history. From that moment, every man, woman and child became involved in restructuring society. They began by abolishing the hierarchy of capitalism. This transformation went in a sequence of its own: the abolition of the standing army; the creation of a People's Assembly, which was not a parliamentary talking-shop, but a working body; and finally, the organization of production by the workers.

There was a double rhythm to the Commune's development--smashing the state in all its forms; then creating new forms of rule with the whole people taking part. The Commission on Labor and Exchange was set up, turning over the factories to the workers to run themselves by their ideas--"freely associated labor."

That is why Marx described it as "working, thinking, fighting, bleeding Paris, almost forgetful in its incubation of a new society of the cannibals at its gates, radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative."

From the beginnings of the Commune, facing the troops, to its tragic end, drowned in blood, women and their organizations were in the lead. Did you know that women organized the mass demonstration on April 6 of 200,000, and that it was women who issued the call to the barricades on April 11, the same day that the Union des Femmes (Women's Union) was organized throughout Paris? Hundreds of clubs sprang up to discuss and act on every issue. Several of the most important were women's clubs which occupied churches and threw out the priests. People are always saying that women are "soft," but in the Commune the women were the strongest groups arguing against easy treatment of class enemies.

New schools were started for all children, and ideas of freedom were taught as the central point of all subjects. Louise Michel proposed a whole new system of education, and other women organized day nurseries on "human principles." The way the schools were run reminds me very much of the Freedom Schools of the Civil Rights movement.

On May 22, 1871, the Versailles troops entered Paris, and immediately began murdering working men and women by the tens of thousands in one of the bloodiest terrors in history. Then the trials began. Over 1,000 women were tried. One of those whose trial was "saved for the end" was Louise Michel. Instead of defending herself, or asking for a lighter sentence, she told the military court:

I must be cut off from society. You have been told to do so. Well, the Commissioner of the Republic is right. Since it seems that every heart that beats for freedom has no right to anything but a little slug of lead, I demand my share. If you let me live, I shall never cease to cry for vengeance...

The Commune was crushed. But the idea of the Commune was not, if only some one could grasp its total opposition to capitalist society. Marx was that one. He had already worked 30 years on his analysis of capitalism. The question of plan was key: "For Marx, the theoretical axis of capital, the central core around which all else develops is the question of plan: the despotic plan of capital against the cooperative plan of freely associated labor."

To keep capitalistic production going to meet the maximum standard, the capitalist must hire a larger and larger number of foremen, superintendents, guards, time-study men--and the union bureaucracy. Marx showed the reason why. The capitalist needs thousands of workers today in an auto factory, cooperating to build a car. They can't be individual

craftsmen anymore. The only kind of co-operation the capitalist is interested in is the kind that makes value for him. But if you are a human being, you get to know people, and your co-operation goes into all areas--safety, speed-up, racism--even how to build a better car than the junk the capitalist is making. You might decide to strike. That is why the capitalist hires his army of helpers, to chain you to the life of the machine.

Like many of the women I read about in the Paris Commune, I used to work in a laundry. This was before the Civil Rights movement. The laundry was a very large place with very large machines. I was working on a shirt pressor on which you had to make production each day before the clock ended the day. You had to be very fast to do three machines and keep up with the person behind you. There was an automatic timer to count the shirts. At the end of each day, the foreman would write the number of shirts down and turn the timer back. You were not paid by the production of the shirts, but if you ironed a certain amount that day, he would expect more the next day.

Production was as high as 900 shirts a day. You did not get paid for the production of the shirts; all you got was \$18 after taxes. Along with this, the conditions were very bad, especially the temperature. Two women worked on this shirt pressor, and if you were in need of water or other things, the man didn't let you stop until he brought someone else. He tried to keep you from stopping altogether.

I have heard many intellectuals argue that machines are really good; that it is just the system that is bad. Marx showed that this is ridiculous. Any time the boss brings in a new machine, it is to make you work harder and faster, to make more unpaid labor for him, so that he can pay for his new machine. It goes round and round. You become what Marx called "an appendage to the machine."

All this Marx worked out before the Paris Commune. But it took the workers of the Commune and the way they practiced the idea of freely-associated labor to show Marx how exactly to strip all fetichisms off commodities. After the Commune, Marx wrote changes into the new edition of Capital.

I would like to quote how Raya expressed it in Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis:

By 1867, in the first edition of CAPITAL, he singles out the commodity-form as the fetish. Even here, the main emphasis is on the fantastic form of appearance of production relations as exchange of things. It is only after the eruption of the Paris Commune that his French edition shifts the emphasis from the fantastic form of appearance to the necessity of that form of appearance because that is, in truth, what relations of people are at the point of production: "material relations between persons and social relations between things."

All the philosophers and economists before Marx could not see this, because they were themselves prisoners of the narrow thinking of the commodity. No one could fully understand how creative human labor could be,

until the Commune, because it was so perverted under capitalism. Not even Marx. But the point is that only Marx had prepared himself for 30 years to work out its meaning. As great as the workers of Paris were, there would have been no new category without Marx.

Preparing for today's talk made me think about how you can really see how human relations become material relations when you consider the relation of man to woman. How many men do you know who list their possessions like this: "I have a house, a car, a wife, three kids...?"

As I read The Women Incendiaries, I began to understand a lot more about what "new passions and new forces" meant--the women were not going to be possessions, not even the possessions of men who called themselves revolutionaries. Before the Commune, the French movement was dominated by supporters of Proudhon. When I read what he thought about women, it made me sick. The French section of the International, run by Proudhonists, even drew up a statement against women going into industry. But this did not prevent women from joining the International.

It is terrible to think that Proudhon was considered a major revolutionary leader, when he wrote things like this about women:

Physically, woman is an instrument of reproduction and nothing more. Therefore she cannot exist in society without a protector...father, brother, husband, or lover...Woman has a mind that is essentially full of error.

He advised husbands on how to treat their wives, saying:

If she brings you money and you have none yourself, you must be four times stronger than she is. (!)

But Proudhon is not the only one. Even many Leftist men who were not Proudhonists just ducked the issue by saying that working women were so poor that they were not affected by the issues of feminism.

Marx attacked Proudhon and the others. He sent 20-year-old Elizabeth Dmitrieff to Paris on the eve of the Commune to organize the Union des Femmes. He put Madame Law on the General Council of the International. There was a beginning made to strip the fetishism off of woman as commodity, woman as substance, woman as object. Still, it was only a beginning.

Today, it is so much more concrete. The Women's Liberation movement became a world stage in the 1960s, by first breaking with the Left that copied capitalism by dividing the work of the movement into mental work for the men and manual work for the women. It was a question of being determined to take back our minds.

Raya wrote recently: "Let us not forget that sexism became the more virulent when women as revolutionaries and as Reason began to demand proof of new human relations the day before, not the day after, revolution."

It was certainly true in Portugal, where during that revolution, Leftist men joined others in throwing rocks at the Women's Liberation demonstra-

tion. And it is true right here in the plants, where women who have fought to get jobs have to undergo physical and mental abuse. They are put on hard jobs that the men cannot do, and their desire to be liberated is used against them. Some women are even fired or disciplined if they don't go with the foreman after work.

Women on welfare are refusing to be considered "poverty objects" any longer. Recently I participated in a demonstration at the Kercheval Social Services offices here in Detroit, along with about 50 other people, mostly women. We were chanting "Welfare rights NOW!" and "Clean up the mess in the DSS!" We were picketing against the conditions of the waiting rooms, which are kept filthy because DSS believes women on aid don't deserve anything better. There is also harassment by the caseworker who cancels your case without notice, or the way you are made to return to the department several times before they let you talk to a worker. They try to control you financially, physically and mentally. It is this same question of women being treated as objects. The DSS acts like the case file is human and woman is a thing. The case file comes first.

One woman I was talking with on the picket line is in the program DSS calls "Vendor." The rent is paid directly to the landlord. This is to make her feel she is not capable of handling her own affairs. But DSS hasn't been paying her rent for at least eight months, and she keeps getting eviction notices. She told me Social Services said they would take care of it, but they haven't. She was picketing to stop the landlord from throwing her children and herself out in the cold. She and the other women are not going to be considered a commodity in this system any longer. They are determined to be recognized as total human beings with ideas a lot greater than the big-shots who see only case files and numbers.

Women's Liberation has reached a new and powerful stage in the movement today. That is why the opposition is so vicious. But it has also reached a new stage in thought. Marx mentioned "new passions and new forces," but he could not spell it out in his day. I believe that by raising the idea of "Woman as Reason," Raya Dunayevskaya has done from the women's movement what Marx did from the Paris Commune--stripped the fetishism off of women as commodities. "Woman as Reason" is the total opposition to that perverted way of life. It is very concrete, because if you follow that path in each and every women's activity today, you can see whether it is moving toward revolutionary feminism, or back to that bourgeois feminism that will never free us.

In 1956, long before I was a member of News and Letters Committees, the Constitution was adopted, stating that women were one of the revolutionary Subjects. It was part of the basis on which this organization was started. In 1973, we updated the Constitution, and this time, I was there. I would like to conclude with what we said then:

The rise of Women's Liberation, as a movement, is proof both of the correctness of our having singled out, in 1955, women as a revolutionary new force, and of the inseparability of women's liberation as Reason, as well as force.

Woman as Reason--that is the only way that sexism can be destroyed, and "human power which is its own end" can be born.



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## ROSA LUXEMBURG AND TODAY'S WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

January is the month of the brutal murder of Rosa Luxemburg, the only woman history records as a great Marxist theoretician as well as revolutionary leader. When Luxemburg was savagely executed by pre-Nazi vigilantes on Jan. 15, 1919, at the age of 48, the German Revolution then in progress was beheaded as well. The uniqueness of Rosa Luxemburg as a beacon for our day is not due to her martyrdom, but to her theoretical revolutionary legacy, which is solid ground we can build on today.

In the 59 years since, Luxemburg has been relegated to martyrdom by Marxists, and stripped of her sex by feminists who ignore her because she supposedly didn't write about women. Although Luxemburg spent three months speaking for suffrage in the very period of her most intense battles with the leadership of the Second International over its fatal reformism, we have only one 1912 speech on "Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle" preserved and translated into English.

I disagree with many of her theories, especially her position on the National Question. But none matched her view against bureaucracy, against imperialism, for elemental revolution. Therefore it is vital for today's women's liberationists to know Luxemburg's life and works -- first and foremost her dedication to working out revolutionary theory for her historic period.

From the start, when she arrived in Germany, 1898, as an exile from her native Poland, Rosa Luxemburg immediately entered the battle of ideas within the first mass Marxist party. Her essay Reform or Revolution? brilliantly exposed the tendency in the German Social Democracy that substituted economic and legal changes for the revolutionary self-development of the masses.

She was vilified by the German party for being female, young, Polish and Jewish. But most of all, she was attacked for holding fast to the self-activity of the working class -- its spontaneity and creativity, its forms of revolt like the mass strike and its revolutionary Reason -- at a time when the advent of monopoly capitalism and imperialism had led a whole generation of Marxists to reformism.

In fighting Bernstein, the leader of those who wished to remove the "dialectical scaffolding" from Marx's "materialism," she pointed out that he was "really attacking the specific mode of thought employed by the conscious proletariat in its struggle for liberation... For it is our dialectical system that shows the working class the transitory character of its yoke, proving to the workers the inevitability of their victory, and has already realized the revolution in the domain of thought."\*

Throughout her life, Rosa Luxemburg was the target of sexist attacks, by the capitalist world that slandered her as "Bloody Rosa," and by her party, in which she and her colleague Clara Zetkin were called "vitches" and "bitches." Luxemburg refused to respond to such attacks,

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\*See Reform or Revolution? The most comprehensive selection in English of Luxemburg's writings is Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, published by Pathfinder Press.

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because she considered them an excuse not to debate the fundamental issues she was raising about socialist revolution. The leadership of the Social Democracy wanted nothing more than to shunt her off to the women's organizations, far from any theoretic work, so Luxemburg made sure she "knew nothing" about women.

By refusing to recognize what we have to learn from Luxemburg -- most importantly, the need and ability of women to develop Marxist theory for our age -- today's feminists are imitating the Social Democracy's kind of compartmentalization of women. It seems it is easier to sit around in elitist groups speculating on whether or not Shakespeare had a sister, than to study a revolutionary theoretician so great that even her mistakes can teach us more about our capitalist world and the revolution than most theoreticians of either sex.

Like Rosa Luxemburg's time of crisis, ours is a time to study the roots of capitalist society so that we are prepared to transform it totally. After 100 years of perversions of Marxism, first with reformism and betrayal, secondly with state-capitalism, all permeated with sexism in the form in every country in the world, we cannot allow the exclusion of women as Reason as well as force from any revolutionary theory. Just as Luxemburg turned to Marx himself to fight those who failed to meet the challenge of the mass strike and imperialism, so we need Marx's philosophy to work out an alternative to all the so-called socialists who exclude half the population from creating their own destinies.

In our recent pamphlet, Sexism, Politics and Revolution in Pao's China, by exposing both the sexism and alienated labor in China, we laid down a challenge to all theoreticians who separate the two. Now, by publishing Marx's CAPITAL and Today's Global Crisis, Raya Dunayevskaya is also challenging all feminists to become Marxist theoreticians. We can afford to do no less if, so many years after Luxemburg's death, revolution is finally to lead to freedom for all.

Anne Molly Jackson  
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## A CRITIQUE OF JOAN SMITH: THEORY DIVORCED FROM PRACTICE

I had a great deal of trouble reading Joan Smith's "Women and the Family" because I couldn't understand how her conclusions flowed from her discussion; nor could I understand what point she was laboring to make in her 12 page article. It wasn't until I realized that Smith has a totally different conception of what theory is that her article became comprehensible to me. It is in this light, i.e., of what is theory, that I want to look at Joan Smith's article and its relevance, if any, to the forward movement of women's struggle for freedom.

In the beginning of the article Smith lays down her 3 major arguments. They are:

"1. That the development of labor and the development of the family can be seen as the development of two forms of production, i.e., as a mode of Production and mode of Reproduction (in the sense of the propagation of the species).

"2. That the different forms of the Family are the basic Mode of Reproduction of all Class societies and that it is impossible for Class societies to abolish the Family form of Reproduction. In particular it is impossible for Capitalism to abolish the family.

"3. With the development of Capitalism the State is increasingly forced to intervene in organising and supplementing the Family as the mode of Reproduction: education, health, etc. Some sections of the State apparatus are therefore part of the Mode of Reproduction, part of the necessary base of Capitalism. The workers in the sections--largely women--are not productive workers, but necessary workers. Their work is necessary to the reproduction of the working class and they are neither in the same category as the unproductive workers of the Capitalist mode of Production, nor as the productive."

The question is, what is the basis for making these categories? For Marx, theory was not something made up in the mind of the theoretician for the purpose of arguing with other theoreticians. No, theory must have a relationship to the movement from practice--to actual human beings fighting for freedom. As early as the 1840s when the Silesian weavers broke up their machines and ripped up the deeds and when every other socialist theoretician was saying how backward they were, how the weavers were against progress, Marx said no. He said that the wisdom of poor Germany was in inverse ratio to the wisdom of the German poor. Throughout Marx's life it was this methodology of having a relationship to freedom movements that made it possible for him to discover a new continent of thought and was the basis of his greatest work, Capital. How does Joan Smith measure up to Marxism?

On page 2 Smith proclaims that, "Many feminists have conceded the bourgeois idea that it is women's biology that has determined women's oppression." Yes, it is true, we raised the fact that we are oppressed because we are women. Without that kind of "bourgeois idea" that arose, not from any leftist theory but in reaction to sexist leftist theory and practice, there would be no women's movement today. There would be no article by Joan Smith trying to opportunistically get in on this women's movement. But had Smith listened to this "bourgeois idea" she would have heard that what we were saying is that yes, we are oppressed because we are women and furthermore we reject the whole idea of biology being destiny.

Throughout the article Ms. Smith misses the greatness of the Women's Liberation Movement, a movement from practice that is itself a

\* See Joan Smith's two part article in International Socialism, Volumes 100 and 104, theoretical journal of the British SWP.

form of theory. Her idea of theory, so divorced from reality, actually leads her to misread Marx. She quotes Marx thus:

"However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry, by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relation between the sexes... Moreover, it is obvious that the fact of the collective working group being composed of individuals of both sexes and all ages, must necessarily, under suitable conditions, become a source of humane development; although in its spontaneously developed, brutal, capitalistic form, where the labourer exists for the process of production and not the process of production for the labourer, that fact is a pestiferous source of corruption and slavery." (Emphasis mine.)

This, Smith says, is Marx arguing "that women were set free by Capitalism" (1) Her conclusion from this quote that is talking about production relations is:

"...the subordination of the Family as the mode of Reproduction to the Capitalist Property relations created enormous contradictions within the Capitalist society--and it is women who bear the brunt of these contradictions."

Here Ms. Smith reveals her shallow conception of what is contradiction. To Smith the contradiction is between a capitalist idea of family and property relations, or, as she says at another point, the contradiction is between the ever greater social productive capacities of capitalism and the capitalist mode of production. And yet what arose from the Women's Liberation Movement is something quite different. Sexism is not a relationship between things; nor, for that matter is production relations. The contradiction is that I want to be a whole person and this society is stopping that development. That is why the women's movement was so great when it challenged the men in the Left directly by saying: If you are talking about freedom I want to see some changes right here and now between you and me in this organization. Joan Smith accepts a dehumanized form of contradiction and thus never moves beyond vulgar materialism. Her solution is simply that one plan--hers--is better than another.

This dehumanization of the Women's Liberation Movement leads Smith to say such things as:

"The women's self-help movement to whose growth the theory of patriarchy has contributed...is very much an ambulance service to rescue women battered by capitalist society."

She speaks as if women are beaten, raped, etc., not by men but by an abstract capitalist society. She wants to battle sexism, not by confronting it in all its forms (as the WLM has done) but by avoiding the issue of sexism all together. Thus she says:

"...It is not men as a social group, but the family system as the means of reproducing capitalist society which underlies the specific forms of women's oppression today."

Smith sees women's anger, not as a powerful impetus for change, but as something we have to "Harness...while connecting the struggle of women to the struggle of all workers against their common exploitation." She talks as if women don't have something new to bring to that struggle precisely because we are women. Joan Smith's dehumanization of contradiction reminds me of the empty headed slogans of the Left and their "Black and white unite and fight" or saying that it is the workers who will stop the Nazis from

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Critique of Joan Smith, p.3

marching in Skokie when in fact it is the Jewish survivors of the camps who are in the streets. Never once do they, or Joan Smith, face the necessity of working out all these contradictions between Black and white, men and women, a Jews and non-Jews, every day in every confrontation. They will not go away by saying that the contradictions lie elsewhere.

What Smith reveals here all too clearly is her deafness to the Women's Liberation Movement which raised the fact that we will not wait until after the revolution to do battle with sexism because we live in an age where we know that revolutions can occur and women not be free. Listen to Yu Shuet in a recent interview:

"What they (the Chinese government) want is to have some women to participate in some roles in the administration. For example, in the factories they want some women to become part of the administrative staff, or in the Standing Committee of the Peoples Conference there may be some women to vice-chair some committees. In other words, they just want to put some women in some positions in the government or party. This to me is not women's liberation at all. It is only a type of official politics; they just want as many people to participate in their party politics as possible. It is to serve their politics and it is not going to get you freedom. In production they are trying to get more women to work. For example, in factories they set up nurseries, the reason being to get more women to work because a lot of traditional villages still have a large number of women not taking part in production as they have children to look after and this reduces the production force. It is for this reason they set up nurseries, not for women's liberation. So, their 'women's liberation' is designed to get more productive labour and to provide more tools to make people participate in their politics. It is very much the same as in Hong Kong and the West. The capitalists say that women should have their right to work in society, but when they say so. Their motive is to achieve a better way to use the whole human race; why just exploit male labour on the market, the women should be exploited too! They are not looking at it from a revolutionary humanitarian point of view at all. The Chinese government only advocated 'women's liberation' from a capitalist profit-making viewpoint--not real emancipation." (Yu Shuet is a former Cantonese Red Guard who fled to Hong Kong in 1973 after being in the revolutionary movement and becoming disillusioned with Mao's China. Quote from Feminist Communications, March 1978.)

While Smith does not accept China as a socialist society this whole question of China and other so-called socialist countries throws light on Smith's claim that capitalism can not do away with the family. This is one of a string of assumptions that she never proves. Jade, another Chinese revolutionary woman who broke with Mao, had this to say about making private property into communal and how that transformed human relationships. (Quote Jade in NOWL on land reform.)

What Jade's story points out is the necessity for theory to be concrete. When theory is only in ones head and not based on what is happening in the lives of human beings, then any kind of inhuman act can be perpetuated and all in the name of revolution.

Another error that flows from Smith's conception of theory runs throughout her article. She reminds me of the woman at the YWCA Talk-In where Georgia (the Essex striker) spoke. This woman said that the reason the Flint Sit-Down Strike won was because of the good graces of the Michigan governor! Listen to Smith's interpretation of history. First she blames men's low wages, not on capitalism, but on the fact of women and children being in



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Critique of Joan Smith, p.4

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the labor force. (Sounds like the bourgeoisie saying the reason we have such high unemployment is because of all the women and children who "want" to work.) She says this right after she quotes Marx saying:  
"Thus we see that machinery, whilst augmenting the human material that forms the principal object of capital's exploiting power, at the same time raised the degree of exploitation."  
She goes on to say that:  
"At the demand of the most class-conscious Capitalist and at the demand of the wage-workers themselves, the Capitalist State had to intervene in order to impose restricted working hours on both women and children."

The capitalist state gets credit for what men, women and children, Black and white, did in the tremendous 8-hour movements. The movements where leaflets from Marx's Capital actually became a part of the fight. (Smith is talking of Britain but the 8-hour movement was there as well nor, I think, would her analysis change were she speaking of the US.) To Marx, whose theory was an expression of the movement, what the workers did in the 8-hour movement was greater than any abstract declaration because the question the workers were asking, i.e., when does my day begin and when does it end, was concrete.

On page 25 Smith says:  
"In the 1860s the State intervened to establish the same working conditions for women and children throughout all workshops. In 1870 the State intervened to establish primary education. Before the First World War came the establishment of Welfare Services and the Income Tax that would organise the working class to pay for its own collective reproduction! These were the tiny beginnings of state intervention."

Each and every one of these so-called "state interventions" was the result of tremendous mass movements for freedom where the state--in fear of revolution, in fear of its very life--was forced to give in to freedom fighters demands. To Smith it is British capitalism that is benevolent:  
"In the past British capitalism sought to protect all women from the burden of certain types of work--night shift, poisons, metals like lead etc.--in order to protect the reproduction of society..."

Women fought long and hard for protective legislation and for an end to child labor and exploitation and can she be talking about the same Britain that Marx said used up 3 generations of workers in one generation!

What runs throughout the entire article is that for Joan Smith contradiction is totally stripped of subjectivity. That is, that the human beings who are the real shapers of history have no place in Smith's theory.

It is not just past history which suffers from this but what is happening today. I just want to pick one example in part II where Smith states:  
"...for the women at Trico and Grunwick and the others like them separatism has no meaning--they need the support of a united working-class movement, male and female, to win their battles."

What this negates is not only the reason why these struggles are so long lasting and vicious but also negates the Reason of working women like Georgia who in talking of her fight against both company and union says that the reason they are being treated so badly is because they are women.

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Critique of Joan Smith, p.5

What Joan Smith fears is not separatism, but the independence of the women's movement which will fight sexism where ever it is be that in the so-called revolutionary parties to lead or in the capitalist world. One can not help but wonder how Smith would explain Black oppression since she can't blame it on an abstract notion of the capitalist family. Sexist images of women are blamed on the family but what of the same stereotypes for every oppressed group?

Joan Smith's conclusions come as no surprise. After she has totally stripped women of our history, our force, and our Reason the only thing left to bring it all together is the party.

As long as theory has no relation to what actually emerges from below we can never get to anything new. Leftists, like Smith, can create "new" categories that represent only their own fantasy world. The working out of a relationship between the movements from theory and the movements from practice has relevance for more than the Women's Liberation Movement. Isn't it only by being theoretically prepared for revolution that we can not only recognize the reason that emerges from below, but move forward to a new society?

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Women's Liberation, News and Letters  
Chicago

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Correspondence from Nigeria and Hong Kong

As we were finishing this pamphlet, we received two reports from international correspondents -- one from Nigeria and one from Hong Kong.

\* \* \*

This report from Nigeria mentions the protest of the market women, who have a long history of independence and activity in West Africa.

NIGERIA, April 30 -- All universities in Nigeria have been closed after armed police shot and killed ten university students on a peaceful demonstration against a 300 percent fee increase....

A woman writing in the "Feminine Forum" column of the local newspaper made these comments: (The National Council of Women's Society is roughly equivalent to NOW.)

"Where is the National Council of Women's Society? Ever since the sad events of the last week which claimed the lives of unarmed university students, I have watched the headlines for the reaction of the collective group supposed to represent Nigerian women. But so far, the only women's voices that have been raised in condemnation of the senseless destruction of innocent lives has been that of market women in Ibadan who staged a demonstration on Tuesday ....

"In Nigeria, the word 'woman' is still synonymous with the womb, the mother. Quite recently, the Head of State Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo reminded Nigerian women of this most important role .... How then can Nigerian women have failed to raise their collective voices on the one single issue over which their right to be heard couldn't have been questioned by even the staunchest opposer of women's rights?

"Students lost their lives in the crisis. Mothers watched the lifeless bodies of their children claimed by silent graves .... The thought of the pain and grief of these unfortunate ones could have moved others to speak. The possibility that in future others may be affected in the same way, and may feel the same sorrow should have been enough motivation for all Nigerian women to collectively cry out against police brutality on unarmed children, thus serving notice on the government that they would not stand aside and watch while innocent children are massacred ....

(The women of) the National Council of Women's Society ... gather at rallies or dinner parties to make noise about getting totally involved in national development. Yet what do they know about involvement? What has been done to map out areas in which women's lot needs to be improved? .... The council is shrouded in so much mystery that it appears like a secret society, an elitist club ....

"So many of the resolutions of the National Council of Women's Society are couched in vague, meaningless oratory that in no way imposes a duty on Nigerian women to get out of their passivity.... So long as women remain silent and restrain their activism to occasional noises which reach no one's ears, so long will their dream of 'total involvement in the development and life of the nation' remain what it is -- a mere dream.

"For hasn't it been said that 'it is only when women start to organize in large numbers that they can become a political (and I hasten to add social) force and begin to move towards the possibility of a truly democratic society in which every human being can be brave, responsible, thinking and diligent in the struggle to live at once freely and unselfishly.'"

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The letter from Hong Kong began with some details of the life of the people there. There is no free education, no minimum wage, no paid maternity leave. The 1971 census showed that 36,000 children aged 10-14, two-thirds of them girls, are in the labor force; no one knows how many more are working illegally. Less than two percent of the population can vote for the local councils, and public meetings require permission from the police.

It is against this background that the thought and activity of the striking women workers, described here, is highlighted.

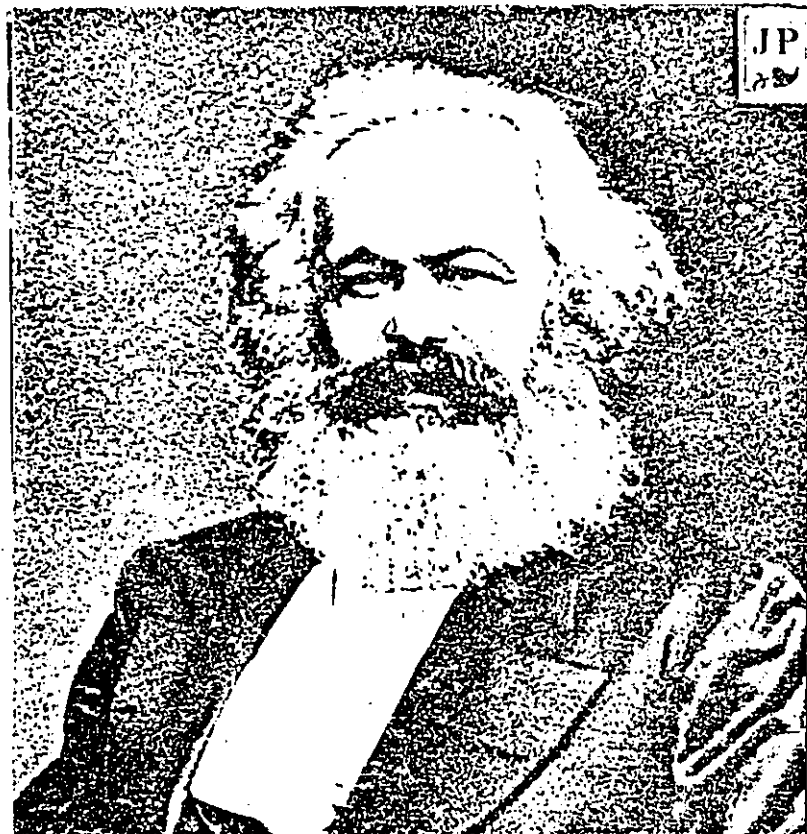
HONG KONG, May 3 -- May Day came and went, with absolutely no activity of any sort permitted, but the ferment boiling below the restrictions revealed itself during the preceding week. On April 20, 200 women factory workers went on strike against the Yokohama Musen Co., because management had banned the women from using the toilet between 11:30 AM and 12 Noon, and from 4:30 to 5:00 PM.

"We did this as too many were leaving the assembly line and stopping production," said a spokesman. But the women went on strike and stopped production entirely for three days. They went back to work after a meeting with the strike committee, management, and a Labour Department official reached an agreement that women could go to the bathroom at any time, though not more than two from each production line, and after getting permission from the line leader. The women accepted this condition only after the company agreed to pay them for the time they were on strike.

On April 28, 1,000 women working at the Kun Tong electronics plant, owned by Fairchild Semi-Conductors, first staged a "go-slow", then a full-fledged strike with banners and a blockade of the factory and a press interview. This strike was sparked when the women discovered that new hires were being paid at the rate of \$32 Hong Kong, daily (less than \$7.00 U.S.) and fringe benefits, while they were receiving \$21.50.

The women went out on strike independently, receiving no support from either of the two existing legal trade unions, nor from the community at large. But their actions can be expected to have a tremendous impact on other factory workers as the word gets around.

\* \* \*



*râya dunayevskaya*

**MARXISMO  
Y LIBERTAD**



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# Marxismo y Libertad

de

Raya Dunayevskaya



Juan Pablos Editor  
México, D. F., 1976

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Introducción especial a la edición mexicana  
de *Marxismo y libertad*

Escribir esta introducción especial me da un gran placer no sólo por mis recuerdos de México, 1937-1938, cuando estuve ahí como secretaria de León Trotsky, sino por la manera en que ese emocionante periodo histórico ilumina el mundo de hoy. Así pues, el presidente Cárdenas no sólo había concedido asilo a León Trotsky precisamente cuando Stalin lo injuriaba en uno de los mayores juicios fraudulentos de la historia, sino que al mismo tiempo retaba al imperialismo estadounidense al convertirse en el primero en suprimir la dominación norteamericana sobre el petróleo de México. Por encima de todo se alzaba en aquellos años la Revolución Española. Retrocediendo aún más en la historia, Frantz Fanon, en 1961, señaló que los españoles en lucha contra Napoleón redescubrieron lo que las milicias norteamericanas usaron durante su lucha por independizarse de la Gran Bretaña. Estos partidarios se llamaron guerrilleros. Lo importante era que las continuidades y discontinuidades de esas luchas de liberación eran inseparables de una subyacente filosofía de la liberación que Fanon sentía como indispensable para las revoluciones africanas que remodelaban al mundo.

El intelectual revolucionario de los Estados Unidos no puede sino tener deseos de mostrar la otra Norteamérica, diferente a aquella del capitalismo estadounidense que tiene una crónica tan absoluta de imperialismo en América Latina, ya sea que se trate de la Guerra Mexicano-Norteamericana de 1846-1848 que se llevó una porción tan grande de la tierra de México, o de la ocupación de la Zona del Canal de Panamá donde hasta la fecha el imperialismo norteamericano se atreve a gobernar "en perpetuidad", o

del golpe neofascista en Chile, que fue financiado, armado e inspirado en tan gran medida por el gobierno de Nixon, desde 1970. El hecho de que el *Interim Report* de la Comisión de Inteligencia del Senado de los Estados Unidos haya por fin revelado los horripilantes detalles de esos días y de que se declare ahora con fuerza en contra de los asesinatos, no le impide mostrar su propia naturaleza capitalista de clase al ser completamente ambivalente en lo que se refiere a los intentos de organizar golpes en contra de otros gobiernos, como si sólo los complotos de asesinato de un caudillo, y no los golpes en contra de todo un pueblo, fuesen dignos de condena. El pueblo norteamericano no puede sentir otra cosa que repugnancia hacia la manera en que el embajador Korry le escribió al presidente Frei, que se retiraba del gobierno, en contra del presidente electo, Allende: "No se permitirá que llegue ni un perno, ni una tuerca a Chile bajo Allende... Haremos todo lo que esté en nuestro poder para condenar a Chile y a los chilenos a la mayor privación y pobreza..."

El pueblo norteamericano no puede sino separarse de un imperialismo tan deshumanizado, y en este mismo momento está presionando a la clase gobernante en contra de su continuación. De esta manera demuestra una mayor solidaridad con el pueblo latinoamericano que con su propio gobierno. La solidaridad más significativa es aquella que expresan los intelectuales revolucionarios, para quienes los actos de solidaridad son inseparables de una filosofía de la liberación.

México también tiene recuerdos para mí después de que rompí con León Trotsky cuando, al celebrarse el Pacto Hitler-Stalin, no pude ya seguirlo en su adhesión a la defensa de Rusia como un Estado de los trabajadores "aunque degenerado". Regresé a los Estados Unidos para comenzar la investigación y el desarrollo de mi teoría sobre Rusia como una sociedad capitalista-estatal y, en 1944, tuve la oportunidad de traducir y exponer (en la *American Economic Review*) la revisión que hizo Stalin de la ley del valor de Marx. Al finalizar la Segunda Guerra Mundial regresé a México para reunirme con Natalia Sedova Trotsky, a quien leí el primer borrador de lo que, en una década, se convirtió en *Marxismo y libertad*, obra de la cual ésta es la octava edición.

Cuando se completó la primera edición en 1957, este trabajo finalizó con las nuevas páginas de libertad señaladas por las revoluciones de Europa Oriental en contra del totalitarismo ruso, y por la Revolución de los Negros en los Estados Unidos, que se inició con el boicot de los autobuses en Montgomery. Cuando, al principio de la década de los sesenta, el conflicto sino-soviético hizo erupción abierta, escribí un nuevo capítulo (XVII): "El reto de Mao Tse-tung". La hoja de parra de la terminología marxista ya no puede, sostenía yo, cubrir la política nacionalista dentro del conflicto sino-soviético, y debemos entonces preguntar: ¿Puede haber una guerra entre dos países que se llaman a sí mismos comunistas? Lo que sonaba como "descabellado" en 1963 se ha convertido casi en un cliché desde el momento en que Mao le extendió a Nixon el tapete rojo, como lo está haciendo hoy (1-12-75) Teng para Ford, al tiempo que lo sermonea en contra de una *détente* con Rusia. Sería un comentario realmente triste sobre nuestra época el que los revolucionarios genuinos persistiesen aún en adherirse a uno u otro polo de la órbita sino-soviética, como si ésta difiriera en su carácter de clase del imperialismo norteamericano, en lugar de construir un camino verdaderamente independiente hacia la revolución social.

Las revoluciones no surgen en la plenitud del tiempo con la finalidad de establecer a El Presidente o a una máquina de partido. El caudillo máximo y el *partinost* (monolitismo de partido) están ahí para ahogar la revolución y no para liberar la creatividad y las energías de los millones de seres. El marxismo es o una teoría de la liberación o nada. En el pensamiento y en la vida, coloca los cimientos para el logro de una nueva dimensión humana, sin la cual ninguna sociedad nueva tiene viabilidad.

Vivimos en "una época de nacimiento de la historia y un periodo de transición" como el que caracterizó la época en que vivió Marx. Sólo que el nuestro tiene un alcance realmente mundial y comienza con la pregunta: ¿Qué sucede después de la revolución que tantas veces ha llevado a una transformación en opuesto? Nuestra era se enfrenta a una tarea: ¿Cómo puede el movimiento que parte de la teoría enfrentarse al desafío del movimiento que parte de la práctica y que busca una relación totalmente nueva



entre teoría y práctica, de manera que pueda reconstruir la sociedad sobre principios nuevos y verdaderamente humanos? Así como Marx tuvo que luchar contra los "comunistas vulgares" de su tiempo, quienes creían que todos los males del capitalismo serían vencidos al abolirse la propiedad privada, nosotros no debemos caer en la trampa de confundir el "anticapitalismo" del comunismo, es decir la economía planificada, por cualquier cosa fuera de la que es: el desarrollo lógico completo del propio capitalismo en capitalismo de Estado. La unidad de teoría y práctica que caracteriza el nuevo continente de pensamiento de Marx sigue siendo la única visión que puede darnos la seguridad de que no habrán más transformaciones en opuesto como aquella que caracterizó la transformación de Rusia de un Estado de los trabajadores en una sociedad capitalista-estatal, y como la que ahora amenaza al Tercer Mundo. Quienes fuimos testigos de la crisis de los proyectiles en 1962 y vimos a Cuba atrapada en el tornillo de carpintero de las dos superpotencias que aspiraban a la dominación mundial, sabemos que el destino del mundo y el de los proyectiles en Cuba no fueron decididos por Castro, sino por Kennedy y por Jruchov. La misma sobrevivencia de la civilización exige que se arranque de raíz la vieja sociedad para crear la nueva, sin clases.

A lo largo de las ocho ediciones de *Marxismo y libertad* no ha habido cambio alguno en el contenido o en la estructura de la obra, basada en el movimiento a partir de la práctica hacia la teoría y hacia una nueva sociedad, a través de doscientos años de desarrollo industrial, político, intelectual e histórico: las edades de la revolución. Parecería que la conveniencia de la obra se ha vuelto más urgente en la década de los setenta, a causa de la emergente pasión por la filosofía por parte de una nueva generación de revolucionarios dentro de cada país, incluyendo a los Estados Unidos. Sea cual fuere la razón por la cual la capitalista ONU escogió a México como sede de la celebración del Año Internacional de la Mujer —y para el desgarramiento que éste produjo— sigue en pie el hecho de que esto simboliza tanto al Tercer Mundo como al Movimiento de Liberación de la Mujer en sus aspectos de razón y de fuerza.

La pasión por la filosofía que ha surgido en esta dé-

cada, en contraste con la anterior, cuando el activismo en general y la guerra de guerrillas en particular tenían a la teoría relegada como algo de poca importancia que podía adquirirse "de paso", ha obligado hasta a un Régis Debray a repensar las cosas. Mientras que en 1967 Debray rechazaba la teoría, como si no fuera más que "el vicio de excesivas deliberaciones", en favor de "focos militares" que lo decidirían todo, de la misma manera en que el caudillo máximo lo sería todo, ha publicado ahora una crítica de sus conceptos anteriores que provocaron tales desastres. Desgraciadamente, se volvió pronto hacia los *Cuadernos filosóficos de Lenin*, y lo que Debray busca así lograr es toda una hazaña: "deducir" de la unidad de los opuestos un estilo militar más, sólo que ahora no se trata de "focos militares" sino de "guerra del pueblo". No es sorprendente que termine de nuevo en la rueda de fortuna de las tácticas elevadas a estrategias. Debray ha aprendido aún menos de Lenin que de Allende quien, al analizar para él la lucha del pueblo latinoamericano contra el imperialismo estadounidense, dijo: "La muerte en vida del pueblo no puede continuar", concluyendo que "la liberación de las energías chilenas" tendría el efecto de "reconstruir la nación". Por fortuna, la miseria de la filosofía de Debray no puede realizar la proeza de invalidar el concepto leninista de la dialéctica de la liberación, y menos aún la de sustituir un subjetivismo pequeñoburgués por la situación objetiva de nuestros días, la cual dio a luz una verdadera pasión por la filosofía de parte de las masas. Son ellas las que se rehusan a seguir separando las luchas de liberación en sí de una filosofía de la liberación, cosa que dejaría el camino abierto para otra revolución trunca.

Así como, al estallar la Primera Guerra Mundial, la traición que la Segunda Internacional hizo al proletariado y la forma en que vició al marxismo impulsaron a Lenin a regresar a los orígenes filosóficos de Marx en la dialéctica hegeliana, para formar así su propia preparación teórica para la revolución proletaria, de la misma manera las revoluciones abortadas y los desastrosos juegos con la guerra de guerrillas en nuestra era nos deben impulsar hacia una total revaluación de la relación entre teoría y práctica. El retorno de Lenin a la dialéctica formó los ci-

mientos de la gran división dentro del marxismo (véase el capítulo X). Es ahí donde debemos comenzar.

Cada generación debe enfrentarse al desafío de los tiempos o perderse en el olvido. Nadie puede sufrir la ilusión de que nuestra época señala esos decisivos puntos de giro de la historia en los cuales se malogra el giro. Al contrario. Debido precisamente a la madurez político-filosófica de nuestros tiempos, el movimiento a partir de la práctica en estas dos últimas décadas es en sí mismo una forma de teoría; podemos enfrentarnos a este desafío, siempre y cuando podamos retornar al humanismo del marxismo y a la nueva dialéctica de la liberación que Lenin desarrolló la víspera de 1917, manteniéndonos al nivel de lo nuevo que hay en nuestra época. En nuestra edad de absolutos, cuando la revolución y la contrarrevolución están tan entrelazadas, no son sólo los intelectuales "en general" quienes deben salir de sus torres de marfil; también deben hacerlo los teóricos marxistas. *Marxismo y libertad* es una contribución hacia ese fin.

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## Prefacio

Una de las tareas más urgentes para tener una comprensión cabal de la situación contemporánea es volver a examinar la teoría marxista. Quizás ninguna otra teoría ha previsto con tanta precisión las tendencias básicas de la sociedad industrial en su etapa posterior; y, aparentemente, ninguna otra ha sacado conclusiones tan incorrectas de su análisis. Si bien el desarrollo económico y político del capitalismo del siglo veinte acusa muchos de los rasgos que Marx derivó de las contradicciones inherentes al sistema, dichas contradicciones no hicieron crisis en la etapa final; "la era del imperialismo" ha presenciado un reagrupamiento intercontinental pero también una estabilización intercontinental del mundo occidental, a pesar de o a causa de una "permanente economía de guerra". Y mientras la revolución socialista se fraguó y se inició guiada por concepciones estrictamente marxistas, en la subsecuente construcción del socialismo en la órbita comunista apenas se detectan rasgos sustantivos de la idea marxista. Sin embargo, para reexaminar la teoría marxista, no se gana nada con señalar meramente el contraste entre la realidad y las "predicciones" marxistas. En la medida en que la noción del desarrollo del capitalismo maduro y de la transición al socialismo fue elaborada por Marx y Engels con anterioridad a la etapa en que su "verificación" fue prevista, puede decirse que la teoría marxista implica ciertas predicciones. Pero el carácter esencial de esta teoría niega tal designación. La teoría marxista es una interpretación de la historia y, basada en esta interpretación, define la acción política que, usando las posibilidades his-

## Special introduction to Spanish edition of *Marxism and Freedom*

This special introduction gives me great pleasure to write not just because of memories of Mexico, 1937-38, when I was there as Secretary to Leon Trotsky, but because of what that exciting historic period does to illuminate the world today. Thus, President Cardenas had not only granted asylum to Leon Trotsky just when he was being reviled by Stalin in the greatest Frame-up Trials in history, but was, at the same time, challenging U.S. imperialism by being the first to do away with American domination over Mexican oil. Above all in those years towered the Spanish Revolution.

Going still further back in history, Frantz Fanon, in 1961, pointed to the Spanish, in their fight against Napoleon, rediscovering what the American yeomen-militia used in their struggle for freedom from Great Britain. They named the partisans guerrillas. The point was that the continuities and discontinuities in those liberating struggles were inseparable from an underlying philosophy of liberation which Fanon felt indispensable for the African Revolutions reshaping the world.

THE UNITED STATES revolutionary intellectual cannot but be desirous of showing the other America than that of U.S. capitalism which has so unmitigated an imperial record in Latin America—whether that be the American-Mexican War of 1846-48 which took away so much of Mexico's land; or the occupation of the

Panama Canal Zone which U.S. imperialism to this day dares rule "in perpetuity"; or the neo-fascist coup in Chile which the Nixon Administration, ever since 1970, did so much to finance, arm and inspire. The fact that the Interim Report of the U.S. Senate Intelligence Commission has finally revealed the barrowing details of those days and now comes out strongly against assassination does not keep it from showing its own capitalistic class nature by being thoroughly ambivalent on attempts to organize coups against a whole people. The American people can feel nothing but loathing against Ambassador Korry writing to the retiring President Frei against President-elect Allende: "Not a nut or bolt will be allowed to reach Chile under Allende . . . We shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost privation and poverty . . ."

The American people cannot but separate themselves from such dehumanized imperialism, and are, at this very moment, pressuring the ruling class against its continuation. Thereby they display greater solidarity with the Latin American people than with their own government. The solidarity which is most meaningful is expressed by revolutionary intellectuals for whom acts of solidarity are inseparable from a philosophy of liberation.

MEXICO ALSO HAS memories for me after I broke

with Leon Trotsky at the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact when I could no longer follow him in his espousal of the defense of Russia as a worker's state "though degenerate". I returned to the U.S. to begin the research and development of my theory of Russia as a state-capitalist society and in 1944 had the opportunity to translate and expose (in the *American Economic Review*) Stalin's revision of Marx's law of value. At the end of World War II, I returned to Mexico to meet with Natalia Sedova Trotsky, to whom I read the first draft of what, in a decade, finally became *Marxism and Freedom*, of which this is the eighth edition.

When the first edition was completed in 1957, this work ended with the new pages of freedom signalled by the East European Revolutions against Russian totalitarianism, and the Black Revolution in the U.S. initiated by the Montgomery Bus Boycott. When, in the early 1960s, the Sino-Soviet conflict erupted in the open, I wrote a new Chapter (XVII), "The Challenge of Mao Tse-tung." The fig-leaf of Marxist terminology can no longer, I maintained, cover up the nationalistic politics in the Sino-Soviet conflict and we must, instead, ask: Can there be war between two countries calling themselves Communist? What sounded "wild" in 1963 has very nearly become a cliché ever since Mao rolled out the red carpet for Nixon, as Teng is doing for Ford.

today (12-1-75), while lecturing him against "detente" with Russia. It would, indeed, be a sad commentary on our age if genuine revolutionaries still persisted in attaching themselves to one or another of the poles of the Sino-Soviet orbit, as if that differed in class nature from U.S. imperialism, instead of striking out on a truly independent road of social revolution.

Revolutions do not arise in the fullness of time for the purpose of establishing The Chairman or a party machine. The Leader Maximus and partisans (party monolithism) are there to throttle the revolution, not to release the creativity as well as the energies of the millions. Marxism is either a theory of liberation or it is nothing. In thought and in life, it lays the basis for achieving a new human dimension, without which no new society has viability.

WE LIVE IN a "birth-time of history and a period of transition" such as characterized the age in which Marx lived. Only ours is of truly world-wide scope, and begins with the question: What happens after the revolution that has so often led to a transformation into opposite? A task confronts our age: How can the movement from theory meet the challenge of the movement from practice which seeks a totally new relationship of theory to practice so that it can reconstruct society on new, truly human beginnings? Just as Marx had to fight the "vulgar Communists" of his day who thought all ills of capitalism would be overcome with the abolition of private property, we must not fall into the trap of mistaking Communism's "anti-capitalism", i.e. planned economy, for any other than what it is—the full logical development of capitalism itself into state-capitalism.

The unity of theory and practice that characterized Marx's new continent of thought remains the vision that can assure that there will be no further transformation into opposite such as that which characterized the transformation of Russia from a workers' state into a state-capitalist society, and which presently threatens the Third World. We who were witnesses to the missile crisis in 1962 and saw Cuba caught in the vise of the two superpowers aspiring for world domination know that the fate of the world and the fate of the missiles in Cuba were decided not by Castro, but by Kennedy and Khrushchev. The very survival of civilization demands the uprooting of the old and the creating of a new classless society.

THROUGH ALL the eight editions of Marxism and Freedom there has been no change in either the content or the structure of the work based on the movement from practice to theory and a new society through 200 years of industrial, political, intellectual, historical development—the ages of revolution. It would seem that its timeliness in the 1970's has gained a new urgency because of the merging passion for philosophy from a new generation of revolutionaries within each land, the U.S. included. Whatever the reason the capitalistic UN chose Mexico as the place to celebrate International Women's Year—and be torn apart by it—the fact remains that it is symbolic of both the Third World and the Women's Liberation Movement as Reason as well as force.

The passion for philosophy that has emerged in this decade, as against the 1960's when activism in general and guerrilla war in particular relegated theory to an inconsequential thing that could be picked up "en route", has compelled even a Regis Debray to some second thoughts. Whereas in 1967 Debray rejected theory as if it were no more than "the vice of excessive deliberations" in favor of "military focus" that would decide all, even as the Leader Maximus would be all, he has just now published a critique of his previous concepts which led to such disasters.\* Unfortunately, in presently turning to Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* for a dialectic of negativity Debray is attempting quite a feat: "deducing" from the unity of opposites still another form of "military focus". No wonder he once again ends up on a merry-go-round of tactics elevated to strategy.

Debray has learned even less from Lenin than from Salvador Allende who, in analyzing for him the struggle of the Latin American people against U.S. imperialism, said, "The living death of the people cannot continue," concluding that "the liberation of Chilean energies" would "rebuild the nation." Fortunately, Debray's poverty of philosophy has no prowess to invalidate Lenin's concept of the dialectics of liberation, much less to substitute a petty-bourgeois subjectivism for the objective situation of our day that gave birth to a veritable passion of philosophy on the part of the masses. It is they who refuse any longer to separate the actual liberation struggles from the philosophy of liberation which would lay themselves open for still another unfinished revolution.

\*Regis Debray, *La Critique des Armes I and II* (1974, Paris) and *Prison Writings* (1973, London.)

JUST AS, at the outbreak of World War I, the Second International's betrayal of the proletariat and vitiation of Marxism led Lenin to return to the philosophic origins of Marx in the Hegelian dialectic as his theoretic preparation for proletarian revolution, so the aborted revolution and the disastrous playing with guerrilla warfare in our era must lead us to a total re-evaluation of the relationship of theory to practice. Lenin's return to dialectics laid the foundation for the Great Divide in Marxism (see Chapter X). It is there we must begin.

Each generation meets the challenge of the times or fades into oblivion. No one can be under the illusion that our epoch marks the type of turning point in history where history fails to turn. On the contrary. Precisely because of the political-philosophic maturity of our age, the movement these past two decades from practice that is itself a form of theory, we can meet this challenge, provided we return to the Humanism of Marxism and the new dialectics of liberation Lenin worked out on the eve of 1917, on the level of the new in our epoch. In our age of absolutes, when revolution and counter-revolution are so interlocked, it is not only the intellectuals "in general" who must leave their ivory towers; so, too, must the Marxist theoreticians. Marxism and Freedom is a contribution toward that end.

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