MARX'S "NEW HUMANISM" AND THE DIALECTICS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN PRIMITIVE AND MODERN SOCIETIES

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I

Bureaucracy, as the focal point of this year's international conference, gains a special significance because it takes place in the year of the Marx centenary when, for the first time, we have a transcription of Marx's last writings -- The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx (transcribed and edited, with an Introduction by Lawrence Krader, 1972). This allows us to look at Marx's Marxism as a totality and see for ourselves the wide gulf that separates Marx's concept of that fundamental Man/Woman relationship (whether that be when Marx first broke from bourgeois society, or as seen in his last writings) from Engels' view of what he called "the world historic defeat of the female sex" as he articulated it in his Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State as if that were Marx's view, not alone on the "Woman Question" but on "primitive communism."

To this day, the dominance of that erroneous, fantastic view of Marx and Engels as one[1] (consistently perpetuated by the so-called socialist states) has by no

means been limited to Engelsianisms on women's liberation. The aim of the Russian theoreticians, it would appear, has been to put blinders on non-Marxist as well as Marxist academics regarding the last decade of Marx's life, when he experienced new moments in his theoretic perception as he studied new empiric data of pre-capitalist societies, in works by Morgan, Kovalevsky, Phear, Maine, Lubbock. In Marx's excerpts and comments on these works, as well as in his correspondence during this period, it was clear that Marx was working out new paths to revolution, not, as some current sociological studies[2] would have us believe, by scuttling his own life's work of analyzing capitalism's development in West Europe, much less abbrogating his discovery of a whole new continent of thought and revolution which he called a "new Humanism." Rather, Marx was rounding out 40 years of his thought on human development and its struggles for freedom, which he called "history and its process," "revolution in permanence."[3]

What was new in Marx's Promethean vision in his last decade was the diversity of the ever-changing ways men and women had shaped their history in pre-capitalist societies, the pluri-dimensionality of human development on a global scale. Marx experienced a shock of recognition in his last decade as he studied the new empiric anthropological studies and saw positive features -- be it of the role of the Iroquois women or the agricultural commune and resistance to capitalist conquest -- which bore a

certain affinity to what he had articulated when he first broke with capitalist society and called for "a human revolution."

The result was that in that decade, 1873-1883, he, at one and the same time, introduced new additions to his greatest theoretical work, Capital, and projected nothing short of the possibility of a revolution occurring first in a backward country like Russia ahead of one in a country of the technologically advanced West. Clearly, there was no greater "empiricist" than the revolutionary dialectician, Karl Marx! Marx did not live long enough to work out in full those paths to revolution he was projecting, but we can see, in the correspondence he carried on at that time, the direction in which he was moving. Thus, we read his sharp critique of the Russian Populist, Mikhailovsky, who attempted to attribute to Marx the making of a universal out of his "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation." Marx insisted that it was a particular/historic study of capitalist development in West Europe, and that, if Russia continued on that path, "she will lose the finest chance ever offered by history to a people and undergo all the fatal vicissitudes of the capitalist regime."[4]

That letter was unmailed, but one of the four drafts he had written on the same subject to Vera Zasulitch, who had written to him in the name of the Plekhanov group

which was moving to Marxism, was mailed. And the most important of all his written statements on this subject is the Preface to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto.

What the post-Marx Marxists have made of all this can be challenged by our age, not because we are "smarter" but because we now have Marx's Marxism as a totality, and because of the maturity of our age when a whole new Third World has emerged and Women's Liberation has moved from an idea whose time has come to a movement. The challenge to post-Marx Marxists to do the hard labor needed to work out Marx's new moments in that last decade is occasioned, not as a minor "demand" for an explanation as to why the unforgiveable 50-year delay in publishing what had been found by Ryazanov in 1923, nor is the challenge limited to what the post-Marx Marxists did not do about the Ethnological Notebooks. The point is that even when the unpublished works of Marx, such as the 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, did come to light soon after they were retrieved from the vaults of the Second International by Ryazanov, under the impulse of the Russian Revolution:--and even when they did create lengthy international debates, certain limitations of the historic period in which those commentaries on the work appeared point up the greater maturity of our age.

Take Herbert Marcuse's analysis of those Essays.[5] It was certainly one of the first, and a most profound analysis "in general," but he managed to skip over a crucial page on the Man/Woman relationship. On the other hand, Simone de Beauvoir, who does not approach Marcuse's Marxist erudition and is not a Marxist but an Existentialist, singled out precisely that Man/Woman relationship from Marx in her The Second Sex: "The direct, natural, necessary relation of human creatures is the relation of man to woman," she quotes on the very last page, and stresses its importance by writing: "The case could not be better stated."

Unfortunately, what follows that sentence and completes her final paragraph runs counter to Marx's thrust: "It is for man to establish the reign of liberty... it is necessary, for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood." In a word, de Beauvoir's high praise of Marx notwithstanding, the conclusion she draws from the essay of Marx as well as all her data over some 800 pages fails to grasp the reason Marx singled out the Man/Woman relationship as integral to alienation, not only under capitalism but also what he called "vulgar communism." His "new Humanism" stressed: "We should especially avoid re-establishing society as an abstraction, opposed to the individual. The individual is the social entity." Which is why he concluded with the sentence, "Communism as such is not the goal of human development, the form of human society."

Let us now reread that sentence that de Beauvoir quoted (except that I want to use a more precise translation): "The infinite degradation in which man exists for himself is expressed in this relation to the woman .... The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman." Women's Liberation had to develop from an Idea whose time has come to an actual Movement before either Simone de Beauvoir or Herbert Marcuse could see the need to grapple with Marx's Promethean vision on Man/Woman relationships.

Marx's concept of the Man/Woman relationship arose with the very birth of a new continent of thought and of revolution the moment he broke from bourgeois society. Before that decade of the 1840s had ended, Marx had unfurled a new banner of revolution with the Communist Manifesto, where he explained how total must be the uprooting of capitalism, the abolition of private property, the abolition of the state, the bourgeois family, indeed, the whole "class culture." This was followed immediately by his becoming a participant in the 1848 Revolutions. Far from retreating when those revolutions were defeated, Marx greeted the new 1850s by calling for the "revolution in permanence." Once again, in that decade, as he now came to view other pre-capitalist societies and analyzed anew human development, he further deepened his concepts as well as aims by concretizing it as the "absolute movement of becoming."

The Grundrisse is the mediation, on the one hand, both to Marx's greatest theoretical work, Capital, and to his activity around and writings on the Paris Commune; and, on the other hand, to the Ethnological Notebooks. One can see, imbedded in the latter, a trail to the 1980s. At least, that is what I see; and it is for this reason that I chose as my subject the relationship of Marx's philosophy to the dialectic of women's liberation throughout the whole 40 years of his theoretic development. My emphasis on the last decade of his life -- which until now has been considered hardly more than "a slow death" -- is because it is precisely in that last decade that he experienced new moments, seeing new forces of revolution and thought in what we now call the Third World and the Women's Liberation Movement. The new return to and recreation of the Hegelian dialectic as he developed the Grundrisse was the methodology that determined all his works. What never changed was his concept and practice of criticism of all that exists, defined as follows:

> "Ruthless criticism of all that exists, ruthless in the sense that the critique is neither afraid of its own results nor of conflicting with the powers that be." Which is exactly why Marx never separated criticism from revolution, and such total uprooting of all that is, sparing no bureaucracies either in production or in education, that he counterposed to the old his concept of "revolution in permanence."

And how very today-ish is his early attack on bureaucracy in education:

"Bureaucracy counts in its own eyes as the final aim of the state... The aims of the state are transformed into the aims of the bureaux and the aims of the bureaux into the aims of the state. Bureaucracy is a circle from which no one can escape. Its hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge. The apex entrusts the lower echelon with insight into the individual while the lower echelon leaves insight into the universal to the apex, and so each deceives the other."

This sharp critique of the bureaucracy in education under capitalism, like the singling out of the alienated Man/Woman relationship, was but the beginning of his critique of what is an exploitative, sexist, racist, capitalist society. It remains most relevant for our nuclear age, whether our preoccupation is that of the Third World or the very survival of civilization as we have known it. My concentration on Marx's last decade makes it necessary for me to greatly abbreviate the two decades that followed the 1840s. The abbreviation will not, however, be at the expense of discussing one of Marx's greatest works, the Grundrisse, because I will consider that work together with the Ethnological Notebooks of Marx's last decade. Here, I mention the Grundrisse only to point out that it was when Marx was working on it, in 1857, that he concluded that there were more than three periods of human development -- slavery, feudalism and capitalism. He saw a whole new era of human development which he then called "Asiatic mode of production."

"Asiatic" did not mean only "Oriental." He was talking about a primitive communal form of development in the West as well as in the East, whether it was among the Celts or in Russia. For anthropologists of our era to disregard Marx's sensitivity to that "Asiatic mode of production" in the 1850s beginning with the Taiping Revolution, and act as if he was totally Euro-centered then, is on the level of their disregard of his concept of the Man/Woman relationship in 1844.

II

Indeed, what I do wish to single out from the 1850s are two events, both of which relate precisely to women. The first was the 1853-54 strike in Preston, England, where no less than 15,000 workers were on strike against the despotic conditions of labor, about which Marx wrote in great detail for the New York Tribune, paying special attention to the conditions of the women workers. The second was the support he gave to Lady Bulwer-Lytton, the author of a novel, Cheveley, or the Man of Honour, who, 1858, had dared not only to differ with the views of her conservative, aristocratic-politician husband, but to wish to make her views public. Because she dared to leave the hustings and attempted to rent a lecture hall for her views, her husband and son had her thrown into a lunatic asylum! In his article, "Imprisonment of Lady Bulwer-Lytton," Marx defended her and attacked not only the Tory press for its sexism, but also "the Radical press, which more or less receives its inspirations from the Manchester School."

As for the articles on the Preston strike, Marx went into detail about both the special exploitation women were subjected to and the fact that even these monstrous conditions did not limit women to fighting those exploitative conditions of labor but challenged the educational system. Marx's Chartist activities and his studies, not only for his books but for agitational writings on behalf of labor, were never written as if only male workers were involved. Quite the contrary. And, in writing: "The factory operatives seem resolved to take the education movement out of the hands of the Manchester humbugs," Marx hit out against child labor and the extremities to which capitalists resorted. He cited the case of a little girl of nine years of age (who) fell on the floor asleep with exhaustion, during the 60 hours; she was roused and cried, but was forced to resume work!!" (Emphasis is Marx's.)[6]

Marx never separated his theoretic works from his actual activities and it is the activities of the workers in particular that he followed most carefully both in the "Blue books" of the factory inspectors and what was actually happening that did reach the press. In April 1856, he summarized the whole question of capitalism and its technology on the anniversary of the Chartists' paper: "All of our inventions and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force."

The battle of ideas Marx was engaged in was so inseparable from both class and all freedom struggles (what Marx called "history and its process") that he hailed John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry in 1860 as signalling not only the beginning of the end of slavery, but of a whole new world epoch. It is impossible in this age to deny the facts. The Civil War in the U.S. did break out the following year; the intensification of the class struggle in Great Britain reaching out for international labor solidarity affected the outcome of the Civil WAr in the US in a revolutionary way; the 1863 uprising in Poland against Tsarist Russia, followed by the intense class struggles in France with its labour leaders coming to London, did culminate in the founding of the First Workingmen's International Association, with Marx as its intellectual leader.

What ideologues do deny, and even some post-Marx Marxists question, is that these objective events (and Marx's activities related to them) led Marx to break with the very concept of theory. How otherwise to account for the total restructuring of Grundrisse as Capital? After all, Grundrisse (and the correspondence around it) reveals that Marx was so glad about his re-encounter with Hegel's dialectic that he credited it with helping him work out the "method of presentation" of all those massive economic studies. Yet, as great as was the change

when Marx decided to prepare part of Grundrisse for publication in 1859 as Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, he began it, not with Money or Value, but wrote a whole new first chapter on the Commodity. It was, indeed, a great innovation, which would be retained as a new beginning for all drafts and for the finally edited Capital. Nevertheless, that wasn't all that determined the content and structure of Capital. What did determine the totality of the restructuring was Marx's decision to put away both the Grundrisse and the Critique and start "ab novo."

His re-creation of the Hegelian dialectic in the historic framework of the turbulent 1860s is what led to his break with the very concept of theory. This becomes clear not simply from his 1870 "confession," but from the actuality of what is Capital; but here is his confession:

"Confidentially speaking, I in fact began 'Capital' in just the reverse (starting with third, the historic part) of the order in which it is presented to the public, except that the first volume, the one begun last, was immediately prepared for publication while the two others remained in that primitive state characteristic of all research at the outset."

Marx's battle of ideas with bourgeois theoreticians had so expanded at the beginning of the 1860s that the manuscript numbered nearly 1,000 pages. This "History of Theory" made up three books and we know it as Theories of Surplus Value (Capital, Vol. IV). But what is most historic and crucial about these magnificent, profound studies is that Marx relegated them to the very end of his three volumes of Capital. Instead of continuing with his critique of classical political economy "on its own", what Marx did was to turn to what the workers were doing and saying at the point of production.

The first great innovation Marx introduced, as he was preparing the first volume for the printer, was an addition to the very first chapter on "The Commodity" of the section, "Fetishism of Commodities." To this day, none -- either Marxist or non-Marxist -- question the today-ness, as well as the uniquely Marxian unity of theory and practice, that characterizes Marx's historical materialist view of human development through the ages and the different types of societies. How, then, can those critics still hold on to the contention that Marx was totally "Euro-centered"; that this, indeed, was so-called "classical Marxism"; that Marx, "the economist," failed to grasp "the Asiatic mode of production" as totally different from what he allegedly made into a universal -- West European economic development? Wouldn't it be more correct (even when these critics did not yet know of the Grundrisse, much less the Ethnological Notebooks) to

take serious note of Marx's brief view of pre-capitalist societies right in that first chapter of Capital. Marx not only specified the existence of primitive communal forms "among Romans, Teutons and Celts," but held that a "more exhaustive study of Asiatic ... forms of common property would show how, from the different forms of primitive common property, different forms of its dissolution have been developed." [7] Clearly, that is exactly what Marx himself had embarked upon; and, still, few study seriously his Ethnological Notebooks.

One great economist, Joseph Schumpeter, who was most impressed with the profundity of Marx's critique of classical political economy, and didn't shy away from acknowledging that economists owe much to Marx's analysis of the economic laws of capitalist development, was, nevertheless, so antagonistic to philosophy that he held it was impossible to have a truly genuine economic argument with him, because, as philosopher, he was forever "transforming historic narrative into historic reason." That is the dialectic of Marx's seeing, not merely the statistics he had amassed, but the live men and women reshaping history. Nowhere is this more true than concerning the so-called "Woman Question." Having turned away from further arguments with theoreticians to follow instead the happenings at the point of production and their political ramifications on the historic scene, Marx came up with the second great innovation in Capital -- his chapter on "The Working-Day."

That chapter had never appeared in Marx's theoretical works before -- be it the Grundrisse or Critique of Political Economy or History of Theory. Although, as a revolutionary activist, Marx had always been involved in the struggle for the shortening of the working day, it was only when his analysis covered it in such detail (76 pages, to be exact) that Marx devoted that much space to women in the process of production and arrived at very new conclusions on new forms of revolt. Where bourgeois theoreticians held that Marx, in detailing the onerous conditions of labor (and especially the degrading form of female labor), was writing not theory but a "sob story," Marx, in digging into those factory inspectors' "blue books" which the ideologues dismissed, did more than single out the inhuman attitude to women when he wrote: "In England women are still occasionally used instead of horses for hauling canal boats..." Marx now concluded that the simple worker's question, When does my day begin and when does it end?, was a greater philosophy of freedom than was was the bourgeois Declaration of the Rights of Man that Marx now designated as "the pompous catalogue of the 'inalienable rights of man.'"

Even were one opposed to Marx's description of the capitalists' "were-wolf hunger" for ever greater amounts of unpaid labor and looked only at the machine and at Marx's description of that instrumentality as a "mechanical monster" with its "demon power" organized into a whole system to which, Marx said, "motion is communicated by the transmitting

mechanism from a central automaton..." -- wouldn't the today-ness of it strike our age of robotiks? It certainly struck the miners on General Strike against the first appearance of automation in 1950. They thought that description was written, not by a mid-19th century man, but by someone who must have been right there in the mines with them and the continuous miner, which they called "a man killer."

Marx didn't separate his "economics" in Capital from its social and political ramifications, and thus he saw one and only "one positive feature" -- allowing women to go "outside of the domestic sphere." However, he warned at once against factory labor "in its brutal capitalistic form" which is nothing other than a "pestiferous source of corruption and slavery." But the collective labor of men and women, under different historic conditions, "creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relation between the sexes."

Marx continued: "It is, of course, just as absurd to hold the Teutonic-Christian form of the family to be absolute as it would be to apply that character to the ancient Roman, the ancient Greek, or the Eastern forms...." Marx ends by pointing to the fact that other historic conditions where both sexes work collectively could "become a source of human development."

That, of course, is not what capitalism aims at and therefore Marx intensifies his attack as he lashes out also against the whole bureaucratic structure, not just in the state, but in the factory. There the despotic plan of capital has a form all its own: the hierarchic structure of control over social labor, which he further concretises as requiring a whole army of foremen, managers and superintendents. This planned despotism, Marx points out, arises out of the antagonistic relation of labor and capital with its bureaucracy, which Marx likens to the military, demanding "barrack discipline" at the point of production. That is why Marx calls the whole relationship of subject to object, machines to living labor, "perverse." He has concretised what the early Marx had warned would be the result of the division between mental and manual labor: "To have one basis for life and another for science is a priori a lie."

Marx, the activist philosopher of revolution, was completing Volume I of Capital in the same period when he was most active in the First International:

(1) It is that organization that records, on July 19, 1867, that Marx proposed to the General Council that at its forthcoming Congress a discussion be held on the practical ways the International could "fulfil its function of a comon center of action for the working classes, male and female,

in their struggle tending to their complete emancipation from the domination of capital."

(2) On December 12, 1868 Marx wrote Kugelmann: "Great progress was evident in the last Congress of the American 'Labor Union' in that, among other things, it treated working women with complete equality ... Anybody who knows anything of history knows that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment."

(3) Marx again called Dr. Kugelmann's attention to the fact that, of course, the First International was not only practicing equality where women were concerned, but had just elected Mme. Harriet Law into the General Council.

Marx's sensitivity to women both as revolutionary force and reason held true in his individual relations as well as organizational relations -- and on an international level. It took all the way to the end of World War II before women's revolutionary activities in the Resistance Movement finally inspired one woman Marxist to undertake a study of women in the Paris Commune. Edith Thomas' work, Women Incendiaries, is the first to give us a full view of women in the greatest revolution of Marx's time -- the Paris Commune. It is there we learn of Marx's role -- for it was he who had advised Elizabeth Dmitrieva to go to Paris before the outbreak of the Civil War -- and it was she who organized the famed Union des Femmes pour la Défense de Paris et les Soins aux Blessés, the independent women's section of the First International. Moreover, the relationship between Marx and Dmitrieva had developed earlier when she was sending Marx material on Russian agriculture, which was also her preoccupation.

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III

"The weak points in the abstract materialism of natural science, a materialism that excludes history and its process," Marx wrote in Capital (Vol.I, p. 406n), "are at once evident from the abstract and ideological conceptions of its spokesmen, whenever they venture beyond the bounds of their own specialty." As we can see from this, Marx's turn, in his last decade, to the study of empiric anthropology was made under no illusion that he would there find other historic materialists who would be dialectically analyzing the new findings on pre-capitalist societies, a question he had posed to himself as he was working on the Grundrisse and asked himself what preceded capitalism, and concluded from his studies that human development was an "absolute movement of becoming." Marx's ever-continuing confrontation with "history and its process", as much as his Promethean vision, disclosed not only how different were his views from bourgeois theoreticians but how his views on anthropology differed from those of his very closest collaborator, Frederick Engels.

With hindsight, it is not difficult to see that Engels did not rigorously follow what Marx had asked him to do -- to make sure that all further editions and translations of Volume I of Capital followed the French edition. Whether he was in any way responsible, with his over-emphasis on the materialist aspects, the point is that it was not only the Populist, Mikhailovsky, who tried to

attribute to Marx the making of "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation" into a universal for all human development. As we showed, Marx had written a very sharp critique of Mikhailovsky's article. Post-Marx Marxists, however, continued to express similar views to Mikhailovsky's and to base themselves on Engels' editions of Volume I of Capital.

What mainly concerns us here is the superficial (if not outright chauvinist) attitude of post-Marx Marxists to the last decade of Marx's life. Especially shocking is the attitude of Ryazanov, who first discovered the Ethnological Notebooks and, without reading them, declared them to be "inexcuseable pedantry." What was more damaging, however,

to future generations of Marxists was the very first book that Engels wrote after Marx's death, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, presenting it as a "bequest" from Marx. But the simple truth tells a different story. It is true that Marx had asked Engels to be sure to read Ancient Society, which had just come off the press and interested him greatly. We have Engels' word for it, however, that he was too busy with other matters to read it and got it only after Marx's death when he found Marx's notes on it. It is not clear whether Engels had by then found in those unpublished manuscripts of Marx either the Grundrisse or much of what we now know as the Ethnological Notesbooks, except the notes on Morgan and perhaps Kovalevsky. Because he presented this as a "bequest" from Marx, we were all raised on this concept of women's liberation as if it were, indeed, a work of Engels and Marx. Now that we finally have the transcription of the Ethnological Notebooks -- and also have Marx's commentaries on Kovalevsky and correspondence on Maurer, as well as the Grundrisse -- it shouldn't be difficult to disentangle Marx's views on women and dialectics from those of Engels.

It is true that Engels was Marx's closest collaborator, whom he had entrusted to "make something out of" the massive material he had accumulated for Volumes II and III of Capital, but did not live to edit. What Marx had also entrusted him with was to make sure that the French edition of Volume I, which is the only definitive edition Marx himself edited, should be the one used for all other editions.[8] What is most relevant to us now is what exactly Engels had done on that, since the most important changes Marx had introduced there concerned the accumulation of capital. They have become crucial since the emergence of a Third World.

So little attention had been paid to that little word, "so-called," as used for Part VIII ("The So-Called Primitive Accumulation of Capital"), that Marx evidently felt that, in order to stress both the concentration and centralization of capital and the dialectical development of Part VII ("The Accumulation of Capital"), he should subordinate Part VIII to that Part VII, thereby showing that the so-called primitive accumulation wasn't at all limited to the beginnings of capital. The key to the ramifications of the concentration and centralization of capital, and its extension to what we now call imperialism, was one of the most significant paragraphs in that French edition. Unfortunately, that is precisely the paragraph Engels omitted as he edited the English edition. It is the one which stresses the creation of a world market when capitalism reaches its highest technological stage. It is at that point, says Marx, that capitalism "successively annexed extensive areas of the New World, Asia and Australia."[9]

It is necessary to keep in mind that it wasn't only a quantitative difference between what Engels quoted from Marx's "Abstract" -- some few pages -- and the actual excerpts and commentary that Marx had made, which amounted to some 98 pages. Far more important is the total disparity in critical/uncritical attitudes to Morgan and the different conclusions Marx and Engels drew from Morgan's work. Take the question of a transition from one period to another. Marx was showing that <u>during</u> a transition period, one sees the duality emerging that reveals the beginning of antagonisms, whereas Engels always seems to have antagonisms only at the end, as if class society came in very nearly full blown <u>after</u> the communal form was destroyed and private property was established. Where Engels sees a unilinear progression, Marx traces dialectical development from one stage to another and relates it to revolutionary upsurges so that economic crises are seen as "epochs of social revolution."

The point was that the element of oppression in general and of women in particular arose from <u>within</u> primitive communism itself, and was not merely related to a change from "matriarchy."

What was a great deal more important in tracing historic development and seeing other human relations was that it allowed for seeing new paths to revolution and the multidimensionality of human development. For example, as early as the Grundrisse (but then, Engels did not know the Grundrisse), Marx called attention to the "dignity" of the guild, commenting; "Here labor itself is still half the expression of artistic creation, half its own reward. Labor still belongs to a man."

What was crucial to Marx in seeing the great freedom of the Iroquois women was to show how great was the freedom the women had before American civilization destroyed the Indians. Indeed, first, it was true throughout the world that "civilized" nations took away the freedom of the women, as was true when British imperialism deprived the Irish women of many of their freedoms when they conquered Ireland. Marx's hatred of capitalism as he studied pre-capitalist societies grew more intense. But, far from concluding, as Engels did, that the move from "mother right" signalled "the world historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels' emphasis), he showed that within the primitive commune there had already emerged such distinction in ranks that, clearly, women's freedom there was far from being total. Marx pointed to the fact that while the women were allowed to express their opinion "through an orator of their own selection, the decisions were made by the Council."

Secondly, and that is inseparable from the first, was the resistance of the women, the "feminist ferment" Marx saw in every revolution. Thus Marx criticized Morgan on some of his statements about ancient Greece and the degraded status of women. Marx held that the Greek goddesses on Olympus were not just statues, but expressed myths of past glories that may, in fact, have reflected a previous stage, and/or expressed a desire for a very different future.

Marx acknowledged Morgan's great contribution on the theory of the gens and its early egalitarian society, but his attitude bore no resemblance whatever to Engels' uncritical acclaim of Morgan, whom he credited with nothing short of discovering "afresh in America the materialist conception of history discovered by Marx 40 years ago." Far from considering Morgan a veritable historical materialist, Marx rejected Morgan's biologism and evolutionism.

What Marx was tracing was the fact that, long before the dissolution of the primitive commune, there had already emerged the question of rank within the egalitarian commune. He laughs ironically at the whole question of how, in patriarchy, they began changing the names of the children in order

to assure paternal instead of maternal rights: "Innate casuistry! To change things by changing their names! And to find loopholes for violating tradition while maintaining tradition, when direct interest supplied sufficient impulse." ¶ Engels did quote that part from Marx, and also quoted a section on the fact that all class antagonisms were present "in miniature" in the family, itself. But he was so overwhelmed by the question of private property that all of the antagonisms within the commune seemed hidden to him by his concentration on private property and the monogamous family. Though Marx surely did connect the monogamous family with private property, what was pivotal for him was the antagonistic relationship between chief and ranks.

Which is why Marx emphasized that the decline of the primitive commune was not due to external factors alone, nor to "the world historic defeat of the female sex" (Engels' phrase but never one that Marx used). On the contrary, even when Marx not only praised the primitive commune highly but saw a possibility for transforming it into a modern collective society, he warned: "In order to save the Russian commune there must be a Russian revolution."

If I may divert for a moment, I'd like to cite the fact that in my national lecture tour this year on the Marx centenary, I found the greatest interest in that subject when I addressed the Third World Women's Conference held in Urbana, Illinois from April 9 to 13. I was especially impressed with the fact that there seemed to be no separation in their minds between the question of Third World and the question of women's liberation. As impressive, also, was the audience at my lecture in Salt Lake City, where I found that a woman anthropologist, Patricia Albers, had just co-edited with Beatrice Medicine The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women (University Press of America). In her introductory essay, Albers points out that the views of the Plains Indian women as "chattel, enslaved as beasts of burden" in which the creativity and struggle of these women is ignored, "tell us more about the attitudes of the Euro-Americans who studied Plains Indians than about the actual conditions under which these people lived."

One of the most important differences between Marx and Engels is that Marx drew no such unbridgeable gulf between the primitive and the civilized as Engels did.

The pivotal point, to Marx, always was "the historical environment in which it occurs." Instead of seeing human development unilinearly, he pointed to the variety of paths which led from the primitive commune to a different world -- never, however, without a revolution. Thus, when, in his last year, his trip to Algiers led him to become so excited with the Arabs that he praised not only their resistance to authority but even their "elegant and graceful dress", he ended his description of the experience: "Nevertheless, they will go to the devil without a revolutionary movement." As Paul Lafargue reported the end of Marx's trip: "Marx has come back with his head full of Africa and the Arabs." [10]

The new moments he was experiencing as he intensified his studies of pre-capitalist society, on women, on the primitive commune, on the peasantry, illuminate Marx's works as a totality. Thus it isn't a question of a mere return to the concept of women which he first expressed in the 1844 Manuscripts, nor, as some anthropologists would have it, simply a move from a philosophic to an empiric anthropology. Rather, as a revolutionary, Marx's hostility to capitalism's colonialism was intensifying to such a degree that his emphasis was on how deep must be its uprooting. His latest studies enabled Marx to see the possibility of new human relations, not as they might come through a mere "updating" of primitive communism's equality of the sexes, as among the Iroquois, but as Marx sensed they would burst forth

from a new type of revolution.

The economist, Schumpeter, was not the only one who saw Marx turning historic narrative into historic reason. The great anthropologist, Sir Raymond Firth, who is certainly no Marxist, focuses on the fact that Capital is not so much an economic work as "a dramatic history designed to involve its readers in the events described."[11] I heartily agree with Professor Diamond's editorial in the first issue of Dialectical Anthropology in 1975: "The Marxist tradition can be taken as an anthropology which was aborted by the rise of academic social science, and including academic Marxists, and the stultifying division of intellectual labor involved in the very definition of a civilized academic structure, whether right, left or center." Marx, of course, was not limiting his critique to "stultifying division of intellectual labor", but to the division between mental and manual labor. However, he never underestimated the creativity of hard intellectual labor when once the intellectual related himself to the labor movement. What post-Marx Marxists have failed to do with his legacy and their near disregard of his Ethnological Notebooks is no reason for us not to do the hard labor required in hearing Marx think.

Marx's historic originality in internalizing new data was certainly worlds apart from Engels' being overwhelmed by it. And in each case he saw economic crises as "epochs of social revolution". The Taiping Revolution led him to an interest in pre-capitalist society. Not only did the Grundrisse, the impulse for which has always been attributed to the British economic crisis in 1857, have that magnificent part on pre-capitalist societies; but Marx remembered the Taiping Revolution in Capital itself.

In the 1860s, it was not only the Civil War in the United States which ended slavery and opened new doors of development, but all the actual struggles of women were seen at their highest point in the greatest revolution of Marx's day -- the Paris Commune. Marx's new studies in the 1870s until his death meant a return to anthropology, not as concept alone, nor as empiric studies in and for themselves, but as a movement of "absolute becoming" through his philosophy of "revolution in permanence."

-- RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

(July 1983)

FOOTNOTES:

1. In a letter from Marx to Engels in 1856, he commented on the attitude of the journalist who had written about them: "What is so very strange is that he treats the two of us as a singlular, 'Marx and Engels says', etc."

2. See Mikhail Vitkin, Vostok v Philosophico-Historicheskoi Kontseptsii K. Marksa y F. Engelsa (Miscow: 1972). Those who do not read Russian can get the essence of his view in several articles which have appeared in English, among which are: "The Problem of the Universality of Social Relations in Classical Marxism", Studies in Soviet Thought 20 (1979); "The Asiatic Mode of Production", Philosophy and Social Criticism, Vol. 8 (1) 1981; and "Marx Between West and East", Studies in Soviet Thought 23 (1982).

3. Marx's "revolution in permanence" is not to be confused with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which had always subordinated the peasantry as any sort of vanguard revolutionary force; indeed, not even granting them a "national consciousness."

4. Marx's November 1877 letter to the editor of the Russian journal which had printed Mikhailovsky's critique is included in Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence, Moscow, 1955.

5. The 1932 essay by Marcuse, "The Foundation of Historical Materialism" was translated and included in Studies in Critical Philosophy (London: New Left Books, 1972).

(footnotes continued)

6. This article is included in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Vol. 12, pp. 460-463.

7. Capital, Vol. I, p.89, ftn. 1, Kerr edition

8. For a critical discussion see "The French Edition of Capital, 100 Years After," paper presented by Kevin Anderson to the Conference of the Eastern Sociological Society, Philadelphia, March 19, 1982.

9. For the full paragraph which Engels left out, see my Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982), p. 148.

10. These letters are included in Saul K. Padover, Karl Marx: An Intimate Biography (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978).

11. See Raymond Firth, "The Sceptical Anthropologist? Social Anthropology and Marxist Views on Society," in Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology (London: Malaby Press, 1975).

July 20, 1983

Prof. Stanley Diamond
Anthropology Department
New School for Social Research
66 West 12th St.
New York, N.Y. 10011

Dear Professor Diamond:

I'm sorry that you were not in town when I reached New York. I look forward to seeing you in September.

The Marx centenary has meant, for me, a national lecture tour lasting three full months, during which I made no less than 46 talks. When I finally reached home in June, I could do nothing other than try to rest some. But finally my paper for the September Conference is finished, and I enclose it herewith.

When is it that the agenda will be set?

Yours,

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