

What is in the Air?

BLACK DIMENSION
(to be put in after the 1907 Congress)

When the 1907 Congress referred back to the 1848 revolution, it was naturally mainly for purposes of debating the question of Marx's analysis of a revolution he participated in, as well as the theory of revolution that preceded the actual -- the Communist Manifesto. Peculiarly enough, it did not extend to the ~~theory~~ concept of permanent revolution that Marx projected ^{in his 1850 Address to the Congress} after the defeat of the 1848 revolution. This is the more curious because Trotsky had projected his own theory of permanent revolution and Lenin referred at one point disparagingly to it in 1907. ~~What none talked~~ What none talked about was what was "in the air", be it 1848 or 1907, that is to say, the ramifications ^{of an ongoing} of revolution into countries not experiencing it.

And yet, that is precisely the point that is of the essence to us today. Take the ^{ramifications of the} 1848 revolution, not as discussed in 1907, ~~but~~ in the period it happened. The very first women's liberation movement took place in the U.S. in Seneca Falls in 1848. Though none there, either, discussed a European proletarian revolution, revolution was in the air in the deepest possible manner in the U.S. both as a struggle for freedom against slavery, and as the beginning of a women's ~~liberation~~ liberation movement. And there is no doubt that the inspiration for it came precisely from the Black dimension towards the middle class women who were working in the anti slavery movement, and moved to extend that towards their own very different type of liberation. And because Black dimension was so ^{crucial} crucial to any freedom struggle in the U.S., no matter what ~~the~~ struggle you were engaged in, the Black dimension was the inspiration force, be it in the Abolitionist movement, in women's rights, or for that matter in the great literature of the day.

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By 1860 when John Brown attacked Harpers Ferry, Marx considered it a

world struggle for freedom, and, indeed, began leaving the library for actual activities which led to the establishment of the First Workingman's International. The point is that everything, most especially, the ~~theory~~^{theory} of revolution, so deepened that whether it was ~~his~~ his greatest theoretical work itself, Capital, the organizational work of the First International, or woman as Reason as well as force, in the participation in his organization, ~~it became a total philosophy~~^{multifaceted} of revolution. In a way, an important way, this was prefigured in the Taiping ~~Revolution~~ Revolution in the 1850s. That is to say, from Eurocentrism, Marx's world view was extending to ~~Asian~~ Asian society, both Indian and Chinese. Even more important than ~~extension~~^{global} extension as if that were narrowed to geography, was the concept of the forces of revolution, whether that be what he called a "second edition of the peasant revolution" as against the ~~misused~~ misused and most popular phrase, "rural idiocy"; a greater appreciation of artisans, of pre-capitalist society, and a greater hatred for capitalism as against playing up the revolutionary features of capitalism when it overthrew feudalism in the Communist Manifesto.

It is fantastic for example for ~~the~~^{the WIM} today to so soon forget that not only the inspiration but the actual tactics of revolt for the activist 60s ~~came~~ came from the Black dimension. And while not that direct a relationship to the development of the ~~Marxist~~ Marxist movement in Europe in the 1907 period, it is a fact that both the Black dimension and the WIM that had begun as early as Marx's day and had come to a tragic climax in the famous Triangle fires, was made an international holiday ~~by~~^{by} the first German socialist movement under the direction of Clara Zetkin. And yet we find no hint of ~~any~~ any of this in either the discussions in the 1907 Congress or in the further development of Rosa Luxemburg. It is not as unconnected as it would appear to be with the fact that she had what to this writer is a fantastically wrong position on the National Question. We will see this reappear again ~~in~~ ~~1917~~ in 1917 when, though she hails the RR

as the greatest daring act, chooses to criticize the Bolsheviks actually carrying out instead of just believing in the principle of self-determination of nations. ~~On the other hand,~~ she herself turned to great new activity in women's liberation both during the suffrage campaign and in getting the greatest support for her anti-war activity among the women revolutionaries.

The reason that it is important before we get to the greatest period of her self-development, theoretically, organizationally, practically, and in the development and rejection of friendships -- ~~1910 - 1918~~ -- is that it's no abstract matter to talk about what is "in the air." There is, in fact, no other way to listen both to the voices from below, to anticipate both the subjective and objective developments, rooted in the economic and political crises of the day.

Take something as far removed from her period and as close to our own, but for a very different chapter, as the question of Simone DeBeauvoir's The Second Sex. ~~As against the new~~ As against the new women's liberation movement that arose in the mid-1960s and had very nearly every American woman intellectual acknowledge great indebtedness to Simone de Beauvoir as a sort of prophet for the movement they were first building up, the appearance of her book in England in 1953 met a very different reaction from Black women in this country. In one discussion I had, the Black women ^{strongly} rejected ~~the~~ ^{book} ~~the~~ ^{fact} ~~not~~ because ~~she~~ had raised the sexual question or any of the other features for which she was being attacked in the ~~bourgeois~~ bourgeois press, but because she was saying that ~~it~~ since it is men's fault

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that we women are so oppressed, they have to free us. The Black woman insisted that it sounded exactly like "white man's burden" that the whites are always saying in relation to the Blacks, and so far as she was concerned unless the women learn what the Blacks had learned, that nobody gives you freedom, you have to fight for it; you have to get self-emanzipation, it will never come.

It's precisely the totality of the crises as they begin to pile up at the very first new stages of strikes in Germany in 1910 and Rosa's return to the Mass Strike, not as a theory of the RR, but as a necessity for the German developments, and as the world is moving toward WWI, that Rosa will first ~~plunge~~ plunge into her original theories. It is to this we have to return, without, however, forgetting what was in the air either in 1848 or 1905 and presently in Rosa's life in 1910.

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