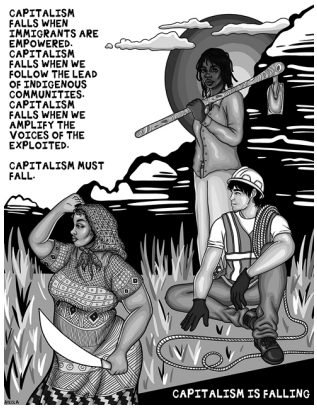
Marx on Communal Villages as Loci of Revolution, in 19th C. Russia & Beyond

written by Kevin B. Anderson | August 4, 2025



Two years before his 1879–82 notebooks on communal social forms around the world, Marx begins to see an uprising in Russia as the most likely starting point for a wider European revolution. For example, in remarks on the Russo-Turkish War (the "oriental crisis") in a letter of September 27, 1877, to the New Jersey communist Friedrich Sorge, Marx views Russia as a cauldron of revolution:

> That crisis marks a new turning point in European history. Russia — and I have studied conditions there from the original Russian sources, unofficial and official (the latter only available to a few people but got for me through friends in Petersburg)— has long been on the verge of an upheaval. The gallant Turks have hastened the explosion by years with the thrashing they have inflicted, not only upon the Russian army and Russian finances, but in a highly personal and individual manner on the *dynasty commanding* the army (the Tsar, the heir to the throne and six other Romanovs). The upheaval will begin *secundum artem* [according to the rules of the art] with some playing at constitutionalism and then there will be a fine row. If Mother Nature is not particularly unfavorable toward us, we shall still live to see the fun! The stupid nonsense which the Russian students are perpetrating is only a symptom, worthless in itself. But it is a symptom. All sections of Russian society are in complete disintegration economically, morally, and intellectually. This time the revolution will begin in the East, hitherto the unbroken bulwark and reserve army of counterrevolution. (Marx-Engels Collected Works [hereafter MECW], 45: 278)

In this period, the last years of Marx's life, I know of no other consideration of revolutionary possibilities in any other country equivalent to what he is expressing here concerning Russia. This is illustrated in how, in the very same letter, Marx dismisses the prospects of revolution in France, still suffering under the wave of reaction that set in after the defeat of the Paris Commune, and where the republicans were battling the threat of a military dictatorship: "The *French crisis*is an altogether secondary affair compared with the oriental one. Yet one can only hope the bourgeois republic wins" (MECW 45: 278). In the event, Russia defeated Turkey the following year, thus attenuating for the moment the internal crisis Marx foresaw in 1877. But he did not alter his position on the underlying issues eating away at the Russian social order. This is seen in a letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht four months later, in which he remarked that, while Turkey's defeat had for the moment forestalled a revolutionary outbreak, he continued to believe that "all the elements are present in abundant measure" for a "social revolution" in Russia "and hence radical change throughout Europe" (Letter of February 4, 1878, MECW 45: 296).

Fifteen months later, in a letter to French socialist Jules Guesde dated May 10, 1879, which has come to light only recently, Marx writes in a similar vein concerning the world revolution starting in Russia. But, here, he details how it might reach Western Europe and the obstacles it would face there:

> I am convinced that the explosion of the revolution will begin this time not in the West but in the Orient, in Russia. It will first impact the two other harsh despotisms [*illegible word*], Austria and Germany, where a violent upheaval [*bouleversement*] has become a historical necessity. It is of the highest importance that at the moment of this general crisis in Europe we find the French proletariat already having been organized into [*constitué*] a workers' party and ready to play its role. As to England, the material elements for its social transformation are superabundant, but a driving spirit [*l'esprit moteur*] is lacking. It will not form up, except under the impact of the explosion of events on the Continent. It must never be forgotten that, however impoverished [*misérable*] the condition of the greater part of the English working class, it takes part nonetheless, to a certain extent, in the British Empire's domination of the world market, or, what is even worse, imagines itself to be taking part in it.[1]

As in the 1877 letter to Sorge and the 1878 one to Liebknecht, Marx sees the revolution breaking out first in Russia.

But, here, sounding notes similar to those in the Confidential Communication on Ireland of 1870, he expresses strong, perhaps even stronger, reservations about the level of class consciousness among English workers, here stressing their affective ties to the Empire. This should not, however, be taken to mean that Marx has given up on the English working class, any more than in the Confidential Communication of nine years earlier. Also, as in 1870, he sees France in a crucial role but provides more details. His failure to mention the Paris Commune in a letter that would likely have been read by the French police may be due to ongoing political repression of those associated with it. And, in a way, Russia is now a replacement for Ireland, as the land where the revolution is most likely to detonate first. Different, of course, is the lack of Russian working-class immigration, of anything similar to the Irish subproletariat in Britain, and the fact that Russia is not under colonial domination. The letter constitutes a multifaceted sketch of how the next European revolution would likely break out and move forward, written from a seamlessly internationalist perspective that also takes very specific account of local and national circumstances. Editor Jean-Numa Ducange is absolutely correct to refer to "France," the "Orient," and the "West" in his title for the article containing the letter. It should also be noted that, in his response, Guesde shows a narrow focus on France, responding only to remarks by Marx about various socialist tendencies in his country, not even mentioning Marx's key point about the European revolution breaking out first in Russia. Here, not only can we discern a Western disinterest in revolutionary movements emanating from the non-industrialized societies to the East, but we are also on the road toward the Second International's focus on socialist parties in each nation operating quite separately from each other, joined together only in a loose federation.

In this 1878–79 correspondence, Marx does not mention Russia's communal villages. It is only in his very last publication that Marx finally combines these two elements, Russia as starting point for a new round of revolution in Europe and the Russian village commune as source of resistance to capital, of revolution, and of communism. He does so in a new preface, coauthored with Engels, to the 1882 Russian edition of *Communist Manifesto*. This brief preface, drafted in December 1881, adds discussion of both the US and Russia, each of them hardly mentioned in 1848 but since then having risen to great prominence, the US for its surging industrial economy, and Russia for its plethora of revolutionary movements.

Without being aware of the letter to Zasulich and other discussions by Marx of the Russian village

commune, all of which lay unpublished in 1882, the reference to these communes as loci of revolution might have been easy to miss, especially given its brevity:

> Can the Russian *obshchina*, a form, albeit heavily eroded, of the primeval communal ownership of the land, pass directly into the higher, communist form of communal ownership? Or must it first go through the same process of dissolution that marks the West's historical development? The only answer that is possible today is: Were [*wird*] the Russian revolution to become the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West [*im Westen*], so that the two fulfill [*ergänzen*][2] each other, then the present Russian communal landownership may serve as the point of departure [*zum Ausgangspunkt*] for a communist development. (*Late Marx and the Russian Road*, edited by Teodor Shanin, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983 [hereafter SHN]: 139; MEGA2 I/25: 296)

Neither in the above lines in the 1882 preface to the *Manifesto*nor in his correspondence with Russians in his last years does Marx acknowledge a change of position. Still, the changes since the 1840s and early 1850s are clear. For, in the earlier period, he viewed Russia as an utterly reactionary power, but, by now, Russia had become for him the likely starting point of a wider revolution.

Interestingly, the last clause of the above was altered in the hand-written original, with a different wording crossed out, presumably at the end of the process of writing the preface. With the crossed-out text intact, the preface would have ended with the phrase "communal land- ownership's ruin may be avoided" (MEGA2 I/25: 974). If, as is then likely, the substitute phrase about the commune "as the point of departure for a communist development" was added at the last minute, this heightens the possibility that the final wording constituted a theoretical innovation on Marx's part.

The above sentences—in what was Marx's last publication—exhibit a complex and intricate dialectic that needs to be unpacked. It is important to note that the quest for the free development of the Russian commune is not unconditioned, a point that is made explicit here, versus being left only implicit in the 1881 drafts of the letter to Zasulich. Russia can avoid the dissolution of its rural communes and the destructive process of the primitive accumulation of capital if the effort to do so is accompanied by a "proletarian revolution in the West."

There are two contingencies here, which form part of a totality riven with contradictions and various possibilities. Were a Russian revolution to break out ahead of one in the West—likely on the basis of a revolution rooted in the rural communes and their resistance both to the state and to capitalist incursions—then a wider European revolution would be touched off not in Western Europe but in Russia. In this case, Russia's Indigenous form of rural communism would become the spark, "as the point of departure" for a wider revolution and transition to a modern, positive form of communism. Thus, there could be no successful transformation of the Russian communes into a modern communism without a proletarian revolution in Western Europe, but the strong possibility also existed that a revolution in Russia could touch off such an event in the West.

Despite being published in Russian and soon after in German, the 1882 preface was almost completely forgotten. This forgetting—by the "post- Marx Marxists, beginning with Frederick Engels,"[3] in Dunayevskaya's pungent formulation—can be seen in Engels's letter to Karl Kautsky two years later, on February 16, 1884:

> [In Java] today, primitive communism (so long as it has not been stirred up by some element of modern communism) furnishes the finest and broadest basis of exploitation and despotism, as well as in India and Russia, and survives in the midst of modern society as an anachronism (to be eliminated or, one almost might say, turned back on its course) no less than the mark

communities of the original cantons. (MECW 47:103)

In the above, Engels places so much emphasis on the need of these pre-capitalist communes, whether the village communes of Java or the traditional German/Swiss "mark community" or village commune, to be "stirred up by modern communism" that the 1882 preface recedes almost to the vanishing point. Instead, unlike Marx, he seems largely to have maintained their Eurocentric positions of the 1850s, which held that these kinds of communal forms were the foundation of "Oriental despotism." It seems, therefore, that Engels never changed his position on the Russian village commune very much.

The newness of Marx's 1882 formulation can also be seen when compared to the drafts of the letter to Vera Zasulich written nine months earlier, in March 1881. As discussed in previous chapters, in those drafts Marx saw the Russian village commune as something distinct from Western European villages. In the West, individuals and family groups, or agricultural laborers working for wages, worked specific plots of land, which were held as private property or at least with possessory rights held by families. In the Russian village, both work groups and property relations were instead organized communally, with individual families having a share in the commune as a whole but not receiving ownership or even long-term possession of a specific piece of agricultural land.

But the Zasulich texts comprised letters and drafts, not programmatic texts, unlike the 1882 preface to the *Manifesto*. Here, albeit briefly, Marx looks through a wider lens, incorporating the Russian village into the system of global capitalism and its dialectical opposite, the movements of revolution and resistance by a wide variety of social groups throughout that system, from London and Paris to Saint Petersburg. In this way, he makes his theorization of revolution in Russia and Western Europe clearer than anywhere else, despite the brevity of the text.

Some forty years ago, as the late Marx was being first put forward on an international level as a topic of research by those like Dunayevskaya and Shanin, three different lines of interpretation could already be discerned. First, in Shanin's 1983 volume, *Late Marx and the Russian Road*, an essay by the British Marxists Derek Sayer and Philip Corrigan took the position that there was nothing really new here, "that Marx's late texts represent not so much a radical break as a clarification of how his 'mature' texts should have been read in the first place" (SHN: 80). This approach continues today among those who acknowledge the originality of the late Marx but see it as simply continuous in this respect with the young Marx and with the mature Marx of *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. In other words, Marx remains brilliant but there are no fundamental changes in the period 1869–82.

A second and seemingly more fruitful approach, also found in the Shanin collection, acknowledges important changes of perspective by Marx after 1869, so much so that they constitute a break in his thought. This is the position of Shanin himself in 1983. This approach is also found in the essay by the Japanese Marx scholar Haruki Wada, who carries out a deep textual analysis. Nearly a decade before the collapse of the Soviet Union and even before the ascendency of Mikhail Gorbachev, Wada had managed to obtain access to some of Marx's papers in Moscow, something almost invariably denied to researchers from outside the Soviet bloc. Wada begins by discussing some of Marx's statements in the drafts of the letter to Zasulich about the possibility of a revolution emanating from the Russian village communes—"a Russian revolution is required, if the Russian commune is to be saved"—and contrasts them with Marx's earlier judgments from the 1850s to the effect that the communes were conservative and that radical change would need to come from outside, from the Western proletarian revolution (SHN: 67). Wada also notes that Marx has by now become a supporter of the Russian Populists and their idea of a peasant revolution and direct attacks on the autocratic state. Wada writes that this contrasted with those around Zasulich, who awaited the development of an industrial proletariat for a revolution. Finally, Wada observes that Engels never

really changed regarding their old view of Russia from the 1850s, and he notes Marx's declining health by late 1881, when the request for a new preface arrived.

Wada also notes that the surviving draft of their introduction to the *Manifesto* was in Engels's handwriting. From all this, Wada concludes Marx must have "asked Engels to make a draft, and put his signature to it" (SHN: 70). This seemingly rigorous argument is less convincing than it seems. I am aware of no case—as seen most clearly early on in their collaboration in 1847–48 on the *Communist Manifesto*, and for which Engels's early draft has been preserved—in which Marx was not clearly the senior author in any of their joint writings. More substantively, Engels never wrote anything similar to the 1882 preface after Marx's death, even though he quoted it on one occasion, as he continued to view the Russian commune as something backward and without any revolutionary potential. Thus, Marx is almost certainly the author of the 1882 preface.

At a more general level, Wada's argument lends itself to the notion that Marx saw the Russian commune as an autonomous force of revolution that could establish a society that could recede from world capitalism and build a viable socialism on its own resources, not only without leadership from the "Western" proletariat but also without even their participation or that of already industrialized societies. In short, we do not need the working class for radical, anti-capitalist revolution. Here too, a variety of thinkers, from Maoists of the 1960s and '70s (as Wada himself was at the time) to radical ecologists in more recent years, have picked up on this strand of argument, not always to good effect.

Dunayevskaya articulates a third kind of argument concerning the late Marx. As a relative outsider to the Marxist intellectual establishment of the time, she was not invited to contribute to the Shanin collection, but, in this period, she addresses not only the late Marx on Russia but also the *Ethnological Notebooks*. Overall, she sees both "new moments" and continuities in Marx's late writings, writing that, in the *Ethnological Notebooks*, "he was completing the circle begun in 1844" and "was diving into the study of human development, both in different historic periods and in the most basic Man//Woman relationship."[4] All this was couched in terms of Marx's concept of "revolution in permanence," as put forth in the 1850 "Address to the Communist League," and which is seen to have marked his entire work thereafter.[5] The 1844 reference concerns the startlingly radical paragraph from the *1844Manuscripts* on gender with which de Beauvoir ended *The Second Sex*, as discussed in chapter 2. Whether in Marx's notes on Morgan, as discussed in chapter 1, or in the late Marx on the Russian communal village, Dunayevskaya stresses not only the ways in which Iroquois clans or Russian village communes offered an alternative to capitalism but also how even these precapitalist forms of communism exhibited social contradictions, including over gender. Moreover, these were, for her, not just historical but contemporary issues:

> These studies enabled Marx (*Marx, not Engels*) 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.[6]

In this sense, Marx's exploration of gender in the *Ethnological Notebooks* was connected to those on the Russian village commune, and to gender in other clan and communal societies Marx studies in his last years, with all this connected to "a new type of revolution."

Dunayevskaya also finds deep connections between what was going on in Russia and the capitalist societies of Western Europe. Thus she stresses, with regard to Russia, that it would be

> a capitalist world in crisis . . . which creates favorable conditions for transforming primitive communism into a modern collective society: "In order to save the Russian commune there

> must be a Russian Revolution." In a word, revolution is indispensable, whether one has to go through capitalism, or can go to the new society "directly" from the commune.[7]

In commenting on the 1882 preface, she writes that it "projected the idea that Russia could be the first to have a proletarian revolution ahead of the West."[8] That is, a Russian revolution could surge ahead of one in the West, forming a starting point, but it could not remain alone if it were to be successful. It could not win out in long-term isolation from the Western proletariat.

I took a position similar to that of my mentor Dunayevskaya on the 1882 preface in *Marx at the Margins*, noting that "a Russian revolution based upon its agrarian communal forms would be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the development of a modern communism."[9] It would be necessary, though, to shake the Western proletariat out of the doldrums into which it had descended with the defeat of the Paris Commune, and soon after, of Reconstruction in the US. This amounted to the setting in of a global era of reaction in the West, after the revolutionary period of the 1860s through the early 1870s. That is why I began the present chapter with Marx's Ireland essay on the interrelationship of the agrarian periphery's revolutionary struggles to that of the working class in the metropole. That is also why I took up Marx on the "Western" Paris Commune, also in this chapter, just before considering Marx on the Russian commune. Still, the Russian commune and similar social forms around the world were, in Marx's eyes, crucial "starting points" for global revolution and also points for the conceptualization of an alternative to capitalism. His interest in Russia deepened as it became the first country where *Capital* was translated (in 1872), and where, unlike in Germany, the book was extensively discussed by the intellectuals, and where a vibrant, youthful revolutionary movement—composed of students and young intellectuals who sought to stir up a peasant revolution based upon the village commune—was growing by leaps and bounds.

It must be underlined that Marx, while rejecting unilinear notions of progress and development, was calling neither for the preservation of these village communes nor for their return to a "purer" state than the one presently under capitalist encroachment. Nor was he calling for a revolution based upon rural Russia alone. Instead, all this was part of a broader, global strategic view of revolution, around the "agrarian question," something that dogs the left to this day. This problem is addressed by the French Marxist thinker Isabelle Garo:

> Thus, the traditional commune is to be conceived not as a model to be generalized but as the possible social and, above all, political lever of an alliance between the working class and the exploited peasant class, a lever at once indispensable and extremely difficult to construct.[10]

The young Brazilian economist Guilherme Nunes Pires cautions that for Marx, "only with the Western proletarian revolution and the incorporation in the rural commune of the most advanced techniques of production" could a "transition by a non-capitalist road . . . to a classless society" take place.[11] These are valid points, but, at the same time, it should be noted that Marx is reversing the directionality of the European revolution in his 1877–78 letters and in the 1882 preface to the *Manifesto* when he writes of revolution in Russia based on the commune as such as a revolution's "point of departure."

Looking at the problem in this more general, global sense, I would argue that Marx's writings on the Russian village commune and revolution, especially the 1882 preface to the *Manifesto,* are just the tip of the iceberg. They form part of a vast project in which, as we have seen, he made hundreds of thousands of words of notes on anthropological and social history studies of India, Indonesia, North Africa, precolonial and colonial Latin America, Russia, ancient Rome, precolonial Ireland, and a variety of preliterate societies, from the Indigenous clans of the Americas to the Homeric Greeks. These notes also deal extensively with gender, especially in Greece, Rome, Ireland, and the Americas.

These voluminous notes are deeply connected to Marx's new notions of revolution. To be sure, we cannot know what he would have done with this material, including how he would have incorporated it into subsequent volumes of *Capital*. Still, it may be worthwhile to sketch the kind of globalized theory of revolution and of the alternative to capitalism that might have flowed out of these studies in his last working years, 1879–82.

1. As Marx states explicitly, resistance on the part of Russia's communal villages to capitalist encroachment could form the "point of departure" for a European revolution if it developed links to the Western proletariat. This is connected to the fact that, by the late 1870s, he saw Russia as the country with the greatest level of revolutionary unrest, with the most determined revolutionary movement, with the greatest interest in *Capital*, and therefore the most likely starting point for a wider European revolution. He sees its villages as more communistic in their internal relations than the Western European village under feudalism or capitalism.

2. In his notes on Algeria's clans, communal villages, and their resistance to French imperialism, Marx connects the fear of the metropolitan French ruling classes over this anti-colonial resistance to their fear of the modern communism of the Paris Commune that broke out under their very noses in 1871. Here, something similar to his 1882 preface is evident, the relationship of the Algerian anticolonial and Indigenous struggles against French colonialism to those in the metropole, which, in this period, experienced the Paris Commune, a unique social revolution that moved toward a non-statist form of communism on the largest scale attempted anywhere up to that point. Moreover, Marx singles out the heroism of the women Communards, as well as the ways in which French colonialism deepened patriarchal domination in Algeria, signs of the importance of women's struggles to revolutionary and anticolonial movements.

3. In his notes on precolonial and colonial Latin America, Marx singles out the persistence of Indigenous communal social structures even after the establishment of Spanish colonialism, also noting that Spain's relatively underdeveloped capitalism did not undermine these structures as radically as did British colonialism in India. He also notes that these communal societies were much more resilient than modern capitalism in terms of sustainable agriculture and safeguarding food supplies and other necessities of life in anticipation of natural disasters and crises of other kinds. He singles out as well the prominent position of women in these networks of sustainability.

4. In his notes on the Indian Subcontinent, the area of the world he covered most extensively in the 1879–82 research notebooks at the center of this study, Marx writes of the persistence, albeit with important evolutionary changes, of communal social structures that persisted for millennia. Important communal elements remained even after these structures were severely undermined, and sometimes destroyed, by capitalist "modernization" policies imposed in the 1790s under British colonialism. Thus, these clan and communal structures underlay the late seventeenth-century uprising led by Maratha rebel Shivaji against the Mughal Empire, and they continued as the Marathas fought the Mughals and then the British, through Marx's own time. In addition, he points to "rural communes" as sources of resistance to British colonial rule and to its imposition of capitalist social relations. Moreover, despite the longstanding suppression of women's rights on the part of Hindu religious authorities during the precolonial and colonial periods, Marx also notes that women emerged as military leaders during the massive anticolonial Sepoy Uprising of 1857–59.

5. In his 1881 notes on communal and clan structures in precolonial Ireland, Marx emphasizes the persistence of these social forms through his own time. He also stresses how, even before the arrival of British overlords, who imposed feudal social relations, the ancient communal forms were being undermined by incipient class structures among the Celts themselves. He also singles out the social power women held in the days before the British conquest, and how this was expressed in ancient Irish clan law. Had he taken up Ireland and revolution in the 1880s, he would likely have brought this research on communal forms and gender into his theorization of agrarian resistance to colonialism and class rule by aristocratic landlords.

In any or all these ways, Marx may have been intending to connect his research on communal and clan societies to specific areas of the world that were experiencing struggles against colonialism and class rule, as he did in the 1882 preface to the Russian edition of the *CommunistManifesto*.

Can the extensive notes on Native American societies, especially in the Morgan notes, also be fitted into the framework outlined in the 1882 preface? Here, any relationship would have to be seen at a higher level of generalization. In both sets of notes, gender comes to the fore as a central social category. In the case of Morgan and Native American societies of North America, this involves studying how gender subordination was at the root of many other forms of social hierarchy. At the same time, Marx investigates relative gender equality in Indigenous America, while not adhering to the idyllic portraits of these societies found in Morgan, or, for that matter, Engels. One can say, based on our present evidence, that it is likely that, after grappling with Morgan and critically absorbing his data, Marx would have centered gender in new ways had he ever written up the results of his 1879–82 notebooks more fully.

The notes on Morgan especially, but also those on ancient Greco-Roman society, as well as those on Ireland, investigate the origins not only of patriarchy but also of slavery and of class society. At the same time, these notes, especially those on Morgan, show alternatives to the forms of patriarchy and class rule prevalent in Marx's lifetime. In this sense, they contribute to his theorization of alternatives to capitalism. Löwy addressed this problem nearly three decades ago: "The idea that a modern communism would find some of its human dimension from the 'primitive communism' destroyed by the civilization founded upon private property and the state" was a major theme for the late Marx.[12]

Finally, it should be noted that, in a number of the cases Marx explores—India after Britain's undermining of the communal village, Latin America after the arrival of Spanish colonialism, Ireland under British rule, Algeria under French rule, or the Russian village commune under pressure from capitalism—he sees the communal forms within these societies as taking on especially revolutionary dimensions in times of social stress and crisis. Thus, it is not the preservation of these communal forms so much as their role in a global revolutionary movement—of English factory workers, of Irish tenant farmers, of impoverished Irish workers in Britain, of Algerians struggling against French domination, of Russian villagers seeking to defend their way of life in the face of capitalist penetration, of Indian villagers and clans using remnants of older communal formations to struggle against dynastic or colonial oppression—that, heterogenous as it was, offered real possibilities of a transformation that was as global as was capitalism itself. It cannot be stressed enough that unrest and uprisings, as in Russia, often broke out only after the communal forms had, to a great extent, disappeared, at least on the surface, and struggles based upon or influenced by these social forms intersected with more modern-facing ones. Thus, it was not so much defense of these forms as they were, as seeing them as elements of revolutionary energy and renewal of society on a totally new basis.

As we have seen in this chapter, in his last years, Marx developed three new concepts of revolution alongside that of a united working-class uprising. First, in 1869–70, he conceptualized a British

workers' revolution sparked by an uprising in France and especially by an agrarian national revolution in Ireland, which would shake up the quasi-racist false consciousness of English workers and unite them with their immigrant Irish coworkers. Second, in his writings on the Paris Commune and his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx theorizes working-class forms of revolution against capital that also target and abolish the modern centralized state while moving toward an emancipatory alternative. Third, Marx writes of revolutions beginning in non-capitalist agrarian societies like Russia that were imbued with communal village systems, which, in resisting capitalist encroachments, could become the base for a large social revolution. These movements could also connect to the revolutionary labor movement of Western Europe and North America, and they would, if victorious, be able to build on their archaic forms of communism as part of the struggle for a modern, democratic form of communism. In each of these struggles, groups subject to super-oppression, whether women or oppressed minorities, would likely play leading parts.

These three kinds of revolutions are a most important legacy of the late Marx, with equally important insights for today. This is the case, whether in analyzing the structures of oppression and domination, in conceptualizing all the multifarious forces of liberation that are in a position to challenge them, including all their contradictions with each other, and in theorizing what a real alternative to the exploitative, racist, sexist, heterosexist world of capitalism and its class domination would look like.

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Notes

1. Jean-Numa Ducange, "Une lettre inédite de Karl Marx à Jules Guesde sur la France, l''Orient' et l' 'Occident' (1879)," *ActuelMarx*73 (2023), p. 112.

2. Could also be translated as "complement" or "complete," the latter a stronger term that I have rendered here a bit more colloquially as "fulfill."

3. Raya Dunayevskaya, *RosaLuxemburg,Women'sLiberation,andMarx'sPhilosophy of Revolution*, second edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press [1982] 1991), p. 175. This is particularly poignant given the fact that the original manuscript of the 1882 preface is in Engels's hand (MEGA2 I/25: 297). Engels quotes the 1882 preface in full in his 1890 preface to a new German edition but does not discuss its implications, and he otherwise restricts the rest of his preface to Western Europe and North America (MECW 27: 53–60).

4. Dunayevskaya, *RosaLuxemburg,*pp. 188, 190.

5. Ibid.,p. 186.

6. Ibid., p. 190.

7. Ibid., p. 183.

8. Ibid., p. 187.

9. Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [2010] 2016), p. 235.

10. Isabelle Garo, *CommunismandStrategy:RethinkingPoliticalMediation*(London: Verso, [2019] 2023), p. 214.

11. Guilherme Nunes Pires, “Marx and Russia: The Russian Road and the Myth of Historical Determinism,” *Ciencias Humanas e Socais*, Vol. 1 (2023), p. 74.

12. Michael Löwy, “La dialectique du progrès et l’enjeu actuel des mouvements sociaux,” *CongrèsMarxInternational.Centansdemarxisme.Bilancritiqueetperspectives*(Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 200.