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*Basic biographical data*

Name:	Evelyn Reed
Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):	Evelyn Andreas * Evelyn Horwit * Evelyn Horowitz * Evelyn Howard * Evelyn Novack
Date and place of birth:	October 31, 1905, Haledon, NJ (USA)
Date and place of death:	March 22, 1979, New York, NY (USA)
Nationality:	USA
Occupations, careers, etc.:	Anthropologist, feminist, writer, painter
Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:	1939 - 1979

Biographical sketch

The following biographical sketch is chiefly based on the appraisals and obituaries listed below in the bibliographical section, particularly those by Matilde Zimmermann and Mary-Alice Waters.

Evelyn Reed was born as a daughter of David and Rebecca Horowitz [Evelyn Reed later changed the name to 'Horwit', occasionally using also 'Howard'] on October 31, 1905 in Haledon, New Jersey. Her father left home when she was very young and died before she was in her teens. She didn't come from a wealthy family. Together with her two sisters she grew up with her mother, a devouring and domineering woman, whom Evelyn disliked immensely.

She thought the world of Haledon too small and in her mid-teens she escaped to New York City where she spent many periods of her life. Inspired by an aunt in New York who first introduced her to museums, plays and concerts, she became a serious aspiring artist. After graduating from high school, she attended the *Parsons School of Design* and the *Art Students League*. Over several years she studied painting under some of the best-known artists of that period - John Sloan, George Luks, and later Grant Wood. She was part of a free-wheeling, radical-minded group of artists and intellectuals in the New York City of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Reed's first overtly political act was to participate in a 1934 demonstration at Rockefeller Center against the destruction of revolutionary murals created by the renowned Mexican artist Diego Rivera. She was rebellious and developed a passionate hatred for the way in which capitalist society degrades and enslaves women. But she also learned that society was structured in thousand ways to destroy her as an individual rebel.

So after a while she decided to try the more conventional route. In the mid-thirties she married an aspiring young writer named Osborn Andreas and went with him to his home in Clinton, Iowa. During that time she continued painting and her works expresses beautifully what she thought about her life

and what she was going through in the Midwest. After less than three years she decided that the narrow family life was too confining for her spirit and she fled back to New York City. She got herself an apartment in Greenwich Village, and resumed her life as an independent artist. The marriage, which had remained childless as a result of two illegal abortions in the 1930s (which left her unable to have children), was divorced in 1941.

Owing to her younger sister who had married an ageing wealthy *General Motors* tycoon, Evelyn Reed had no financial worries. Though she felt free, travelled as a painteress to Mexico and Central America searching desperately for answers for the class and sex oppression.

When she finally came across F. Engels' explanation of how the family and its twin institution of prostitution arose as pillars of class society and determine the oppression of women, she understood where it came from and why. The prospect of liberation through the struggle for socialism gave essential meaning to her existence. By the end of the 1930s Evelyn Reed had learned that there are no personal solutions that can liberate you. She understood that she herself would have been one of the victims of the capitalist system if she had not found a coherent explanation of the world and a perspective for how to change it. She wanted to get involved. She was first introduced to revolutionary Marxism by a professor at *New York University* who was a sympathizer of the Trotskyist movement. She helped him distributing *The Militant* newspaper. The same professor also introduced her to a student of his named Walter Ketley (also known by his pen names O'Rourke, Rork etc.) who at that time was a young member of the *Socialist Workers Party (SWP)*. In 1939, he went to Coyoacán, Mexico, in order to serve as a guard/secretary to Leon Trotsky; Reed accompanied him and set up a studio in Mexico City. She began to frequent the Trotsky household and helped out in various ways. She was described as a rather off-beat, bohemian type, but very helpful.

It was in Mexico, under the influence and at the initiative of Leon Trotsky, that Evelyn Reed became a member of the *Socialist Workers Party*. She discussed with Trotsky her personal plans, her place in the party, and her conflict with her sister who still supported her financially. After the assassination of Trotsky in August 1940, Reed remained in the household for a while providing assistance and support to Trotsky's widow Natalia Sedova. And at that time she painted one of her finest and last portraits of women - Natalia Sedova. When Reed decided to become a serious revolutionist, she gave up painting.

Back in New York City, Reed worked on the staff of *SWP's* theoretical magazine, *Fourth International*. With George Novack, who was one of the journal's editors, Reed developed a political and personal relationship that lasted until her death. In 1942 they got married. Like her husband, Evelyn Reed was deeply involved in civil liberties defence struggles and helped to organize the *Civil Rights Defense Committee (CRDC)*, to which she served as executive directress, and organized its day-to-day work. In the mid-1940s, she became a staff writer of *SWP's* weekly paper *The Militant* adopting the pen name Reed, after the famous revolutionary journalist John Reed. She learned to write in a clear, well-organized, pedagogical style that was a joy to read. She stayed a *The Militant* writer until her death. Besides this, she contributed articles to the theoretical journal *International Socialist Review* and to various other American and international Trotskyist papers. In the 1970s, she co-edited together with George Breitman three volumes of the American *Trotsky Writings* edition published by *Pathfinder Press*.

In 1951 – Evelyn Reed and George Novack were then living in London and participated as *Socialist Workers Party* observers in the work of the *Fourth International* – Reed began the anthropological research that would eventually culminate in her pioneering magnum opus *Woman's evolution*. But it lasted almost two decades before the results of her investigations on the origins of female oppression began to be published (*Women's evolution from matriarchal clan to patriarchal family*, New York, Pathfinder Press, 1975). Reed was an anthropologist who applied the scientific method of dialectical materialism. She did not start with any preconceptions about women's role. She took the most advanced scientific method available and applied it, searching for facts, directly and indirectly verifiable, about the origins of human society.

From 1954 to 1965, Reed and Novack lived and worked in Los Angeles. It were difficult years for

them and for the *Socialist Workers Party* which was isolated, under heavy pressures, and in perpetual financial crisis. But during these years, Reed wrote a number of articles for the party's theoretical journal in which she began to expound her views. In 1965 Reed and Novack returned to New York City to help at the party centre. By then, the financial situation improved and Reed was able to begin systematic work on her *Women's evolution*. When a new spread of feminist ideas evoke in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Reed was enthusiastic. She spoke at one of the earliest conferences of the new movement (Boston, Spring 1969). She organized and taught the first class series for women who were beginning to lead the *SWP's* activities as part of the new movement. She quickly assembled some of her articles for book publication: *Problems of women's liberation* (1969). The book has been published in eight languages, including Japanese. It was the development of the women's liberation movement as a world wide phenomenon in the 1970s that made it possible for Evelyn Reed to help strengthen the Marxist current in the women's liberation movement outside the borders of the United States. But she was an internationalist long before she became known around the world as a Marxist theoretician. She identified with and worked to build the *Fourth International* as strongly as she did the *Socialist Workers Party*. The party recognized her contribution and elected her to the party's *National Committee* in 1963.

In 1973 she made a tour of Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Some of her meetings were attended by 500 or 600 women. In 1975, she went on a speaking tour to England and Ireland. In the last year of her life, her illness of cancer forced her to cancel a long-awaited tour of Scandinavia and West Germany.

In the course of the 1970s, Evelyn Reed spoke at more than 100 universities all over the United States and abroad, in addition to countless media interviews and informal meetings with women both inside and outside the party. In every speech she delivered, she sought to educate and inspire women with the facts about the creative and productive role females have played in history. She explained how and why women were responsible for the major advances in the productive capacities of humanity and laid the foundation for the development of all civilization.

Aged 73, Evelyn Reed died on March 22, 1979, in New York City.

*Selective bibliography*¹

- ***Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets (co-)authored by Reed***

- Abortion and the Catholic Church : two feminists defend women's rights / Evelyn Reed and Claire Moriarty. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1973. - 14 pp.
- An answer to 'The naked ape' and other books on aggression. - New York : Pathfinder Pr., 1971. - 23 pp. - (A Merit pamphlet)
- La evolución de la mujer : del clan matriarcal a la familia patriarcal. - Barcelona : Ed. Fontamara, 1980. - 350 pp. - (Ensayo contemporáneo) [& later ed., with series statement: Fontamara ; 46]
- Féminisme et anthropologie / trad. de l'américain par Armelle Mui. - Paris : Denoël-Gonthier, 1979. - 563 pp. - (Collection Femme)
- Les femmes : caste, classe ou sexe opprimé? - Ed. rev. et augm. - Montréal : Ed. d'Avant-Garde, 1975. - 19 pp. [& later ed.]
- In defense of the women's movement : articles / Ruthann Miller, Mary-Alice Waters, Evelyn Reed. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1970. - 15 pp. - (A Merit pamphlet)
- Is biology woman's destiny? - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1972. - 23 pp. [& later ed.]
- Kvinnans utveckling : från matriarkalisk klan till patriarkalisk familj / svensk övers.: Gunvor Karlström. - Stockholm : Röda Rummet, 1978. - 527 pp. [& later ed.]
- Problems of women's liberation : a Marxist approach. - New York, NY : Merit Publ., 1969. - 63 pp.

1) TSB item numbers (e.g. <TSB 0716>) refer to Lubitz' *Trotskyist Serials Bibliography*, München [etc.] : Saur, 1993, which is out of print but [available as PDF file](#) within the framework of the *Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet* website. In TSB you can find detailed descriptions of the respective Trotskyist journals, newsletters, bulletins and the like.

- Problems of women's liberation : a Marxist approach. - 2., enl. ed. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1970. - 96 pp. - (A Merit book) [& later ed.]
- Sexism & science. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1978. - 190 pp. [& later ed.]
- Sexo contra sexo, o clase contra clase / trad. Helga Pawlowsky y Rosa Ma. Cañadel. - México, D.F. : Fontamara, 1984. - 162 pp. - (Fontamara ; 8) [& later ed.]
- Woman's evolution : from matriarchal clan to patriarchal family. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1975. - XVIII, 491 pp. [& later ed.]

• **Selective bibliography: Books/pamphlets and journals (co-)edited by Reed**

- Trotsky, Leon: Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1938 - 39 / ed. by George Breitman and Evelyn Reed. - New York, NY : Merit Publ., 1969. - 152 pp. [2. ed. New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1974, 430 pp. was ed. by Naomi Allen and George Breitman.]
- Trotsky, Leon: Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939 - 40 / ed. by George Breitman and Evelyn Reed. - New York, NY : Merit Publ., 1969. - 128 pp. [2. ed. New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1973, 465 pp. was ed. by Naomi Allen and George Breitman.]
- Trotsky, Leon: Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1937 - 38 / ed. by George Breitman and Evelyn Reed. - New York, NY : Merit Publ., 1970. - 184 pp. - (A Merit book) [2. ed. New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1976, 510 pp. was ed. by Naomi Allen and George Breitman.]

• **Selective bibliography: Books, collections, journals, bulletins to which Reed contributed**

- Abortion is a woman's right! : articles / Pat Grogan [et al.] - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1985. - 44 pp. [& later ed.]
- El aborto : derecho fundamental de la mujer / Pat Grogan [et al.] - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1985. - 46 pp.
- Cosmetics, fashions, and the exploitation of women / by Joseph Hansen and Evelyn Reed [et al.] Introd. by Mary-Alice Waters. [Ed. by Sonja Franeta]. - New York [etc.] : Pathfinder Pr., 1986. - 138 pp. [& later ed.]
- Discussion Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1547>
- Engels, Friedrich: The origins of the family, private property, and the state / Friedrich Engels. Introd. by Evelyn Reed. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1972. - 187 pp. [& later ed.]
- Feminism and socialism / ed. with an introd. by Linda Jenness. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1972. - 160 pp. [& later ed.]
- Fjärde Internationalen (Uppsala, later: Stockholm, later: Göteborg) [ISSN 0345-3375] <TSB 0518>
- Fourth International (New York, NY, 1940-56) <TSB 0532>
- International Socialist Review (New York, NY) <TSB 0715>
- James P. Cannon as we knew him : by thirty-three comrades, friends, and relatives / introd. by Jack Barnes. Ed. by Les Evans. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1976. - 288 pp. [Collection of obituaries, reminiscences and appraisals]
- Kate Millet's Sexual politics : a Marxist appreciation / by Kipp Dowson [et al.] - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1971. - 31 pp.
- The Militant (New York, NY) [ISSN 0026-3885] <TSB 1026>
- Partisans (Paris) [ISSN 0031-2533]
- Philosophy of woman : an anthology of classic and current concepts / ed. by Mary Briody Mahowald. - 2. ed. - Indianapolis, Ind. : Hackett, 1983. - XV, 454 pp.
- Sétáló agyak : kotárs feminista diskurzusz / Orshi Drozdik [et al.] - Budapest : Kijarat, 1998. - 259 pp. - (Léda könyvek)
- SWP Discussion Bulletin (New York, NY) <TSB 1684>
- World Outlook = Perspective mondiale (Paris ; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1886>

- **Selective bibliography: Books and articles about Reed**

[Anon.] [Evelyn Reed](#). [Biographical sketch, Wikipedia article]

[Anon.]: Evelyn Reed dies in New York, in: *Intercontinental Press* <TSB 0657>, 17.1979 (12), p. 306. [Obituary]

[Anon.]: Reed, Evelyn, 1905-1979, in: *Contemporary authors*, 102.1981, p. 429. [Biographical sketch]

Allio, Jacqueline: Evelyn Reed, in: *Klassenkampf* (Luxembourg) <TSB 0833>, 1979 (132), p. 10. [Obituary]

Eckert, Hermann: Marxistin und Feministin : Evelyn Reed (1905-1979) / H.E. [i.e. Hermann Eckert], in: *Was tun : sozialistische Zeitung* <TSB 1621>, 12.1979 (263/264), p. 23. [Obituary]

Godchau, Jean-François: Evelyn Reed (1905-1979) / J.-F.G. [i.e. Jean-François Godchau], in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1979 (2), p. 3. [Obituary]

Knight, Chris: The anthropology of Evelyn Reed, in: *Chartist International* <TSB 0301>, [n.s.] 1978 (2), pp. 16-23

Roberts, Sabina: [Obituary], in: *Socialist Action* (London) <TSB 1487>, 1979 (Aug.), p. 5

Waters, Mary-Alice: Marxist, feminist, fighter for the working class: Evelyn Reed, in: *Intercontinental Press* <TSB 0657>, 17.1979 (16), pp. 441-445. [Speech delivered at April 8, 1979 memorial meeting, New York]

Zimmermann, Matilde: Evelyn Reed (1905-1979) : Marxist and feminist fighter, in: *Intercontinental Press* <TSB 0657>, 17.1979 (13), pp. 332-334. [Obituary]

Zimmermann, Matilde: 500 attend New York memorial meeting for Evelyn Reed, in: *Intercontinental Press* <TSB 0657>, 17.1979 (15), p. 416. [Originally publ. in: *The Militant* (New York), 1979 (Apr. 20)]

- **Selective bibliography: Books dedicated to Reed**

Wohlforth, Tim: *The prophet's children : travels on the American Left / Tim Wohlforth*. - Atlantic Highlands, NJ : Humanities Pr., 1994. - XVIII, 332 pp. - (Historical memories)

Trotsky, Leon: *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1932 / ed. by George Breitman and Sarah Lovell*. - New York, NY : Pathfinder Pr., 1973. - 413 pp.

Notes:

- More informations about Reed are likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works and articles listed in the relevant chapter(s) of the *Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0183]*, e.g. in chapter 7.5.18.

- A small [text archive](#) is available within the framework of the *Marxists' Internet Archive (MIA)*.

Note on archives

The *State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives Division* houses the ***George Novack and Evelyn Reed Papers, 1933-1992***, comprising 11 reels of microfilm. The call no. of this collection is *Micro 555*. The copyright is retained by the *SWP*.

Note: The photograph on page is from Intercontinental Press (New York, NY), 17.1979 (12), p. 306 (Flax Hermes/Militant)

Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2005
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