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Remembrance

Rossana Rossanda: The great mother of a singular story

Wednesday 23 September 2020, by [Di FRANCESCO Tommaso](#), [RANGERI Norma](#) (Date first published: 22 September 2020).

Remembrance. When you're twenty years old and lucky enough to be in the presence of Rossana Rossanda, Luigi Pintor, Lucio Magri, Valentino Parlato and Luciana Castellina, you don't really understand just how much of an impression they will leave on your life.

With Rossana gone, an important part of our—and my—political and personal life has gone with her.

There will be time to reflect more deeply on the political and cultural legacy of such a great personality of the Italian left as her. But now, after her loss, for those of us who have shared a long history with Rossana, it is the memories that overwhelm us—vivid, sweet, painful, even traumatic as they are to us now.

My memories are of an already-white head, of a beautiful, noble and authoritative face, of a blue skirt and shirt, of a striking room lined with books at the end of the long corridor in Via Tomacelli, of a large desk, and, in front of it, an armchair in which those who came to talk to her would sit and listen.

For us girls and boys in our twenties who used to sit in front of her, on the fifth floor of that fantastic, messy, turbulent, overcrowded editorial office, all the hours, days, months, years are now jumbled together, hopelessly tangled, now that the great mother of il manifesto has left us.

It's simply impossible to put everything in order, because of the close interweaving of life and politics, of passions and affections, of political growth and grand projects, that the left of the '60s and '70s carried in its head and heart.

When you're twenty years old and lucky enough to be in the presence of Rossana Rossanda, Luigi Pintor, Lucio Magri, Valentino Parlato and Luciana Castellina on a daily basis, you don't really understand just how much of an impression they will leave on your life, but you feel like you're getting an education every day: an education in terms of knowledge, culture, sentiments, and you nurture a critical thought within you that will be with you forever.

Rossana was a strict mother, and every action, every behavior by us young people on the editorial staff came with a question about what she would think. But it was normal for her great culture to be so awe-inspiring (and not only to us of the 1968 generation), making everything else recede into the background. And, before feminism became for her a topic on which she would engage in pointed political confrontation with the women's movement—which was when personal experience came to the fore—talking about private matters was not in the order of things.

So, when Karol, Rossana's partner, an illustrious journalist of Polish Jewish descent, arrived from Paris, a jovial character with endless stories to tell, Rossana was smiling at the editorial meetings and even allowed herself a few joking remarks ("Come on, Karol, be quiet just a little bit!"). I think I'm not wrong when I say that the long period she lived with Karol was the most beautiful of her life.

Many years have passed through the rooms of that incarnation of *il manifesto*. They are certainly unrepeatable, because nothing seemed impossible to us back then, and because we were always on the inside of the movements, part of the meetings, part of every social conflict, in Italy and everywhere in the world, with our leadership group expelled and disowned by the Communist Party and enjoying immense respect in the international network of the left.

Thanks to Rossana, Luigi, Lucio, Valentino and Luciana (the latter being the only wonderful eye-witness left of that extraordinary history), we were able to face turns of events that were both hard to bear and exhilarating, moments of discouragement and enthusiasm. And I am sure that the temperament, determination, will and taste of that fantastic handful of people have been decisive, giving *il manifesto* the vital energy it needed to reach 50 years of existence.

Many things happened that affected our relationship with Rossana, including a radical change within ourselves. There were political events that involved people on a personal level, to the point of reaching a profound and painful break. That's how it was for me, as for other people, for Rossana herself, and, I imagine, for the thousands and thousands of militants and readers who have accompanied us for over ten years.

There will be a time and a place to go deeper and tell that story. Now, what prevails is the regret that we couldn't be fully reunited (she had returned to collaborate with us on occasion), but above all the dutiful, deeply felt, emotional farewell we owe Rossana.

She will continue to be with us as long as *il manifesto* lives.

Ciao, Rossana.

Norma Rangeri

• *il manifesto*. September 22, 2020:

<https://global.ilmanifesto.it/the-great-mother-of-a-singular-story/>

Rossana's indelible light

Remembrance. It was as if she had before her eyes the long arc of history and its gentle but inexorable movement: she was a communist, she worked for a greater society, but she did not discard the limits of the past.

Rossana Rossanda left us this weekend. It wasn't a loss we expected, although in some ways one could see it coming, given her grave physical condition and advanced age.

Her death is, and will remain, an open wound. After the last dramatic economic, generational and political crisis that *il manifesto* went through at the end of 2012, in recent years she had returned to

writing and being present in various ways at her newspaper.

From now, more than ever before, we will miss her style that always strove to go deeper, never satisfied, her restlessness and critical distance, and at the same time always devoted to a close relationship with the youngest of us. We will miss her admonishment not to forget the fundamental reasons of our existence, which came to be due to the deep crisis of the alternative models of construction of socialism, but also due to the precipice that the winning capitalist model is fast approaching.

For those of us who have worked with her for 50 years and who consider her the mold from which we formed; her serene and sharp words have cut through, and still cut through, our lives every day—clashing with the news coming from all corners of the world and from Italy itself, which confirm that we're going through a widespread and general crisis, both material and of meaning, so deep that it borders on tragedy.

As far as we can see, what lies ahead is a murky future that recalls even darker times than those Rossana herself had gone through, always fighting on the side of the downtrodden, always sensitive to the birth of new and decisive movements.

There was an unforgettable light in Rossana's eyes, one that hits close to home and that remains with us as an essential lesson: the light of those who don't wait for others' support or attention, but investigate the present moment without pretense, and always with an attitude of dissatisfaction.

It was as if she had before her eyes the long arc of history and its gentle but inexorable movement: she was a communist, she worked for a greater society, but she did not discard the limits of the past.

Are we up to the much-needed standard of such rigor and such stubbornness?

Rossana was unique. Now, everyone is rightly recalling her importance, not only for the history of il manifesto, but for politics and contemporary culture as well. But she did not conform to the dominant intellectual models: she was on the sidelines, seeing before everyone else the development of social processes in progress and foreseeing their outcomes.

She radiated both toughness and love, an immeasurable love, stronger than our scarce material possibilities. She was independent and free, both in her individuality and in the collective dimension.

Goodbye, Rossana.

Tommaso Di Francesco

• il manifesto. September 22, 2020:

<https://global.ilmanifesto.it/rossanas-indelible-light/>
