

SELECTED DIJITICAL WRITINGS of Rosa Luxemburg, edited by Dick Howard, Monthly Review Press, 1971

This awful "editor" (1) is a typical example of the "new young left" from the 60s, who think anything in their head is "theory" and just as they brought in Socialism ou Barbaric as "new" and take advantage of knowing some languages so with the greatest arrogance, they talk down to such great revolutionaries as RL, tho they take full adv. of the fact that it is thru publ. of her work that they get a name and money (I believe the money from this book went to Radical America) and as if that nevertheless made them independent - independently Stalinist. The SWP edition has a much more comprehensive grouping of RL's works and the only advantage I can see is that he is the only one who has RL's talk on women's suffrage. The only advantage of going thru his intro. and intro. notes is to get the ~~new~~ concept of theory among these awful empiricists.

Supposedly, according to his very first page (p.9) having grown this past decade a "practical reflection" which he now (1970) produced "attempts to theorize the new practice. He then proceeds to reduce her theoretical work to "practical, tactical, measures which she developed were always situation-specific" the development of capitalism has long since passed them by. In her eyes her theoretical work was nothing but a consequent application of the dial. method, which had enable Marx to uncover the secrets of the capitalist system.

On p. 11 he has the gall once again to say that "she never undertook a serious methodological analysis of the basis of theory" (the ridiculous feature is the ft. to it that cites "one exception" acc. of Capital, which he has never bothered to reproduce at all in the section on it, and further refers you to Rodolsky as if that were the perfect answer whereas he is the most mechanical of all).

As if that one sentence about "not undertaking a serious methodological analysis" he then reduces her to intuition: "RL's political writings show an intuitive understanding of the marxian dialectic." (and this stupidity has its ft. where he attributes such a thesis to Lukacs, which is the exact opposite of what George Lukacs says. Whereupon he credits with further development of the thesis (Lelio Bassa).) "The key to the marxian dialectic is the notion that the final goal of the prol. movement, socialism, is a necessity. The necessity of the final goal provides that teleology which makes it possible to understand the present as a process of becoming." This is pure Telos kind of dialectics, in other words, it stops with subjective purpose instead of neg of neg. and this again shows itself in his concept of totalities. Again, this is burdened by a ft. p.12 about "hieroglyphics" of capitalist economy so that methodology to them, though they attack the social dem. and side with Lukacs, stops at purpose, which is synthetic cognition.

He quotes RL on cause and effect changing places and the totality. concept of a whole period of class struggle of which the mass strike is the phenomenon. (See the quotations from mass Strike pp237 of this book)

The book has 5 parts, with each carrying an introduction and it's this we will concern ourselves with.

I* Against Revisionism and Opportunism which takes up the speeches in 1899-97 and the Social Reform or Revn pamphlet and question of militarism. And here is how he introduces it:

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REVOLUTION
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I He does admit that the reason RL's work on Reform or Rev. is outstanding is because she went to the theoretical roots and not just Bernstein's violation (p.36) and that's very nearly all of his introduction, except that it was introduced by reformists present in the soc. dem.

II concerns itself with Tactics and has material on the 8 hr. day, and this is where she has the women's suffrage article and an excerpt from Mass Strike; in a word she doesn't have the 1905 Revn at all. So how would one know the movement from practice in the mass strike? Here is how he introduces this section: in correctly saying that spontaneism was not the way it has been interpreted; certainly was not anarchist Blanquist, he comes to the conclusion that is rather ridiculous. 163d. More surprising may be the non-enraged position taken by RL. The speech on woman suffrage, he says, "is interesting", since she never liked to write for the women's paper. And he certainly doesn't try to resolve the contradictions between RLs supposed dis-interest in anything on the woman? with the fact that she was forever encouraging the women to free themselves from male domination and take an independent position in politics. (RD - DON'T FORGET TO DEVELOP THIS - especially when you summarize Nettl and deal with this)

III: "the element of spontaneity plays such a prominent role in the mass strikes in Russia not because the Russian proletariat is 'un schooled' but because revns allow no one to play schoolmaster to them."

IV On the role of the Party "is as superficial a commentary as ever" (p.278) and ends with a "manifesto" (p.278): "The reader will recognize this as the view of the Communist Manifesto." It is true that DH has quoted from "What Does the Spartacus League Want?" It is not true that that was her concept of Party with a capital P. Moreover, the only things she includes there are from 1904 and 1908.

V "The International" is again quite superficial since outside of a section of the important Junius pamphlet (and the second part is likewise from the Junius pamphlet) its appendix on guidelines that were later to be adopted by the Spartacus League, "Either/or" one small article on the origins of May Day and one appeal to the proletarians of all countries.

VI- The final section on "The Beginnings of the German Revolution" has a lot of rhetoric about "the proletariat can learn from this 'defeat' because it must learn" (p.354) His ultimate statement (p.365) "What is important is that the heritage of the past, previous revolutions becomes a living part of the present struggle, adding to it the experiential depth and consciousness which make the advent of socialism the beginning of a new human history."

So despite all rhetoric on the masses, we don't see the masses at all. We see programs.

Handwritten notes:
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