

NQ

THE NATIONAL QUESTION: Selected Writings by Rosa Luxemburg,  
Edited and with an Introduction by Horace B. Davis  
(Monthly Review Press, 1978)

This quite new and rather comprehensive selection of RL's writings on the National Question makes it impossible to see how it is that the editor, Horace B. Davis, can possibly conclude that this all will prove that RL was right and VIL was wrong, especially when he uses such ridiculous generalizations that her major work, The National Question and Autonomy, which is not only the first English translation but evidently has never been translated into any other language (1908-09), is something that ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ "was never refuted", and that "despite Lenin's attacks on her, the philosophical position..." I have no idea what philosophy he is talking about. But what I'm talking about in addition to the criticism is the carelessness regarding all facts, and complete ignorance of what polemics are conducted when. These were written right after the height of the relationship of RL and VIL when they collaborated most closely in the 2 1907 Congresses, when RL, who had walked out of the 2nd Congress because of the National Question, rejoined the Bolsheviks in 1906, and remained with them throughout the Russian Revolution, without even raising the question of the National Question, though the Bolsheviks had never removed the question from their program. In a word, once a revolution was involved, the NQ was so subordinate that neither cared to raise it, one because they had won (the Bolsheviks), the other because obviously revolution was more important. *the overwhelming of all revs*

On the other hand when the imperialist war came and RL continued with her stupidities and stubbornness, then there

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was no limit to the number of articles Lenin directed against the "Polish Marxists".

Now then, the actual super-"Historical" biggest thesis-- and also the ones she had written both in 1896 and 1905 that were directed against Marx -- likewise showed quite a twisting of the position since it was not on theory, but simply that Marx's position was out of date, in view of the fact that now there was a great proletarian movement.

Marx, in 1896  
de facto issue  
it is alleged by  
me

The NQ and Autonomy, then, has 5 sections -- the 6th which is not published even this editor has to admit was too detailed and minor to be included -- : (1) The Right of Nations to Self-Determination as if that right was made into an Absolute and Marxists don't believe in Absolutes, she goes on to prove that there is no such right; that actually it's

but in fact that all emphasis was on work, he says  
Answers of all kind  
of 5  
C. M. W.

only " a paraphrase of the old slogan of bourgeois nationalists put forth in all countries at all times: 'the right of nation to freedom and independence.'" Having now reduced the question to bourgeois nationalism, it becomes very easy to say I'm for the class struggle not bourgeois nationalism, But

PLD

obviously because she is aware of Marx's position on Poland, she keeps talking only of the fact that it has no practical value, and that all things have changed both from the 1840s and the 1860s.

1840s  
1860s

The 2nd article -- which was a series of 6 -- is called "The National State and the Proletariat", and there

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she develops the class struggle and the proletariats' independent class interests. The 3rd is called "Federation, Centralization and Particularism." The 4th, "Centralization and Autonomy". And in that one she does at least show that she is for autonomy. She quotes Marx's 18th Brumaire, and then tries to show that the 1905 Revolution "solved this historical collision, violently moving the Russian nobility to the side of reaction and depriving the parody of territorial self-government of any mystifying resemblance to liberalism."

of with p. 243

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(P. 243) It's heavily directed against Kautsky who was then the orthodox Marxist position. I would say that the only part that has any value is the 5th section, called "The National Question and Autonomy":

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(1) Though I would call it nothing but vulgar materialism, the point is that she begins in a serious manner with the objective situation of seeing "entirely new economic phenomena: Big industry, machine production, proletarianization... labor of women and children, and so forth". (p. 251)

(2) She then develops an even more vulgar interpretation of super-structure: "in a word, the vulgar material process of capitalism creates a whole new ideological 'super-structure', with an existence and development which are to some extent autonomous." And proceeds to develop "any ideology is basically only a super-structure of the material and class conditions of a given epoch." (p. 253), with the conclusion, evidently, that the bourgeoisie has de-

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let  
18th Brumaire  
+ base

think is  
Kautsky  
Stalin  
18th

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veloped this for their own interests, making it no less than  
"the monolithic quality of a national culture."

(3) But since she ~~uses~~ is for  
autonomy, she uses a different form of explanation why this  
type of independence, though also bourgeois, can nevertheless  
be used. "If, however, we transfer the concept of autonomy from  
this utopian ideological area to the historical field and examine  
as a specific historical result of the capitalist economy in  
a certain environment..." (p. 265)

(4) In another way of vulgar  
materialism is how much more valuable are large units of pro-  
duction than small units, and she asks, "What is the result  
of this sole and exclusively ethnographic method of the poli-  
tical dismemberment of Russia?" (p. 285)

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He then shows that it became even more, supposedly urgent  
under imperialism to oppose nationalism, for he quotes from the  
Junius pamphlet that, "there can be no self-determination under  
capitalism."

Then there is the part from the Russian Revolution pamphlet  
in 1918, where she opposed the Bolshevik "so-called right of  
self-determination of people's, or -- something that was  
really implicit in the slogan -- the slogan of the disintegration  
of Russia. " (p. 292)