

Plostered
June 12, 1978

Dear Sybille,

Michael Flug's report to me of your activities and writings excited me, not only because I was naturally most pleased that you had broken with Trotskyism in the analysis of Russia and East Europe, but because the three areas of concentration that you're imersed in are the very ones that I am working on. It is true that it is long since I dug deeply into the question of the role of trade unions in a workers' state, but from the very start of my analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society, it was not Russia but the role of labor at the point of production that led me both to philosophy and women's liberation. What I mean is that I began to concretize, or try to do so, what exactly were the forces of liberation in any historic period, especially our own. And because in the U.S. there was this flow of labor from South to North, which included especially Black women in factories in the North being the most militant of all, I began my fights within the Trotskyist movement on a new role for women, shouting most against the very word "role" and using instead Subject.

Two decades later (or is it three?) it is still women's liberation, but not as attacks only on male chauvinism, but as critique of the women theorists of our day disregarding Rosa Luxemburg because she didn't write very much on the "woman question." In the process, of beginning the work on Rosa Luxemburg, I realized that the most crucial period in her life--1910-1914--was actually the period she was most original and really superior to all other revolutionaries, including Lenin. That is to say, she broke with Kautsky way ahead of the outbreak of World War I when it was all too easy to see his reformism and betrayal. She sensed the most corrupting event of all--imperialism--even though her "solution" I thoroughly disagree with, that is to say, I thoroughly disagree with her analysis of the accumulation of capital. And both in her anti-imperialist work and theoretic work on accumulation of capital, she had to contend with not only reformists as enemies, but the male chauvinism which also characterized revolutionaries, and the fact that she never said a word on that subject doesn't mean that she wasn't both aware of it and had to frame her argument in a way that wouldn't bring that aspect to predominate over the revolutionary purpose.

By now, my work has expanded far beyond both these critical

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subjects--Rosa Luxemburg in her own right, and today's women's liberation movement-- It is this: nothing short of Marx's theory of revolution can really dig so deep into the various revolutions since, as compared to the 1871 Civil War in France, as not only to be relevant for our age, but to be indispensable for the theoretic preparation for revolution.

Let me give you just one example of what I'm thinking of. Take the 1905 Revolution, and see what each of the three great revolutionaries active in it--Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg--singled out as the greatest event. Rosa Luxemburg singled out the general strike and what distinguished her doing so is that it was not just an event that happened and went, but something that she tried to apply to Germany and that persisted with her in 1910, 1914, 1917, and 1919. Lenin singled out democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, and Trotsky, permanent revolution which on the face of it sounded greatest of all but which remained so dormant as never to have developed beyond what it was in 1905.

In any case, I was wondering whether (1) you could possibly send me what you had done on Rosa Luxemburg for the radio program; (2) Do you know of any of her writings on the woman question other than the 1912 talk on women's suffrage? And (3) would you be interested either in doing some research in the same period I'm working on, or any translation of some of the articles that are unavailable to me here?

Do let me hear from you; I wouldn't want this to dry up...

Yours,

* I don't know why I thought of the trade union question again just when I mentioned the "woman question," but since I did, I do want you to know that I have quite a bit of material which hasn't been published. For example, an original piece of the Russian study called "Labor and Society" which I wrote in 1943 had to be excluded for space and is just available on microfilm now from the documents I deposited at Wayne State University. Also, I remember copying all the Trade Union Congress' resolutions from some Russian work; gosh, I don't remember what it was, but I could find it for you if you wanted it.

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