

REB MEETING, March 16, 1981

Present: All; Diane as sitter-in.

Agenda: I- "The Book" as a Whole, and Discussion; II- Unfinished Business;  
III- G&W.

I- Presentation by Raya, who brought with her to the REB the completed manuscript. Raya began by pointing out that although we have taken up the book several times before at the REB, it has been as bits and pieces, even when they are as big as Part II. That is not the same as the view you get when you see it as a totality. Even for herself, Raya said, this is the first time seeing it as a whole. The different perspective affects every chapter, even one like Chapter 1, which is virtually unchanged. Yet the order that follows gives it a completely different meaning. Now what was Chapter 3 ("The Inter-regnum of Luxemburg, and an Excursus into Marx's New Continent of Thought") is no longer there. What is now Chapter 3 is not an excursus into Marx for the book, and not an inter-regnum for Luxemburg. Rather, Chapter 3 is now "Marx's and Luxemburg's Theories of Accumulation of Capital", and we see RL not in any interregnum, not taking on a Kautsky or Bernstein, but in a big clash with Marx at his highest point. Thus a whole new connotation is given to Chaps. 1 and 2 which precede it.

What then becomes Chapter 4 is very different. Half of the old chapter 3 is thrown out, with only the part on Poland and the National Question retained. And the whole is combined with what had been Chapter 5, on "Spontaneity, Organization and the Dialectics of Revolution". Now the whole has a new title: "From the National Question to Dialectics of Revolution: the Relationship of Spontaneity and Organization, especially as regards Disputes with Lenin, 1904-17". What it does dialectically, is that at the end of the section on the National Question, it moves right to spontaneity and organization, and the myth of the dispute between Lenin and Luxemburg. The need is to follow the actual articulation by RL of the question, and to see when she put organization subordinate to revolution, she was with Lenin. It gets into the differences with Lenin very specifically in each period. The contradiction on the National Question is exactly what keeps her from seeing philosophy. Her insistence is on listening to the masses-- but not to Marx, and not to his concept of organization.

The whole question of the relation of philosophy and revolution to organization was posed in Russia, but could not be solved there. The crisis could only be solved in the context of world revolution. That was what Luxemburg was great on; she was Russian, Polish, German revolutionist. The whole of Part I will have the title: "Rosa Luxemburg, Internationalist".

Chapter 6 is still titled "War, Prison and Revolutions", but the German Revolution of 1919 is seen very differently than we have ever seen it before. All of us, Raya said, have been a little brainwashed by the CP on this period, where the whole question is presented like: Lenin had a party; she didn't. Lenin won; she didn't... Raya had to go to bourgeois sources instead to see the genuine mass revolutionary character of Spartacus Week, January 1919. First was the Kiel mutiny of sailors, which grew into workers, soldiers, sailors councils all over Germany. Then when they occupied the Vorwärts building, Scheidemann had appointed Noske as Defense Minister, but they didn't dare ask Berlin troops to take back the building. They had to bring in 6,000 troops from outside for the massacre. And what followed was a General Strike of no less than 200,000.

You also see that the years in prison were not just the "birds and flowers" that have been so much written about, but the Junius pamphlet, and the Anti-critique. Part I ends as the German Revolution has begun, with Luxemburg's speeches, "What does the Spartacus League want?" and the one to the "Founding conference of the Communist Party of Germany".

Raya then explained that even though Eugene had sent out a DF letter last week on her meeting with the PTC and the WL-N&L on Part II, she wished to take it up again in the

15268

REB, March 16, 1981-- page 2

context of the book as a whole. The whole of Part II is now called: "The Women's Liberation Movement as Reason and as Revolutionary Force".

That Part will begin now with quotes not only from Louise Michel, D.H. Lawrence, and Luxemburg, but from Marx's 1844 Essays. The Marx quote here is the one that takes up each of the "human relations to the world-- seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, wishing activity, loving..." Put in the context of the transcendence of private property, they shed a very different light on human individuality. It will be important to study the quote as in this context.

The very first chapter of Part II is now called "Overview by way of Introduction: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow". Time now is shown not as time, but as the concept of space for human development. It is not just a question of "then and now". Rather, a form is created for a back and forth on all concepts. Thus, 1831 is where we begin, with Nat Turner's revolt in the same year as Maria Stewart became the first Black woman to lecture publicly calling on "O ye daughters of Africa" to awake and arise. But it does not stop there, does not limit itself either to the revolutionary Black dimension or to the USA when you see 1848 as a world historic moment. 1848 shows that revolution was actually present, and that inter-communication was real in the answer of American women's liberationists to the greetings sent them by French women in prison, after the defeat of the 1848 revolutions. Then we can go from Marx 1844 on Man/Woman to how Marcuse in 1932 could not see it; from Sojourner Truth's story about Jesus (man had nothing to do with it) to Harriet Tubman as leader, organizer, and to many Black women.

The next section of Chapter 6 takes up "Individualism in Masses in Motion", and it is here that Raya brings in Pentesilea, revealing how totally original a character was Luxemburg in the way she lived. Pentesilea isn't raised on the "woman question", but on the war and betrayal. It is important to see what instinct can force you to do. The chapter then ends with the "Aba Riots" as a "Women's War". This permits Raya to connect to the Polish 1863 "women's war", and to Marx's Ethnological Notebooks. In the Aba riots, it was called "sitting on a man". In Marx's notebook on Maine, the women of India called it "removing the horns" of the chief.

Chapter 7 is the least changed, but it is very important to note that the title is now: "Rosa Luxemburg as Revolutionary, as Feminist", NOT "RL as revolutionary feminist". What is expanded is both the section on the relationship of Luxemburg and Jogiches, and the attack on Nettl, who, Raya has finally figured out, called 1906-09 "The Lost Years" for RL, because they were the years of the break-up with Jogiches!

"The Task that Remains to be Done: The Unique and Unfinished Contribution of Today's WLM", is the title of Chapter 8. It gives more credit to the current WLM than ever before, actually breaking the style of writing to let those voices speak for themselves, yet showing that we are still nowhere. It brings in the Moslem women, and then-- before we ever get to the concluding chapter, Raya takes up some of the section on the Ethnological Notebooks. She brings in Draper on two points: on the "world historic defeat of the female sex", and on the first division of labor, which Marx saw as a social division as well as a sexual one. The whole of Part II ends, not with the EN, but on a very different note, coming back to today's movement. We see Portugal with doCarmo and Barrero; Rowbotham on women's liberation as "an organizing idea" (which Raya accuses of being a return to Lenin's "What is to be Done?"); and Iran's WLM-- all raising the question of form of organization. But it is a matter of posing the question, not answering it. By the end of this section, we go back to Ding Ling on "Moras who came home" like Jiang Qing, and forward to the trial, 1981.

Part III is titled "Karl Marx-- from a Critic of Hegel to Author of Capital and Theorist of Permanent Revolution". That is the same title, but very little else is the same. Take the question of "style". In Parts I and II, there are subheads in the chapters, but here each

15269

REB, March 16, 1981-- page 3

subhead is a section, almost chapters in themselves and all the sections will be listed right in the Table of Contents.

into the 20th century:  
Section 1 thus extends / "A Preliminary Note on the Dialectic: in Marx of the Early 1840s; in Luxemburg 1902; in Lenin 1914" Now that we have seen Luxemburg's life, the crises at the turn of the century are seen as the beginning of the downgrading of Marx. Everyone from Mehring to Kautsky becomes more important than Marx, since they were the ones who supposedly "interpreted" Marx, enabled us to "understand" him. You never saw Marx, but only the popularization. Thus, there is no way to re-connect without going back to the dialectic in Marx himself.

Raya's re-connection begins before what is considered the beginning, with the section "Prometheus Bound, 1841-43". This is entirely new on Marx. Marx as a student of Hegel wants to add "a few details" on Democritus and Epicurus to Hegel's analysis. The "details" turn out to be both opposite to Hegel's analysis and the notes turn out to be 300 pages. Marx turns against Hegel's concept of totality, in which there is not really a unity of theory and practice. And against the world that is, and into action. What is more astonishing yet, Raya reported, is the way Epicurus re-appears suddenly in 1867, in Capital, in the "Fetishism of Commodities". For years Raya had read that reference, and it did not mean what it means in this context. This precise paragraph (p. 172 Vintage edition) is one where Marx was accused of anti-semitism. Far from that being the case, it is against all blinding fetishisms-- against petty-bourgeois mercantilism, against religion.

The final section, "Prometheus Unbound, 1844-48" is more familiar. Yet here is where Marx first comes out with the formulation of permanent revolution in the essay on the Jewish Question.

Chapter 10, "A Decade of Historic Transformation: From the Grundrisse to Capital" is a very different one than even a few weeks ago. Before, when Raya thought of the separate parts, all had to flow from Luxemburg. Now, after you see the book as a totality, the beginning of the chapter on RL is thrown out entirely, and we begin instead with the 1857 Crisis. But even there, the first section title gives a hint that the economic crisis of 1857 isn't that alone: "Economics": Only Class Struggles or "Epochs of Social Revolution?", 1857-58. Immediately the question is posed on what happened before the Grundrisse -- the Tai'ping Rebellion. That is what concretely drove Marx to look at what forms preceded capitalism. When we move to the second section, on Capital, it becomes clear that we still don't have Capital as Marx wrote it. Fowkes followed Engels rather than Marx. Thus the Part 8 "so-called Primitive Accumulation" is a separate Part, instead of placing it, as Marx did, under Part 7, "The Process of Accumulation of Capital". You miss entirely seeing that Marx meant it as one movement.

This brings us to the final chapter, "The Philosopher of Permanent Revolution Relates Theory to Organization". It begins with the section on the "Critique of the Gotha Program (of a United Workers' Party of Germany)". What is key here, is the way Raya pointed out that this section is not a question of having to rid ourselves of Lassalleism. Indeed, throughout the whole of the book, we are not arguing with reformists or counter-revolutionaries. All are revolutionaries, in theory and in fact. Yet they still did not make it without philosophy. This is crucial to see.

Again the book returns to Marx on permanent revolution, now over the whole period 1843-83, in section 2. And it is here that Raya wished to stress the "Afterword" to that section. It is what we think we know from the PPL, now called "Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution". It is very different in this context. Consider Trotsky on the peasantry in the context of Marx's letter to Engels that what the German Revolution needs is a "second edition of the Peasant War". (Here Raya noted that she just learned--through material in the Harvard Trotsky Archives-- that she had looked at the 1907 Congress all the way

15270

REB, March 16, 1981 -- page 5

the turn of the century? (Raya answered by discussing the "highest" point of that crisis, RL's Accumulation of Capital. In a certain sense the whole form is taken from Marx's Theories of Surplus Value, which had just been published then. That is the form Marx doesn't use in Capital, and the form that RL does not follow to the end here either. She blames Engels for misrepresenting Vols. II and III, but never confronts herself.)

15271