

February 10, 1983

Dear Dave:

As I told you when I heard your presentation on Luxemburg at the Detroit local, I wanted to suggest a form for that presentation, because without a philosophic content, all the facts do not have the impact they should. Furthermore, I believe that your attitude to the audience is likewise very important, when once you have a philosophic framework for your attitude -- which means that the subjective type of "biting at others" gets reduced to a minimum and the aspect of not being subjective is an absolute necessity for getting to the root of problems. But this is the first chance I've had to drop this letter.

You were right to begin with the present objective situation because the objective grounding actually reveals also the todayness of a subject, even when that subject, as with RL, refers to a very different period. But your transition points were quite loose, which means a loss of audience attention, in the sense that, when you present something very crucial and original in the topic, that gets lost, not alone for the audience, but for yourself. Here is what I mean:

Something as original and great as Luxemburg's flash of genius in relationship to sensing imperialism at the end of the 19th century is not only a transition point from what you have just expressed on the objective situation of today but the originality of RL herself and the uniqueness of a turning point in history itself gets lost in your presentation. Didn't you feel that when you went on to use the expression "flash of genius" in relationship to RL's conception of Woman -- when in fact you were talking about our conception, not hers, of Woman as Revolutionary Force and Reason? Didn't you realize that the question Eugene asked about your use of that expression was not so much for information as to question whether you were presenting a position other than ours on the historic uniqueness of RL? And finally, didn't you feel that because you had to deny this in your summation, that it took something away from Luxemburg? In a word, Form (with a capital F) is ~~both~~ both content and the universal, and Luxemburg certainly achieved both with her flash of genius on imperialism, and it is therefore up to you to make sure that the audience knows that.

When you do talk of her views on Women's Liberation, and you do show that the feminist dimension was certainly something she was for but not fully conscious of ~~and~~ it as Force and Reason, you again detract from it if you insist on telling stories out of context about her critique of Zetkin as indulging in "old women's business". First of all, she burst out with that when she was furious with Zetkin for being absent from the Congress floor when she was needed in the fight against the Reformists. Secondly, your job is to show how those kinds of remarks ~~were~~ used by everybody who is opposed to WL and is trying to "prove" that RL was likewise opposed. But the best thing in that respect, because you naturally have only so much time to talk, is just not to get involved in minor matters, and that is a very minor matter. What

15448

is new is to point out transition points that lead to turning points in history and it is the newness that Marxist-Humanism strives to single out in all cases.

Take for example, your reading in its entirety the remarks Luxemburg made when she urged the Women's Congress not to move to Brussels but to stay with Zetkin. What was very important in that statement gets lost when the whole is read, because details and essence get mixed up. If instead of reading, you report that RL's point was tremendous because, with her insistence that they "follow" Zetkin, she actually produced a blow against the Second International's attempt to hide their opposition to the autonomy of the WL, under the excuse that their only interest was being geographically close to their center.

On the one hand, you were great in presenting Zetkin as an independent revolutionary as well as the editor of Gleichheit at the very moment in history when men as well as women -- all revolutionaries -- could express their anti-militarism and fight against the Second International's betrayal in Gleichheit and Gleichheit alone. On the other hand, you detract from revolutionary aspects of Zetkin by telling her background in such great detail and simply saying in relationship to Gleichheit that the GSD accused it of being "too theoretical". I believe that the story of Zetkin should begin when she is already a socialist and there should be more said about the relationship of Luxemburg's influence on Zetkin theoretically. At the same time, I should not have left the analysis of Gleichheit as "too theoretical". Instead, I would say what was considered as "too theoretical" may not be what we consider philosophy, but the masses, in motion ~~as~~ ^{as} readers of Gleichheit, have given it its place in history -- despite the fact that after Luxemburg's death she did not remain the independent she had been but eventually capitulated to Stalin.

Therefore, you return to Luxemburg, and with our interpretation of Luxemburg ~~as~~ you end with a quotation from RLWLM. And for that I would propose the one from RL on p. 75 and the last sentences on p. 76: "She comes alive every time we are in a deep new crisis... but history has original ways of illuminating the thought of its time."

The form in which you present your document therefore would have four parts: I. Objective Situation; II. The Transition Point from RL to Today's Objective Crisis would be RL's "flash of genius" on imperialism, both at the point of 1899 and as it continued throughout her life climaxed in opposition to WWI; III. The Crucial Position in Anti-Imperialism and in the Autonomy of WL as expressed by Zetkin both in Gleichheit and against Reformism, culminating in the deep friendship with RL not only as friendship but as theoretical influence. Finally, in IV. The Conclusion should include the return to RL as well as the relationship to the Marxist-Humanist analysis in RLWLM.

Yours,

15449