

THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL - AN ANTI-CRITIQUE, BY ROSA LUXEMBURG
AND IMPERIALISM AND THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL BY N.I. BUKHARIN,
Edited and with Introduction by Kenneth J. Tarbuck, Translated by
Rudolph Wichmann. Monthly Review Press, copyrighted 1972

Tarbuck has both biographical notes on RL and NB, and
an Editor's introduction. It is the latter I am interested in
summarizing. The 1st important ~~EMM~~ distinction he makes (p.15)
is that though RL has given the impression that this book came from
her attempt to write an economic textbook on Marx "an examination of
the period makes it clear that the question of IMPERIALISM generally --
and the specific form of Prussian militarism combine with German
monopoly capital -- was the context, which raised seemingly abstract
questions involved to the level of passionate political dispute."

He then points to the fact that why it became so imperative
in 1913 was not economic but the political context, beginning with
the fight against revisionism, her attempts to warn the German party of
the dangers of imperialism and its influence in the Party.

Another important point he makes is that the attack on her
should not have surprised her. "And it is indicative of the manner in
which she compartmentalized her life and thinking." . . . He then proceeds
to an analysis of the formulae of Vol 2 of Capital. (A good critique
of Joan Robinson appears in the footnote on pp 19 to 20.).

On pp 23-25 Tarbuck deals with Sweezy, Mandel (a bit too
complimentarily there) even though he also ^(looked at from RL's pt of view) makes the point that Mandel
is advancing as proof, the very point that needs to be proved" (p. 25).
On that same page he also takes up Dobb. He also takes issue with
Tom Kemp's The Theories of Imperialism. On page 28, Tarbuck criticises
Tony Cliff's pamphlet on RL, showing how "he completely confuses her
presentations of the question." He is referring to the schema of re-
production. On pp 30-31, he does come back to Marx's own statement
showing that it isn't true that the creation of a 3rd department --
gold production -- "was legitimized by Marx. But in fact Marx was very
careful only to use 2 departments of ^{social} production and he quite specifically
made gold production a sub- department of Dept. 1." (The whole of p.31
is crucial), and he even used expressions (almost like mine on appearance
and reality: "She also fails to see that the schemes are in fact only
an ex post facto presentation of what has occurred. On such points
we see the confusion between theoretical abstraction and reality that
continually creeps into Luxemburg's ~~ex post facto~~ supposition.")

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His critique of Bukharin with whom, on the whole, he does agree, begins on p. 32 and it seems to me that when he takes issue with Bukharin's concept of "a single world trust of capitalism" he is really skipping over too fast Marx's concept of a closed capitalist economy, that is to say, Marx is assuming a closed capitalist society, but the world exists.

It's not hard to see why RL was off

On p. 35, Tarbuck has a good point in contrasting the methodology of Lenin which singled out the points of difference from ordinary capitalism and Luxemburg who "merely sees the threads of continuity."

Key

And on p. 37 he begins the critique of Baran and Sweezy who think they have avoided underconsumptionism by saying that the problem for modern capitalism is not the ques. of realization of s v

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but rather that of the disposal 'economic surplus'. In that critique of Sweezy and Baran he also correctly includes the latest collaborator, Harry Magdoff's The Age of Imperialism. Tarbuck is especially brilliant (p. 40) when he shows that the very posing of the question and the methodology departs from RL in where she is correct, i.e. that she is continually seeking to understand how the struggles of the workers and of revolutionary Marxists should be related to imperialism, whereas in Baran and Sweezy's Monopoly Capital "labor as an economic category" and the working class as a political force hardly rate a mention, and this is not accidental. These omissions flow from the methods used in the analysis and as such separate them sharply from the tradition in which RL worked."

Unfortunately Tarbuck then goes into praise of Mandel's Economic Theory as if he closely followed Lenin's thesis. And whereas Tarbuck criticises Stalin's "sway" he never once mentions the debate between Natanovna-Smith's debate with Varga on the question of imperialism and state-capitalism.

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The Accumulation of Capital -- An Anti-critique by Rosa
Luxemburg, Edited with an Introduction by Kenneth
J. Tarbuck, Translated by Rudoph Wichmann,
Monthly Review Press, N.Y., 1972

RL's Anti-critique has finally been published in
English. I think subheads have been supplied by
the editor, Tarbuck. The first ^{is} "The Question at
Issue" (pp 47 - 62) -- on p. 50, she says, At the
same time, the absolute ~~and~~ and undivided rule of
capital aggravates class struggle throughout the
world and the international political and economic
anarchy to such an extent that, long before the last
consequences of economic development, it must lead
to the rebellion of the international proletariat
against the existence of the rule of capital.

"This, in brief, is my conception of the
problem and its solution. At first glance, it may
appear to be a purely theoretical exercise. And yet
the practical meaning of the problem is at hand --
the connection with the most outstanding fact of our
time: imperialism."

(p62): "Marx, himself, only posed the ^{question} of the
accumulation of gross capital but his answer went no
further... Death forced him to stop writing. It was
clearly left to his pupils to solve this problem/
(like many others), and my Accumulation was intended
as an attempt in this direction."

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And
Second subheading: "The Critics", p.71

"To accumulate capital does not mean to produce higher and higher mountains of commodities, but to convert more and more commodities into money capital."
She mixes up all critics whether revolutionary or reformist and treats them with equal contempt.

And subheading: "Bauer's General Criticisms" and this continues into the *5th* subsection "The 'New' Population Theory of Otto Bauer." And into the next, 6th, "Bauer's 'Practical' Conclusions."

Actually, the only important part is the last on imperialism, just as that was the only original part in Accumulation. (PP. 140 to 150) Again we are in North America, South America, South Africa, Australia, African Colonies, West Indies and the South Seas, China, France, Berbers in Morocco, Austrian imperialism in Serbia and Albania; German capital in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. On p. 144, she says: "The proud monolithic edifice of official German Social Democracy was revealed at its first historical trial to be a Potemkin village."]

P. 145: "But the connection with practice is in our case even more obvious than it may seem at first sight. It basically means two different methods of fighting imperialism."

(cont'd)

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"Marx's analysis of accumulation was developed at a time when imperialism had not yet entered the world stage... This apparently rigid theoretical contradiction has only to be translated into historical dialectics in that it conforms to the spirit of the entire Marxist teaching and way of thinking, and the contradiction in Marx's model becomes the living mirror of the global career of capitalism, of its fortune and fall. Accumulation is impossible in an exclusively capitalist environment."

P. 146 "Marx's model of accumulation -- when properly understood -- is precisely ⁱⁿ its insolubility. The exact prognosis of the economic unavoidable downfall of capitalism as a result of the imperialist process of expansion whose specific task it is to realize Marx's assumption: the general and undivided rule of capital."

She quotes herself from Accumulation where she said that "the rebellion of the international working class against the rule of capital (would come) even before it has economically reached the limits it has set for itself."

P. 147 "The discovery of America ^{and the} sea route to India were not just Promethean achievements of the human mind and civilization but also, and inseparable, a series of mass murders of primitive people in the New World, and the large-scale slave-trading with the peoples of Africa and Asia... the expansion of

capital, which for four centuries had given the existence and civilization of all non-capitalist peoples in Asia, Africa, America and Australia over to ceaseless convulsions and general and complete decline, is now plunging the civilized peoples of Europe into a series of catastrophes whose final result can only be the decline of civilization or the transition to a socialist mode of production."

Final para. "Marxism is a revolutionary world outlook which must always strive for new discoveries, which completely despises rigidity in once-valid theses, and whose living force is best preserved in the intellectual clash of self-criticism and the rough and tumble of history."