

October 7, 1980

Dear Olga, Mike and Eugene:

The enclosed note to Dave gives you a whiff of what I'm about to change, and I trust that you also realize that, with the whiff comes the bad news that I will probably be at least another month working out that one chapter, AND THAT IS AS A DRAFT ONLY.

Here is what has happened when I was ready to "complete" the next two-thirds of the Notes I began in Wallaceburg. It's that little word "concrete" again. I just couldn't see how I could possibly start the "Marx chapter" by writing as if nothing came before it. When I got over the "self-consciousness" on the question of RL being "tone deaf" on philosophy, I realized that, in fact, it can be done, (indeed, must be done) very objectively; and it does take in, until 1914, everyone including Lenin. That is to say, if philosophy is what determines not only your vision but your strategy and tactics, then obviously "they" (or at least RL and VIL) did very well by just being politicians. And in fact the fact that I do deal with a strict revolutionary who not only never betrayed, but very nearly went to her death "knowingly", -- naturally, I'm not referring to her gory murder, but to the fact that she had advised against the Spartacus week, because she knew it was an insurrection bound to fail, as they were altogether too small to attempt anything like that, but she was going to be where the workers were.

If you look concretely at the various periods, you can see that she sounds as if she did take dialectics seriously, just because in the fight against reformism it was enough to be quite general on the need for dialectics, as the ground for the proletarian independence of thought. On the other hand when it comes to the Russian Revolution, where she was greatest in activity, and on appreciation of spontaneity, theoretically, philosophically what she singles out, is General Strike; that is to say, the unity of economics and politics; no philosophy is involved either in the manner of LI's permanent revolution or VIL's most open attack on his own narrow theory of party. (I believe that both by seeing the Subject -- the proletariat and peasantry -- as Reason, and it's in that period that he used the expression "proletariat as Reason"; he displayed, to use Tony Cliff's phrase in a very different sense, "an uncanny intuition" BUT CANNY IN RELATIONSHIP TO DIALECTICS. In a word, because his practice was so very dialectical at all times, the reorganization of philosophy came easily in 1914.)

Where you began to see most seriously that the lack of philosophy is murderous, is at very highest point of original development -- the break with Kautsky, imperialism, and the national question, women's suffrage. Put differently, it meant that her failure to draw organizational conclusions arose precisely from her failure to have the dialectics so inherent in her thought as to forever see negation of the negation instead of just contradictions.

RL's review of
Sometime back, when Dave translated for me the early manuscripts -- not the 1844 Manuscripts but of that same period -- that Mehring first brought out, in which Mehring totally underestimated Marx; and while RL had a much higher opinion of Marx at the time Kautsky translated *Theories of Surplus Value*, there is still that nonsense that the one who discovers the manuscripts is greater than the author of the mss. In any case, those translations plus the one in the NI on RL on Marxism and the "Party of Practice", were sufficiently something I disliked that I put them away. They surely seemed to have nothing concrete on all the turning points in her life; they could be dismissed as "popularizations".

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When, however, I got down to Marx, even the very new way I intend to cover ~~his~~ his great new continent of thought to one year before he broke with bourgeois society, it hit me that RL's superficiality in dealing with that period was really beyond belief, and told more than 1000 pages could tell about how the Second International related -- pardon me, failed to relate -- to Marx; how at very best they were raised on Engels' Anti-Dühring and Origin of the Family, and, organizationally, didn't move one inch away from Lassalle. We really must grab this by the scruff of the neck. (Gosh, we'll have fewer and fewer friends all the time.)

What I must now do is not only re-examine all I have done on RL, stressing that it's precisely because she is a revolutionary; it's precisely because she suddenly discovered that it's Marx she was disagreeing with "in economics", and yet wanted to claim that she was only "supplementing" his unfinished Second Volume; and precisely because the most urgent and concrete subject -- the war -- was truly not answerable by being a revolutionist without a philosophy, we first now get the opportunity to see both the start and the end of Marx's life, as totally inseparable from Hegelian dialectics. That is to say, we can't say that because we didn't betray and those who were reformist did betray, therefore we don't need philosophy. We are dealing with one of the greatest revolutionaries, who remained great until the "day of judgment" -- World War I and the German Revolution.

Yours,

Raya

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