

June 8, 1978

Dear Meintje:

Thank you ever so much for the work you did on Rolad-Holst's biography of Rosa Luxemburg. It is of great value to me, and I hope you will permit me to ask you for more work. To give you an example of why it is so much more important to have a Woman Liberationist write than the summaries you get from men, no matter how sympathetic to Rosa, nevertheless always expand on matters that look like "women fighting" (or do they say "cats fighting"?). Where you mention only one matter on Clara and Rosa which includes Rosa's intention to accompany Zetkin to International Women's Conference--she could not as she landed in jail instead; and then say but one sentence on Henriette's estimation of Zetkin's dependence on Rosa, no less a scholar than Nettie expands unnecessarily as to just how Henriette said Clara was wasting Rosa's time because she herself did not like Clara!

So, first will you please tell me (incidentally please cite title of book, publisher, date of publication) what does HR-H mean, that is, how does she develop the point Rosa wasn't interested in women's movement "but now she wants to help everywhere where people try to reconnect the torn threads of the web of int. connections

Secondly, and even more important, is what you summarize in but one short par. about the years, 1910-1914 and Karl Kautsky. What, exactly, does she say are the reason of their conflict? Is it just opportunism? Is it the position of Rosa on the General Strike? Is the polemic between KK and RL that HR-H cite on the question of the war? Or is it the fact that he refuses to publish her and she goes "outside" to have it published and thus reveals there are polemics within the organization? This takes up a great part of Rosa's legacy as well as life, and Roland-Holst was "ultra-left" so the exact phrases she would use would be very revealing to me even if the space devoted to it is little. Can you please translate, say, a page? Thanks, again.

When are you coming to NY, or better still to Detroit? I hope it is to the Labor Day convention; we'll be glad to put both of you up. Incidentally, I once lived for a little while in Worcester, and was most surprised that so little a place, was both important for labor & women especially--at least in the 1930s it was--and had a most sophisticated classical music festival every summer. Is it still there.

Yours,

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H.R.H. on Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg :

Only this :

(1915) "Rosa Luxemburg works day and night. She prepares the first issue of "International", a new newspaper edited by herself and Franz Mehring, to which also Heinrich Schabel, Clara Zetkin and A. Thalheimer contribute. The leading article "The Reconstruction of the International" is already written. She also plans to accompany Clara Zetkin to Holland, to help her with the preparation of an international women's conference, which is to take place in Bern. So far she hasn't taken much interest in the women's movement, but now she wants to help every where, where people try to reconnect the torn threads of the web of international connections."

H.R.H. indicates that Clara Zetkin knew Rosa Luxemburg very well, but does not deal with that relationship in her biography. As a reference she gives Clara Zetkin's introduction to the second edition of the Juniusbrochure, in which Zetkin describes Luxemburg's days in Zürich. She mentions that Clara Zetkin was not very independent and that her friendship was for Rosalind very dim. very dim. continuing

H.R.H. on Kautsky: (1910-1914):

She states the reasons for their conflict, talks about the polemic between the Kautsky and R.L., but not in great detail. The correspondence between R.L. and Louise Kautsky may contain more specific information.

On the suffrage - speech: was not mentioned.

Henriette Roland - Holst heard Rosa Luxemburg speak for the first time in 1900 in Paris (Socialist Congress)

I'm afraid this isn't of much help to you. However, if in any other way I can help you (translation etc.), please let me know.

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Roland Holst (From Luxemburg)

Henriette Roland-Holst on The Accumulation of Capital:

In her "Accumulation" Rosa Luxemburg tries to prove that the capitalist system of production, which, to be able to function orderly needs a continuous increase of its economic base, is to all sides dependent of the presence of non-capitalist forms and groups of society. To create surplus-value, capitalism needs a constant supply of labor from non-capitalist forms of society. Beyond that it also needs a constant supply of consumers from these formations to consume this surplus-value. It can only continue to exist so long as it finds in its expansion -- endeavours non-capitalist forms of life. Again and again it throws itself upon them and sucks out their vital juices until they finally decay and die. Capitalism then does not only live from the exploitation of the worker, but also from the murder on the different non-capitalist societal forms that exist on earth. And it is because of capitalism that these formations grow fewer in number and significance.

Out of a need for unity, so typical for her, has Rosa Luxemburg in her "Accumulation" made an attempt to present capitalism from its origin to its collapse as a whole, as a cohesive system, in which the same forces are always active. According to her, the imperialistic phase of capitalism is not the product of a long development; on the contrary, the imperialistic tendencies are from the beginning present in capitalism: "historically understood is the accumulation of capital a process of metabolism, which takes place between the capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of production." ("Accumulation") "Thus capitalist accumulation as a whole, as an actual historical process, has two different aspects. One concerns the commodity market and the place where surplus value is produced- the factory, the mine, the agricultural estate."

"...peace, property and equality prevail. and the sharp dialectics of scientific analysis were needed, to reveal how the right of ownership changes in the course of accumulation into appropriation of other people's property, how commodity exchange turns into exploitation and equality becomes class-rule." ("Accumulation")

"The other aspect of accumulation of capital concerns the relations between capitalism and the non-capitalist modes of production which start

making their appearance on the international stage. Its predominant methods are colonial policy, an international loan system- a policy of spheres of interest- and war. Force, fraud, oppression, looting are openly displayed without any attempt at concealment, and it requires an effort to discover within this tangle of political violence and contests of power the stern laws of the economic process." (Accumulation)

And so for Rosa Luxemburg, the process of capitalist development takes from the beginning place in two spheres. Its collapse will begin, when it will have devoured all the non-capitalist forms of production and societies.

Rosa Luxemburg's theory of accumulation caused in the circles of the ultra-left Socialists a great deal of conflict, because his theory seemed to move the "physically necessary" collapse of capitalism to a far away future.

Rosa Luxemburg describes in the concluding chapter of "Accumulation" militarism as the special field of accumulation of capital, which comes in the later phases of cap. development more and more to the foreground and takes on increasingly violent proportions. Resulting in a change in the day-to-day history of capital. It becomes a string of political and social disasters and convulsions, and under these conditions, punctuated by periodical economic catastrophes or crises, accumulation can go on no longer. But even before this natural economic impasse of capital's own creation is properly reached it becomes a necessity for the working class to revolt against the rule of capital." (Accumulation)

And so we see that Rosa Luxemburg eventually turns from voluntarism back to historical fatalism, which was to her economic determinism. Like all radical Marxists of her time, she was convinced, that the revolutionary effects of the capitalist process of development on the consciousness of the working class would present themselves. And the farther the cap. process of development progressed, the stronger they would be. In the last instance, it is the belief in the blindly working forces in production that forms the rock, on which the temple of her optimistic political radicalism is built. This optimism she shares with her contemporaries."