

March 9, 1973

Carrie
Dear Harry,

You have no idea how very excited I was to get your letter regarding Lenin and the whole concept of philosophy and organization. N&L Committees are so young that questions relating to Lenin's time appear abstract; I dare say that for most history began in the 1960's.

You really hit the nail on the head (though your modesty made you put it in the form of a question) when you asked whether Lenin's perspective had been to copy the structure, not to mention the mass following, of German SD. That is it in a nutshell. Everyone from the Polish exponent of spontaneity (RL) to Lenin's overly-centralized party had a single model before them: Kautsky's party. This is why Rosa did not break with the party even though she had gotten Kautsky's opportunist number long before Lenin had thought about it. That is why Lenin, who hungered for just such a mass party, could not understand why Kautsky and Rosa and the revisionists all opposed him when the truth was that it was Tsarism that foisted upon them such extremely illegal work that there was no other way to function and remains alive than to carry out so tight a discipline. (For that matter Rosa had to do the exact same thing in her little group but she didn't make a theory of it, whereas Lenin did.) On the other hand, he was the only one in the whole International who did have in his program from the very outset the question of workers' power, conquest of it, and the question that there could be no revolution unless there was a revolutionary theory. The "only" trouble there was that that same appreciation of theory regarding revolution did not carry through to organization, and ~~was~~ by the time in 1914 when he first grasped the universality of the dialectic, including the dialectic of organizational development, it was never spoiled out. You may recall that the first day of the February Revolution his telegram was still on the level of combining legal with illegal work. It was only on the second day when he cabled, "Never again within the Second International. Never again like the Social Democracy."

In a word, there was a 2½ year lapse between the fall of the Second, a 2½ year lapse during which he went to town beautifully on the National question, on the imperialist war being transformed into a civil war, on fighting "imperialist economism" among his own Bolsheviks who went "ultra-left" in trying to throw out or at least blame as fully the proletariat as the betraying leadership, and went even as far as to say: nothing like 2½ (Zimmerwald or Kienthal) will do. And yet, and yet, that dialectic, when it comes to organization, had no ramifications. It began in April upon his return to Russia and meeting all the antagonisms from his Bolsheviks on the question of putting the struggle for state power on the agenda. And he raised the slogan of all power to the Soviets and the most famous and greatest of all statements was to threaten to resign from the leadership and "go to the sailors" but he didn't give up the party and was altogether too forgiving when they did put the question on the agenda. So over and over again we are back to the fact that only in his Will does he ~~staxx~~ state that the biggest theoretician didn't understand the dialectic and that if the factional fights really represent class differences, then nothing he said could possibly stop the collapse of the first workers' state.

This dichotomy between philosophy and organization, this over-appreciation of Lassalle who had built the first working class mass organization, even if it was mostly for electorate purposes, has kept us in a vise from which we better free ourselves with extending Philosophy and Revolution to its becoming the organization builder. I do hope you will write more on your experiences in organizations and its gaping lack of philosophy.

Yours, Raya

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