

Ju ly 28, 1979

Dear Peter,

Because I was (and am) so very anxious to experiment with an autonomous youth group, and because you are so pivotal to that development, and because it was necessary for you to begin sinking your roots in LA, I did not find wa day the brief time you were here to discuss your very important work on RL. I must now at least raise some questions that I would need to know when I see you at the Plenum -- and I do hope I will have several hours with you, so you better let me know exactly when you're arriving and when you have to leave, since it's generally the day after the Plenum, not before, when I would have time to discuss this.

First, of the concrete matters that I want to know before I "disappear" is what is available on the West Coast, that is to say, is there such a thing as complete works, either in LA or in Bay Area or Stanford? In what language?

Before even that question is looked into, what have you got in your library? I was quite amazed to hear from someone that you actually do have, if not complete, selected works of Luxemburg. How could that be and I not know it? When did it happen? I mean, why would you have done exactly what I asked, as if that was all there was to the question of RL, instead of sk at once telling me what you have, in what language, covering what scope of work, edited by whom, and is that work handled chronologically or by subject matter or just on the basis of what some faction wants to reveal? Surely you understand that I not only have the highest opinion of your talents, but I would depend upon all sort of independent, creative suggestions. Just to cite one example, regarding the fact that it cannot be limited to questions I ask, is the fact that when I first began to work, 1910 was the pivotal point. First, because that is where she seems so far in advance of everyone; Lenin included, by having sensed Kautsky's opportunism long before anyone else even dreamed of challenging Kautsky. Secondly, (and this shows how even WL can become a narrowing rather than a broadening point, and why, thanks to dialectics and revolution, I moved into the fact that it's not only RL, or WL, or both together, but must be focused on Marx's philosophy of revolution, Marx and no one else) and most importantly, that very change in focus lead to my finding the 1907 Congress and making the central point the 1905 Revolution. And isn't dialectics great and today-ish, for I found it just in time for the Iranian Revolution.

OK, that means that no matter how important and needed a question I raise must always be related to all that RL is. So I repeat: what works do you have, what periods do they cover, can you translate the contents page for me? Do you have the books with you, or would you need to ask someone to bring them to the Plenum, or better still, Mike is going to be there Aug. 5 for a few days, so could he get them?

One more question in regard to your translation: I don't see ~~that~~ whether you could easily locate a quotation that I would question. The specific point I have in mind is LT's 1910 article in NZ Your page number is 16, and it comes under section V, on "The factions' method..." The last sentence in that paragraph, you use the

expression, "Only by their compilation--by overcoming the extremes." What is the word for compilation. From Lenin's critique of that

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article, I would judge that the word, instead, is conciliation. Surely Lenin's theoretical critique of Trotsky is directed against conciliationism, conciliator, and Trotsky, once he accepted Lenin's critique of him as conciliator and his going 180 degrees around on the question of the party's lead, was all too happy to accept the critique of conciliationism and being a conciliator, as if that only meant on the organizational question. And we Trotskyist all accepted that. Even when I began my struggle against Trotskyism, and not only on the Russian question -- and I ^{had} not then accept that he was wrong only on the organizational question, I nevertheless thought that that is what Lenin was criticizing him for. Since I've begun studying the 1905 Revolution, not as past but as relevant present, it is that very article you translated and Lenin's answer which convinced me that whereas it is true the immediate line of attack was the bounding back and forth between Menshevism and Bolshevism and neutralism, it was actually the highest period of a theoretical weakness that was involved.

That is to say, conciliationism in theory is what is absolutely fatal.

So you see how crucial ~~as~~ ^{word} a ~~word~~ sometimes becomes. I'm pretty sure that there were several times in your translation of ML that I definitely questioned the translation of a word that seems to me a person who has been around for along time and knows all the "name-throwing" that had been going on in the post-Marx Marxist movement would not have used. Since there was no immediate necessity for my knowing the exact word, I did not write you about it. But now that I'm thinking more concretely of actual work, I do want to know most concretely how you go about in your translation and easy you would find anything that I questioned. What is best "academically" is when a word appears quite pivotal to the thought, the translator would always include it in parentheses the word of the original language. I'm sure I need not belabor the point about Begriff, alienation, sublimation, entfremdung, and so forth, and how many years since Hegel died? You won't find any unanimity on what is abebhung. And the only correct thing under those circumstances is to say, I'm using my own translation but here is the official or orthodox or whatever. Most of the time, I "capitulated" to the Russian translation of Lenin's Notebooks, but sometimes I absolutely refused, and since it simply does not pay to divert the question to "who is right", I would give both translations (incidentally, I absolutely abhor by now the translation of Lenin's Will that the Trotskyists made; the official is definitely better; and to think that all these years we were acting as if VIL called NB "the greatest theoretician" whereas in fact it was "a great theoretician. Or to come down to low level of Johnsonism, who had quoted Hegel as "error is the dynamic of truth" whereas Hegel had used it as "a dynamic of truth".) Enough!*

Yours,

*On second thought I don't want it to be enough. Since though I've often related the incident orally, I've never put it in black and white and it should be. I'm referring to the fact that the American Trotskyists, its intellectuals, its leaders, were making life quite miserable for me when I was with LT, by endless letters as to how I was "taking advantage" of LT not being fluent in English, and "passing myself off" as a competent translator. When the letter actually accused me of "misleading" LT, I approached him and said I was sorry bother him with

such trivia, but since they would not take my word that he asked me to translate, and since what is more important, he should know that my translations are not acceptable to the leadership, here is the letter I just received. The Old Man literally hit the ceiling, since he was so absolutely furious with their kind of King's English that for the sake of a beautiful expression, they often misinterpreted and deviated from his thought, that he had actually asked them once -- on an article on the Spanish Revolution -- to reprint the whole. He made me do the following:

A page was divided into 2. Over one-half of it was written in his King's English. On the other half was Raya's translation. And after something like 10-15 pages, I don't recall how long it was, he wrote in his own handwriting, "I Lev Davidovich Trotsky prefer Sanskrit."

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