

COMRADE AND LOVER, RL's Letters to LJ; edited and translated by Elzbieta Ettinger, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1979/

This absolutely ridiculous book, ~~not~~ not only gives you not a whiff of Luxemburg either as revolutionary or as multi-dimensional or even in the narrow field she has chosen -- personal (that is to say that in the question of personal she ~~manages~~ manages to create the absolutely wrong impression and conclusion). Here is an example of how she imposes her wrong conclusions on Luxemburg, on the historic relationship of RL to ~~Jogiches~~ Jogiches: (1) ~~on p. 49, Ettinger fn.~~ on p. 49, Ettinger fn. states "J proofread and revised L's dissertation for publication. After they broke up, he continued to proofread and revise her work" (See Letter 91). The letter to which this fn. is attached is dated June 24, 1898 and concerns her ~~doctoral dissertation~~ doctoral dissertation, and ~~she~~ she, in fact, disregards his "corrections" and ~~says that his~~ says that his "lashing" scares me as much as the wagging of a dog's tail."

(2) The letter which Ettinger refers to as if it were proof of the fact that he always read and "revised" her work jumps all the way to 1912; and those galleys which RL sent him of Acc. of Capital, are certainly not anything she would accept anyone's "revision" about, much less Jogiches.

What is more than just annoying in this kind of thing, and the choice of the personal life of Luxemburg as her concentration point, is that because we do not see from these letters RL as a theorist, as a great writer, and as very, very independent, the impression is left that Jogiches really not only dominated her life as "comrade and lover" but indeed remained the man behind the little woman's work.

About the only thing I found quite valuable and wish I could trace it through is that in her introduction, where she speaks about the general atmosphere in Poland among the educated, assimilated Jews, who supported the cause of Polish independence, which was characteristic of RL's father, she says (xiv) that the 1863 insurrection was "sometimes called the 'women's war'" and "women proved to be skilled conspirators and comrades in arms... They revealed themselves as a power to be reckoned with."

In further elaborating the question of the role of women, beginning with "the first mass strike in Warsaw erupted after women laborers and prostitutes had been ordered by the Czarist police to undergo identical, hygienic checkups". She also shows that in literature, the protagonist of a famous novel by Eliza Orzeszkowa, published in 1877, "as distinguished from such famous characters as Mme Bovary, on the one hand and Anna Karolina, on the other, who were romantic tragedians, "paid with her life for being useless in the labor market."

The divisions of the book likewise do not seem to have any real logic. Thus, the first chapter called "The First Years: 1893-1897" has only one "female" characteristic (my quotes) when she quotes 7/16/1897, as saying: "I just don't want you to take my tears as female hysteria."

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The second chapter is called "The Trial: 1898-1900". This period contains that magnificent letter (No. 24 by this editor) of April 19, 1899, where RL declares that she feels something great coming on, and I do like the fact that she includes one sentence that I didn't see in the other translations: "I don't care to your heart's content, I don't care. I'm convinced that something is stirring inside me, something is being born." (p. 76)

The third chapter is titled "Together: 1900 - 1905". In her introductory notes to that part, Ettinger says, correctly, but rather in the wrong period, since it's 1904 and on the very article against Lenin's "Organizational Question of Russian Social Democracy": "One of the first on the European scene to recognize Lenin's political genius, she was a supporter and at the same time a critic of the Bolsheviks." (p. 110) And since she would have to show a better proof of this than the 1904 piece, she jumps to 1912 when in a letter to K. Zetkin, RL writes of Lenin: "Lenin came yesterday and called on me four times in two days. It's a pleasure to talk to him. He is sophisticated and knowledgeable, with that kind of ugly face I like so much to look at..."

On p. 142, RL's letter of May 21, 1905, reveals what I couldn't figure out as to why so many things are referred to as "What Next?" RL explains that she's absolutely opposed to Jogiches publishing it as a separate pamphlet. It must be a publication which has the "format" of "What Next?": "Therefore, I categorically insist that the format of 'What's Next?' stays unchanged. I only give in on the title. Let's call the publication: 'From the Revolutionary Era,' subtitled 'What Next?' No. 2." She follows this up on May 26, all furious about the way it was published: "The printing of 'What Next?' is an idiot's dream."

The final part is entitled "Unto Death... 1907-1914" but since that is not when RL is murdered and since the letters end in 1914, she writes an epilogue which tells you that she was murdered on Jan. 15, 1919, and that he was assassinated within 2 months, and she doesn't even tell you that it took quite a few months before her corpse, completely deformed, surfaced.