

ROSA LUXEMBURG IN CHINA

RLS China Small Office Event Report

On December 18th, the China office of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung has organized its second Rosa Luxemburg workshop, this time as its year end office event in Beijing, which is dedicated to further spreading of Rosa Luxemburg's ideas and thoughts in modern Chinese society.

The main subject of the event was selected as "Rosa Luxemburg in China". It was particularly focused on how Rosa Luxemburg's thought has been introduced into and then spread in China. At the same time we wanted to discuss its contemporary value for Chinese society today. The topic attracted a large number of people from completely different professional backgrounds. Many students, including but not limited to the top universities of China like Beijing University, Qinghua University as well as the Renmin University showed up and participated very enthusiastic. Also, staff from government think-tanks, party institutions, local NGOs and political veterans also showed interest in the topic and participated in the event. RLS China Office received a large number of applications prior to the event, but finally only could register 50 people due to the limited number of seats available.

We selected the meeting room in a local German restaurant as the location for the event. Due to a relaxed and unconventional atmosphere there, the discussion was further stimulated.

This was especially due to the two well-known and extremely experienced professors from the relevant field who presented the input speeches. Professor He Ping, a teacher from the Department of Philosophy of the Wuhan University was invited to Beijing to give her findings specifically for this event. She is one of the top scholars in the field of western Marxism in China. She has an extremely deep and comprehensive understanding of Rosa Luxemburg and also published a couple of books on Rosa Luxemburg. The other presenter was Professor Zhang Guangming, who is the director of the Institute of World Socialism at Peking University. He is well known for his research in socialism, democratic systems as well as a comparative research on Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin.

The event started at 2 o'clock in the afternoon on December the 18th and lasted five hours altogether. Firstly, Dr. Pohle, the office head of RLS China office opened the event and thanked all the participants for their contribution to the development of the China office of the foundation and the cooperation with its Chinese friends. A 25

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minute video named “Rosa Luxemburg – a revolutionary idol” produced by a local TV channel was shown then. It briefly introduces Rosa Luxemburg and gave the audience a current official Chinese view on her story to the audience. It was then followed by Professor He Ping’s presentation. She discussed in detail the spread of Rosa Luxemburg’s ideology in China since the beginning of the 20th century. She named different phases, namely from the 20’ies till the 40’ies of last century, the 50’ies till the mid 60’ies, the time of the cultural revolution and after 80’ies, the beginning of the policy of reform and opening. Each phase has its own characteristics, most interesting was the change in the official reception of Rosa Luxemburg corresponding to the changes in the official ideological guidelines of the party in China. After the very interesting and inspiring presentation, Professor Zhang Guangming specifically explained the differences between the ideology of Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin. In particular, he explained and criticized the way how Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas traditionally got misinterpreted in China. He argues that Rosa Luxemburg’s democratic socialism model could have an extremely high contemporary value to today’s Chinese society.

The exceptional presentations delivered by the two professors stimulated some truly active and inspiring discussions. Many attendances were especially interested in Professor Zhang Guangming thoughts about Rosa Luxemburg’s contemporary value for China, both some agree and others disagree. One student also raised an argument against Prof. Zhang Guangming’s viewpoint by explaining that the democratic model supported by Rosa might not be suitable to China’s society today. Many participants also raised points and asked questions about Professor He Ping’s presentation. Overall, the discussion was one of the highlights of the office event and it was very inspirational.

From the very beginning, the event has been considered as a very important channel not only to communicate with our local partners and supporters in China, but also to increase the public awareness of RLS office in China, particularly among young students and scholars. So it can be summarized that it was an absolute great opportunity to increase its publicity. We have received extremely positive feedbacks from the students and other attendances after the event. Some people mentioned that the location of the event was no doubt a “thinking out of the box” approach and they were happy about that. Some people also pointed out that it would be even better if the length of the discussion could be longer. Overall, it was the result of the tremendous amount of attention from all staff members RLS China Office and their common initiative in the pre-event preparation.