

Class Struggle and the Revolutionary Party: A Reappraisal of Rosa Luxemburg's Theory and Practice of Party Building

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*"In 1903, when the RSDLP was facing dissension on the question relating to membership in the Party, Luxemburg stood on the side of the Mensheviks. She criticized the Leninist-Stalinist teaching about the Party of a new type, resulting from an opportunist theory of spontaneity; she vigorously gave representation against the Bolsheviks, accusing them of ultra-centralism and Blanquisim ... In the brochure *The Mass Strike* she was heavily on the side of the strikers. The pamphlet was characterised by the theory of spontaneity and underestimation of the role of the political party of the proletariat in the revolutionary struggle. The mistakes of Luxemburg ... were conditioned by her inconsistency in the struggle with the steadily consolidating opportunism in the SPD."* [From the article "Rosa Luxemburg" in *The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, First Russian Edition, Moscow 1926 -, vol 37, 1938]. [[1](#)]

When Rosa Luxemburg was murdered in January 1919, friend and foe alike used to know her as a communist. This is as true of the Bolsheviks as of the right wing of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Lenin demanded the publication of all her writings so that they could serve as manuals for training communists for generations. Karl Radek, a one-time member of her party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) and later on a Bolshevik, did not hesitate to call her the 'most profound theoretical thinker' of communism, even when Lenin was alive. On the other hand, German Social Democrats who instigated the murderous attack on her, lumped together Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky and Karl Radek in an anti-Bolshevik *and* anti-Semitic hate campaign in the party daily *Vorwärts* (12 January 1919). [[2](#)] But subsequently, Stalin and the Stalinists claimed to see in her a "semi-Menshevik" who was utilised by the "Trotskyites", while anti-Bolsheviks claimed her as the spokesperson of 'Marxism without an organising party.' [[3](#)] As a result scholars and political activists alike have often viewed her ideas about the revolutionary party as if her sole aim was to oppose Bolshevism. Much of the responsibility lies with Stalin and his propaganda machinery. When Stalin promoted the fiction of an infallible 'Leninism' as part of the ideology of the party-state bureaucracy, all critics of Lenin from the right and all spokespersons of proletarian democracy were lumped together, and defence of proletarian democracy was denounced as semi-Menshevik, or worse, 'Trotskyite-fascist'. The Soviet bureaucracy in its early years needed to cover its dictatorship under a Leninist guise. But for that very reason it needed an orthodox interpretation of Leninism with Lenin as God and Stalin as His High Priest. [[4](#)] Subsequently, anti-

communists and anti-Bolshevik leftists of all shades, who unanimously identify Leninism [5] with Stalinism, have taken up the Lenin-Luxemburg counterposition only to reverse the direction of accusation. The image of a semi-Menshevik deviationist was soon changed to a great spontaneist fighting for democracy of the working masses *as opposed to Lenin* the founder of a monolithic party and the originator of “communist autocracy”. Thus, a French Marxist, Lucien Laurat, claimed that in her essay ‘Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy’ Luxemburg defended democracy in the workers’ movement against Leninism. [6]

The above mentioned article, written by Luxemburg in 1904, containing some of her criticisms of a specific phase of Lenin’s arguments about organisation, has often been quoted selectively and used as the sole evidence of her “anti-Leninism” on the question of the revolutionary party. Neither has the article itself been always thoroughly examined, nor has it been shown that it contains the sum and substance of Luxemburg’s views on building a revolutionary working class party. A proper reassessment of her theory of the party requires an analysis of the totality of her writings on class-party relationship; and her views on inner-party democracy as well as revolutionary consciousness and vanguard organisation, in the historical framework of her political career straddling three political parties – the SDKPiL, the SPD, and the RSDRP (the Russian social Democratic Labour Party). Otherwise the full history of her interactions with Lenin and the Bolsheviks cannot be studied. Moreover, such a reassessment would also be a partial reassessment of Lenin when the validity of her criticisms of Lenin is examined.

Critique of Bolshevism

What were the criticisms that Luxemburg levelled against Lenin in her ‘Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy’? She was primarily opposed to Lenin’s assertion, “a Jacobin who wholly identifies himself with the **organisation** of the proletariat – a proletariat conscious of class interests – is a revolutionary Social-Democrat.” [7] She argued that the Jacobin tradition, as reflected above all in Blanquism, involved political principles fundamentally opposed to Marxism. While the aim of Blanquism was to organise a revolutionary coup, Social Democracy would strive for a majority revolution.

Moreover, Blanquism did not have a revolutionary strategy that started from the elementary class struggle and the immediate consciousness of the masses. The Social Democratic organisation and programme were products of the class struggle itself. From this it flowed that the organisational structures of the Social Democratic party could not be based on blind obedience, nor on the mechanical subordination of members to the Central Committee. [8] Luxemburg felt that Lenin was transferring Blanquist organisational patterns in the Social Democratic movement where all organisations (units) of the party had to let a central authority think for them; and the organised members were being separated from the surrounding revolutionary milieu. [9]

This general criticism was the basis for specific criticisms as when she claimed that Lenin represented the ‘ultra-centralist’ viewpoint and that, “Lenin’s concern is essentially the control of the activity of the party and not its fruition, the narrowing and not the development, the harassment and not the unification of the movement.” [10] Luxemburg’s contention was that the imposition of such Jacobin elements would steer the social Democratic Party in the direction of one of its perennial problems. The party, guided by a closely knit Central Committee, and cut off from the masses, would be transformed into a sect in the name of preserving the purity of principles. This was a point she had also made while combating the reverse danger of lapsing into bourgeois reformism in her famous polemic against Eduard Bernstein. As she wrote:

‘the unification of the great mass of the people with a goal that goes beyond the whole established order, of the daily struggle with the revolutionary overthrow – this is the dialectical contradiction of the Social-Democratic movement which must develop consistently between two obstacles: the loss of its mass character and the abandonment of its goal, becoming a sect and becoming a bourgeois reformist movement.’ [11]

In other words, the Social Democracy in the course of leading the day-to-day struggle of the class towards revolution should not fall into either of the opposite traps of sectarianism and bourgeois reformism. This double emphasis on Rosa’s part shows here a concern with the concrete problems before the German working class and the SPD. Working inside the SPD, she was obviously much more aware of the bureaucratic and oligarchic tendencies of the SPD than was Lenin. In fact, Luxemburg had her article published not only in the Menshevik-dominated *Iskra*, but also in the main theoretical organ of the SPD, the *Neue Zeit*, edited by Kautsky. In Germany, reformism and the related problem of bureaucratisation were not theoretical possibilities but a reality since the legalisation of the SPD in 1891. As early as the Ruhr strike of 1892, Engels had commented critically about the tendency of the party leadership to view everything from a narrowly organisational viewpoint. [12] This ‘organisation above all’ attitude had hardened even more following what Ernest Mandel termed ‘the dialectic of partial conquests’. In other words, with the growth of organisation it is possible for the proletariat or sections of it to possess something which it can lose conjuncturally (besides its chains). As a result safeguarding the organisation becomes a goal in itself, at the cost of revolution. [13] By 1906, Luxemburg was pointing out that in Germany the trade unions had passed to the functionaries. As a result the trade unionist conception of politics had replaced the self-activity of the masses by the “theory of the incapacity of the masses for criticism and decision.” [14] In Germany, it was not organisation, but spontaneity and struggle that were absent. Forms of militant struggle, like strikes, were very weak in Germany compared to contemporary Russia. It is possible to explain Luxemburg’s repeated emphasis on the spontaneity of the masses due to her awareness of the one-sided and erroneous nature of the facile optimism that the SPD leaders had, regarding a peaceful, linear growth of the party, its parliamentary votes and the trade unions.

This socio-political context must not be forgotten while assessing her own alternative regarding the relationship between the party members, i.e., those organised in it and the broad working class masses outside it. Criticising Lenin for the organic separation of these two strata of workers, Luxemburg argued:

“Social Democracy is not bound up with the organisation of the working classes; rather, it is the very movement of the working class. Social Democratic centralism must be nothing but the imperative summation of the will of the enlightened and fighting vanguard of the working class as opposed to its individual groups and members.” [15]

This is a problematic formulation. Since any party has an organisational structure, to eradicate the boundaries between the movement of the working class and the members of a particular organisation altogether, is to simultaneously propose too uniform a structure on the movement and to push down the consciousness of the organisation to the lowest common denominator, so that it could not be the will of the vanguard any more. Moreover, notwithstanding certain weaknesses in Lenin’s organisational concepts at this stage, the only alternative that Rosa Luxemburg could offer was that of the SPD. The SPD, as the archetypal social democratic organisation, had a concept of being the representative of the entire working class. In a non-revolutionary situation, such a representation, or a fair attempt of it, carried dangers. The contemporary study of Robert Michels showed that mass parties like the SPD had a large number of passive or infrequently active members resulting in the creation of a perpetual leadership. Service to the class in the past, or holding some public position, rather than regular participation in current struggles and the development of revolutionary strategy, became the basis on which leaders were elected. In consequence, formal

democracy could hide a growing oligarchy. [16]

Thus in her attempt at coping with problems that were discernible in the German working class movement, Luxemburg was running ahead of reality in her criticisms of Lenin. Despite Lenin's later assertion that the term Jacobinism had been used only as an analogy, Luxemburg's critical comments on Lenin's definition of a Social Democrat were valid ones. To accept this definition, as she argued, was to treat the Social democrat as a revolutionary who would identify oneself with the working class organisation from outside. Besides, this definition overlooked the struggle waged by Marxism in the 19th Century to differentiate the proletariat organisationally no less than politically from Jacobinism. The idea of a Jacobin identifying with the proletarian organisation from outside also has a kinship with the more famous formulation of Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?* Here Lenin, citing the authority of Kautsky, had argued that socialist theory created by the "philosophic, historical and economic theories elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes lay at the root of socialist consciousness." [17] Later on, Stalinism defined the Communist Party, party membership and its duties, and the task of the Communist party in bringing socialist consciousness by focusing on *What Is To Be Done?* and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, eliminating the subsequent historical evolution of Lenin's theory of organisation. This was labelled 'Leninism' for decades and still passes as such in many parties inspired by Stalinism. Against this doctrine and practice of party dictatorship or substitutionism, where any group of people completely cut off from the working class can become a self-proclaimed vanguard, Luxemburg's criticism remains valid.

In discussing *What Is To Be Done?*, the first point to note is that the book is written as a summary of the political line of the entire *Iskra* group. [18] The central argument of this book was that at a time when the mass working class movement was spontaneously moving ahead the revolutionary party could discharge its duty only by effecting political centralisation of the diverse fragmentary experiences born out of diverse struggles. If class-consciousness was to rise higher than the level where workers presented economic demands to individual capitalists, the working class had to understand, beyond the relationship of capital and labour in one factory, the relationship of all the classes in society as well as the state to the working class. [19] For years before this, in course of developing this perspective, Lenin had insisted that without the development of such high level of class consciousness the self-emancipation of the proletariat could not be achieved. [20] At the same time, the working class was fragmented, and from this fragmented nature flowed the necessity of professional revolutionaries. The professional revolutionary was not external to the proletariat. Those workers who were aware of the dynamics of the class struggle, had to be brought together in one organisation and turned into full-time activists so that they could be freed from the need to earn a livelihood, and so that organisational stability and political centralisation could be ensured. [21] Consequently, the development of the professional revolutionary as envisaged by Lenin meant ensuring the preponderance of the leaders of working class origin in the party.

Lenin wrote a point-by-point rejoinder to Luxemburg, which was however published only after his death, and has been used infrequently by scholars. [22] Lenin showed that in many of her criticisms, Luxemburg was either wrong about the facts or about what constituted democracy. Where Luxemburg had accused Lenin of giving the Central Committee the right to organise local committees, Lenin pointed out that this right was the result of an amendment proposed by his opponents. [23]

Luxemburg had talked of Lenin's ultra centralism or relentless centralism. [24] Lenin responded that he was in fact defending the elementary principle of organisation. [25] In an important respect, it was Lenin who stood for the formal rules of democracy. In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he insisted repeatedly that people at the top must discharge their duties as much as the rank and file. [26] Decisions arrived at democratically in the Party Congress, the highest body of the party,

like the election of the Editorial Board of the *Iskra*, were being flouted by the party minority. [27] In other words, it was Lenin who was advocating democracy, which includes the subordination of the minority to the majority, whereas the Mensheviks were insisting that party Congress decisions could be flouted in the name of other considerations. As Lenin put it, what he defended was the view that "Rules adopted by a Party congress must be adhered to until amended by a subsequent Congress." [28] Far from advocating 'slavish submission' etc., it was Lenin who was advocating broadest expansion of class democracy in a revolutionary proletarian party as far as underground conditions in Tsarist Russia allowed.

In her essay, Luxemburg rejected the view that anarchistic intellectuals were less amenable to discipline while workers trained in factories were more disciplined. She wrote that factory discipline was bound to create a slavish spirit of discipline which was fundamentally opposed to proletarian self-discipline. [29] But Lenin was also quite aware that collective work in a revolutionary party required self-discipline. He had clearly differentiated between discipline imposed by the exploiter and the discipline that the workers learned as a result of working collectively with developed technology. It was the latter that taught the working class co-operation and organisation. This, he stressed, added to the revolutionary potential of the working class. [30]

In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Lenin had claimed that his organisational principles were effective weapons against opportunism. Luxemburg refused to agree with the view that opportunism was a mere alien outgrowth which could be checked by rules directed against petty bourgeois elements. She, on the contrary, was convinced that opportunism could be one of the by-products of the struggle waged by the Social Democracy to become the hegemonic political force amidst diverse oppressed class forces. [31] So she was in favour of combating politically the opportunist tendencies in the Social Democratic movement. But too much can be made out of this. Luxemburg did not rule out the possibility of instituting statutes, rules or regulations to drive out opportunism. But in her opinion the constitution could serve as a weapon only when a proletarian revolutionary majority existed. It was the activism of the revolutionary working class that could make the rules or statutes effective and alive to their revolutionary aim. Hence she asserted:

"It is not the text of the statute but the sense and spirit which are brought into that text by the active fighters which decide the value of an organisational form." [32]

On this point, it would not be out of place to say that later, too, Lenin's expectation of combating bureaucratisation through the additional institution of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate proved inadequate. Lacking active fighters, it became another cog in the bureaucratic wheel. At the stage of party building, essentially, what Luxemburg had to say was that a party built with the errors she was pointing out might degenerate into a sect adhering to empty rules and regulations, which would fail to rise to the occasion when necessity arose.

The events in Russia during the turmoil of 1905 soon revealed that at least in part, Luxemburg's political prediction had been correct. At the third (Bolshevik) Congress of the RSDRP, "the negative aspects of Bolshevism's centripetal tendencies first became apparent". [33] A mechanical understanding of the vanguard role of the party had made the Petersburg Committee of the Bolsheviks treat the spontaneous struggle of the Workers' Society led by Father Gapon sceptically, whereas it was necessary for them to participate in its agitation in order to gain the leadership of the movement. These Bolsheviks, like S. I. Gusev, believed that their primary task was to expose the illusions about the trade unions. [34] Even more glaring was their attitude to the formation of the Soviets, the unique form of proletarian self-organisation which was first thrown up by the Russian revolution. Krasikov, a leading Bolshevik, rejected it as a non-party Zubatovite committee. (Zubatov had been a police chief who tried to promote police controlled trade unions). [35] Subsequently, the Bolsheviks led by Krasikov and Bogdanov, presented an ultimatum to the soviet of St. Petersburg -

either it would accept the programme and leadership of the party or they would turn their backs to it. [36] The main reason for this attitude was the nature of this workers' body. Since it was elected it could not guarantee its class-consciousness and social democratic character. [37]

This sectarianism was most evident with respect to the party itself. Even after 9th January, the committeemen took a dim view of the spontaneous mass initiative. Joseph Stalin, one of these committeemen, urged the masses in the following terms: "Let us stretch out our hands to one another and rally around the party Committees ...only the party committees can worthily lead us... to the 'promised land' called the socialist world!" . [38] Lenin's instant reaction was different. At almost the same time, he was writing, "Make way for the anger and hatred that have accumulated in your hearts throughout the centuries of exploitation, suffering and grief". [39] The climax was reached during the Third party Congress, a purely Bolshevik affair. There, a proposal by Lenin to draw in large numbers of workers into the party committees was opposed in the name of principles stated in *What Is To Be Done?* The delegate Gradov (Kamenev) accused Lenin of demagogically raising the question of the relationship between workers and intelligentsia. [40] Reports by Leskov, Filippov and Krasikov made it obvious that workers were not being drawn into the party. One delegate, Mikhailov, even accused in disgust that "the requirements for the intelligentsia are very low, and for the workers they are extremely high" . [41]. This experience must have been a factor that prompted Lenin to affirm categorically later on (in 1907) that the book had been a polemical work belonging to a "definite and now long past period in the development of our party". [42] Lenin's initial defeat in the Bolshevik faction showed how correct Luxemburg had been in emphasizing the danger of sectarianism. At the same time, the initial selection of cadres had brought together genuine revolutionaries to the ranks of Bolshevism. They were able to learn lessons from the ongoing struggles of the working class, thereby steering the party along the road that reflected class aspirations. Party cells sprang up in dozens of factories and rank and file workers pushed their way into the committees. The elective principle was established in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Odessa. Lenin even recommended the organisation of referenda on important issues. [43] But this was not a one-way process. The Bolsheviks, as the revolutionary wing of the RSDRP, thus gaining the confidence of the working class, became its vanguard as they could quickly mobilise several thousands of militant workers under their banner. By the spring of 1906, out of 48,000 party members, 34,000 were Bolsheviks. [44]

The Test of Revolution

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a turning point in Luxemburg's political career. As long as socialist strategy remained confined to existing parliamentary and trade union tactics the question of power could not be posed, nor did Luxemburg have much to say about how the SPD should work and with what aim. It was the strike waves, particularly the general strike that rocked Russia in October, which overcame her uncertainties on the question of working class power. She wrote her famous pamphlet *The Mass Strike* in 1906, to propagate the international significance of the strategy of the general strike. What is not often recognised is that this pamphlet was written in order to educate the German workers in the spirit of the Russian revolution. A reading of chapter 4, 5, and 6 leaves no doubt about that. The German trade union leaders had broken with the SPD on a vital matter in 1905. The SPD's Jena Congress had adopted a resolution threatening general strike in case the Government attacked the universal suffrage. At the Trade Union Congress in Cologne soon after, even a theoretical discussion on the general strike was banned as playing with fire. In a secret agreement in February 1906, the SPD leadership abdicated any right to enforce party policies on the unions in the name of the separation between the economic and the political spheres. The attitude of the trade union leaders was summed up in Ignaz Auer's oft-quoted remark: "general strikes are general nonsense". [45] Luxemburg objected to any rigid separation of the political and the

economic struggles. Analysing the history of Russian mass strikes, she pointed out that the mass of workers turned to political struggles through participation in the mass strike. She further wrote “the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political centre to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilization of the soil for the economic struggle ... the economic and the political factor in the period of the mass strike ... merely form the two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle in Russia. And *their unity* is precisely the mass strike.” [46]

Thus Rosa Luxemburg argued that the economic and political factors could be brought together only in the periods when proletarian class struggle rose to a peak. As she commented: “The history of the Russian mass strikes is the history of the Russian Revolution.” [47] But she also insisted on the organic unity of the working class under the political leadership of the party. Just as the party could not make the revolution on behalf of the working class, similarly it could not call a mass strike into existence by its own efforts. To put in her own words: “the social democrats are called upon to assume political leadership in the midst of a revolutionary period. To give the cue for, and the direction to, the fight; to so regulate the tactics of the political struggle in its every phase and at its every moment that the entire sum of the available power of the proletariat which is already released and active, will find expression in the battle array of the party; to see that the tactics of the social democrats are decided according to their resoluteness and acuteness and that they never fall below the level demanded by the actual relations of forces And this direction changes of itself, to a certain extent, into technical direction. [48]

So by political leadership, Luxemburg meant that the role of the party was to give the general slogans of the movement and to provide overall guidance and develop the general tactics but not to try and prescribe tactical details at the grassroots level. Because Luxemburg rejected the view that political struggles meant only campaigning for votes, while economic struggles only meant simple bread and butter issues, she rejected any attempt to set up boundaries which were off-limits for the party. In order to coordinate the struggles of different layers of workers the experience of Russia indicated:

“the task of social democracy will then be to regulate its tactics, not by the most backward phases of development but by the most advanced.” [49]

The last chapter of the pamphlet was a direct attack on the claims of the German trade unions of independence from the party (i.e., independence from Social Democratic politics, or the politics of working class self-emancipation). Luxemburg was forthright in condemning their theory of parallel action of party and union, and of the equal authority of the two, as a product of opportunism. [50] So in this work her aim was to wage a battle against the trade union bureaucracy and to reassert the vanguard role of the revolutionary party. John Molyneux is therefore not at all correct in his claim that in *The Mass Strike*, “Luxemburg’s main theme ... is to warn against overestimating the capacities of the party and especially the party leadership.” [51]

It is certainly true that Luxemburg’s view regarding the unity of economic and political struggles was opposed to certain well-known formulations of *What Is To Be Done?* The workers’ struggles during 1905 established beyond doubt that there could be no hard and fast separation between the economic and the political struggles. However, the contexts of the two works are totally different, and it would be a great mistake to view *The Mass Strike* as a sustained reaction to Lenin’s book. Lenin’s formulation is one-sided when applied to the class struggle in full flow. But as noted earlier, during the revolutionary period this was not Lenin’s position. His own position had then changed. During the Revolution of 1905 and afterwards Luxemburg also stood on the extreme left wing. This led to close collaboration with the Bolsheviks. On the side of the Bolsheviks, many of the sectarian features of 1903-4 were dropped. In 1912-14, the ascendancy of the Bolsheviks vis-à-vis the Liquidators (i.e., those who wanted the abolition of the underground structures and therewith the

full revolutionary programme of the RSDRP) was made possible by the skilful combination of economic and political struggles, including the utilisation of both legal and illegal avenues by the Bolsheviks. [52]

Poles and Russians: Party Building in the Underground

An assessment of Luxemburg based simply on text analysis would be erroneous because as a political personality she was active in party work. But here a distinction must be made between the Russo-Polish situation and the German one.

The SDKPiL was built well before the Bolshevik party by going through a similar process of organisational rupture with the opportunists – in this case the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Leo Jogiches did not build the party organisation in Poland less firmly than did Lenin, Sverdlov or Zinoviev. One of the leaders of the party, Feliks Dzierzynski, set up a distributing network for the party organ *Czerwony Sztander* and asserted that the only aim of this section was “to be at the beck and call of the Foreign Committee”. [53] In reality, extreme repression under the autocratic regime made stable centres in exile the only way to organise socialist parties. This was true of both the RSDRP and the SDKPiL. That was why some of Luxemburg’s criticisms of Lenin were polemical exaggerations, typical of clashes between groups. At the Second RSDRP Congress of 1903, when the Polish delegates Adolf Warszawski and Jakub Hanecki, broke off negotiations on joining the RSDRP, they were not acting under the mandate of a democratically elected party body, like a party Congress, but under instructions from Luxemburg. [54] At different stages other considerations, for instance the nationality question, sometimes intensified polemics over organisational issues. An in-depth investigation would show considerable similarity on theoretical issues. Like Lenin, Luxemburg believed that the phase of independent social democratic circles had to be overcome and that “the motto of the new phase of the great organisational work should be: centralism.” [55] She also acknowledged that Social-Democracy was the fighting vanguard of the working class. [56] Moreover, Luxemburg emphasized no less than Lenin the need for self-centralism and for the struggle against opportunism. In a short article, written in 1906, and entitled ‘Blanquism and Social democracy’, she defended the Bolsheviks against the charge of Blanquism stating that it was possible that there were traces of Blanquism in Lenin’s position of 1902, but that life itself had corrected such errors. [57]

Throughout 1905, Luxemburg became sceptical about the Mensheviks. The SDKPiL joined the RSDRP at the Fourth (Unity) congress of 1906, and sided with the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik majority at the Fifth RSDRP congress in 1907 was possible because of the support given by the SDKPiL and the Lettish party. In exchange the Poles got two full and four candidate members of the Central Committee of the RSDRP.

At the Sixth Congress of the SDKPiL the keynote speech of Jogiches, drafted in collaboration with Luxemburg, showed him taking an anti-Liquidator stand. He said: “We are a mass party, we try to increase the proletariat’s consciousness of its role, we can lead it but we cannot – and in no sense must we try to – be a substitute for it in the class struggle ... On the other hand we must equally not obliterate the distinction between the party organisation and the politically shapeless mass – like the opportunist wing of the RSDRP suggests.” [58]

Amazingly, Luxemburg’s biographer, J. P. Nettl claims that the main target of criticism here were the Bolsheviks. In fact, the accusation of substitutionism was directed against the right wing terrorist group, named Revolutionary Fraction, that Joseph Pilsudski led out of the PPS. The one unambiguous reference to the RSDRP was the condemnation of the Liquidators, who were all Mensheviks. If the Bolsheviks had been the target, in the earlier part of the fragment quoted above,

Jogiches would have certainly mentioned them by name. In fact, at around the same time Luxemburg was supporting the Bolsheviks both against the ultra-left Otzovists (Recallists) who wanted to boycott all legal arenas, and the Liquidators. Moreover, Nettle himself provides evidence that the Revolutionary Fraction was, in the eyes of Luxemburg, a nationalist agent of Tsarism. She denounced this group as a pure terrorist movement. [59]

In subsequent years the collaboration between the SDKPiL and the Bolsheviks continued. However from the 1910 Central Committee Plenum, the organisational stand of the Poles came closer to the so-called Bolshevik-conciliators and of Trotsky, who all advocated unification of legal activists and the underground committees without giving up the underground. In the International Bureau of the Second International she always took an anti-liquidator stand and therefore stood in partial agreement with Lenin. [60]

In her final years, Luxemburg came further close to the Bolsheviks in the Russo-Polish context. In 1916, Warszawski united the SDKPiL which had split in 1911. By 1918, he had also negotiated a merger with the PPS Left. On both issues he had the approval of Luxemburg. The Unity Congress in November 1918 proclaimed the Communist Party of Poland. In 1918, to call a party Communist was to side unambiguously with the Bolsheviks on the basic political issues and organisational split in international socialism, whatever the specific criticisms that she still had. Luxemburg made this clear forcefully in a letter to Warszawski. [61]

Germany: The Delayed Separation of the Vanguard

Germany, however, shows a different picture. There Luxemburg was much slower in recognising the necessity of an organisational struggle culminating in a split. Yet her views on the role of the revolutionary party started to change after 1905. From 1907, she had become one of the teachers of the SPD's party school. It was at her insistence that the history of socialism was made a part of the curriculum. At the Nurnberg congress of the SPD in 1908, the right-wingers criticised the party school as an institution creating elites. They suggested that workers required hard facts of life instead of theory. Luxemburg's speech on this issue was a defence of the school. She insisted that history of socialism and the consequent enrichment of socialist theory would help the working class in theorising from the experience of their own struggle. This was central to the essence of the Marxist principle of the self-emancipation of the working class. But this did not mean that Rosa Luxemburg was taking an anti-organisation stand. On the contrary, she vehemently attacked the notion that teaching too much Marxist theory caused a decline in militancy and she commented that the workers knew about facts of life from their own experience. What they needed was "the theory which gives us the possibility of systematising the hard facts and forging them into a deadly weapon to use against our opponents." [62] This was a recognition of the role of the party as a political centralizer of the experience of class struggle. Militant workers had to be taken away from the factories to enable them to get a more comprehensive political education, as Lenin had argued in *What Is To Be Done?*

In other words, Luxemburg well realised, like Lenin, that the slogan highlighting only the daily struggles of the workers was a slogan of the opportunists. By 1910, long before Lenin (a fact that he was to acknowledge in his letter of October 27, 1914 to Aleksandr Shlyapnikov [63]) Luxemburg did not hesitate to characterise the Kautsky-Bebel centre of the SPD as the opportunist current in disguise. Indeed, in one of her lesser-known polemics, she fought far more sharply against Kautsky and his proposed strategy than Lenin ever thought of doing till 1914. By 1906-7, Luxemburg had become aware that Bernsteinian revisionism was rooted in the reformist practices of the SPD, which in turn were being defended by the so-called orthodox Marxists like Kautsky. With increasing

urgency, Luxemburg called for a reorientation of tactics and the integration of a revolutionary orientation in the day-to-day practice of the party. *Theory and Practice*, published in *Neue Zeit* in 1910, presented her critique.

"Above all, Comrade Kautsky has not noticed that his current theory destroys his earlier theory of the "strategy of attrition".... My inexcusable error lay in this: I held that the mass strike was already called for in the present struggle for Prussian voting rights, while comrade Kautsky declared that our overwhelming victory-to-come in next year's Reichstag elections would create the "entirely new situation" which might make the mass strike necessary and appropriate. But now Comrade Kautsky has demonstrated with all desirable clarity that conditions for a period of political mass strikes in Germany ... are lacking after all.... The conditions which make the mass strike absolutely impossible [are]... the strongest contemporary government and its glittering prestige, the slavish obedience of the state employees, the unshakable opposing might of the cartels, the political isolation of the proletariat....[I had earlier argued that] in reality the 'strategy of attrition' amounted to "Nothing-but-Parliamentarianism". Now Comrade Kautsky himself confirms this in elaborating his theories." [64]

Yet her sharp attacks were not followed up by any organisational measures. Luxemburg, in responding to Kautsky, clearly set herself against both interpretations of the mass strike advanced by Kautsky (both being widely prevalent even now). One affirmed that the mass strike was such an elemental thing that no advance planning was possible or necessary. The other viewed it as a kind of coup, plotted in absolute secrecy. Against these views, she wrote that mass strikes cannot be made to order, but politically the party had to lead the struggle forward. [65] But such a reorientation of the party could not be achieved only through debates with theorists like Kautsky, who were at the call of the party bureaucracy, but through political and organisational struggles against the bureaucracy itself. She did not try to win over a majority for her views in the leading bodies and in the party as a whole. It was only in 1913, that she along with Franz Mehring and Julian Marchlewski founded the *Sozial Demokratische Korrespondenz*, a factional paper of the radical left. The first step towards building up a cohesive faction was taken after the crisis of 4 August 1914, when the SPD parliamentary fraction decided to vote for war credits. On that very day, Luxemburg arranged a conference of her political friends. This was the beginning of the *Spartakusbund* (initially known as *Die International*). But at this stage it was still a loose faction. Despite basic differences in approach, the *Spartakusbund* worked as a faction within the Independent Social Democratic party of Germany (USP), a new party of the centrists (formed in 1917, when the right wing of the SPD began the massive operation of draining out all opponents within the party). Luxemburg's stand on forming a separate revolutionary party was still not clear. She argued that one could easily leave sects but not a mass party. [66] It was only the victory of the Bolshevik party in the Russian revolution, which, bringing about a total restructuring of international socialism, changed her position. In her most critical, but unfinished work on the Bolsheviks in power, Luxemburg did not have to think twice to write:

'the Bolshevik tendency performs the historic service of having proclaimed from the very beginning , and having followed with iron consistency, those tactics which alone would save democracy and drive the revolution ahead ... The party of Lenin was the only one which grasped the mandate and duty of a truly revolutionary party....' [67]

Nothing could be more frank than this admission on her part. She still had criticisms of the Bolsheviks. But the Bolsheviks, in discharging their historic duty had shown that the function of a revolutionary party was to lead the proletarian revolution. Thus, history had shown that the organisational principles of the Bolsheviks were those of proletarian revolutionaries, not of sectarians. And Luxemburg admitted this not only in her unpublished essay but in her subsequent actions.

It is an undeniable fact that the Marxist left wing in Germany was badly organised and could set up a separate party only at the end of 1918. The problem lies with those interpretations which emphasize the personal failings of Luxemburg, or of any other single individual. The *Soviet Encyclopaedia*, Nettl and Molyneux all agree that the Spartacus leaders deliberately decided to forego any sustained attempt to create an organisation. [68] All such assessments are based on a measuring of Luxemburg against Lenin, consciously or unconsciously, in terms which are often thoroughly ahistorical. In the case of Molyneux, we can understand the motivation by tracing the evolution of his tendencies views on Luxemburg. When the *Socialist Review* group was set up by Tony Cliff and those who went along with his split from the Fourth International, they needed to 'prove' the sectarianism of Trotskyist Leninism, and for this, Luxemburg was turned into a handy weapon. After 1968, the relative success of the French Section of the Fourth International, and of several sections of the Fourth International for that matter, were factors in making this current decide that a 'hard' Leninist party needed to be built. Hence the thrust in Cliff's biography of Lenin, and Molyneux's 1978 discovery of a fatalist tendency in Luxemburg. Finally, when the British SWP began to claim that it was becoming the vanguard party of the proletariat, its attitude hardened even more. In *International Socialism* (IS), the SWP and its international tendency's theoretical paper, Alex Callinicos strongly put the onus of failure to develop revolutionary parties in the West on leaders like Luxemburg. [69]

Leadership certainly has an important role in history, contrary to Plekhanov's tale of the brick-dodging Robespierre. But when the subjective factor is extracted from the objective situation, the explanation becomes unreal. No one, not even Lenin, thought of the necessity of splitting in Germany, France, etc. Throughout East and southeast Europe, on the contrary, the struggle between the opportunist and the revolutionary wings of Social Democracy were acute. It is easy to argue that Lenin was 'superior' to Luxemburg. But by such logic, Jogiches and Luxemburg were 'superior', for in Poland the split between the opportunist and nationalist PPS and the Marxists had resulted in the formation of the SDKP (later the SDKPiL) had occurred before the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. Even D.I. Blagoev in Bulgaria led a split of the left or the 'Tesnyaki' against the opportunists. On the other hand, as late as April 1914, when Lenin wrote an article criticising the opportunists in the SPD, he did not urge a split. [70]

It is therefore necessary to move away from apportioning praise and blame, and to ask what the hindrances were, to arranging a successful split winning over the masses to the revolutionaries in the West. The first factor was the long period of accelerated growth between 1894 - 1913 which provided the objective basis for the success of workers' struggles focusing exclusively on economic betterment. As a result of this, political and economic struggles came to be more and more separated in the west and the trade union movement practically acquired a veto on industrial action. Besides, long years of prosperity had reduced social tensions and enabled the bourgeoisie to provide political concessions in the form of parliamentary co-optation of the social democratic leaders. One result was the growth of non-revolutionary mass parties and mass trade unions. On the eve of the First World War, the SPD was the largest political party in Germany, with 110 deputies in the Reichstag and 42,50,000 votes. At times the SPD owned 90 daily papers and employed over 11,000 small and middle ranking officials. The party's assets were valued at nearly 22 million marks. This had a dual effect. The mass of the workers saw in this the growth of socialism. For the officials, on the other hand, the party became a career. This was even more pronounced in the parliamentary fraction. Since the German state was a semi-autocratic one and the government was based on a Conservative-Catholic alliance even simple parliamentary opposition seemed a revolutionary act. And the SPD's principle was one of consistently opposing the Government in the Reichstag. But this parliamentary radicalism had an increasing integration of the Reichstag deputies into the existing system. Max Weber, as early as 1906-7, stressed that "If the contradictions between the material interests of the professional politicians on the one hand and the revolutionary ideology on the other

could develop freely ... then for the first time serious internal problems could arise for the party.” [71]

Rosa Luxemburg was more keenly aware of this degeneration of the SPD than most other leftwing leaders of social democracy. But she was also aware that the structure of the SPD and its previous history made the crystallisation of a vanguard leftwing very difficult. The Kautsky-Bebel ‘centre’ had the reputation of being orthodox Marxists who had fought the Bernsteinian revisionists. Until the militant workers broke with this ‘centre’, an alternative organisation, or even a left faction seemed far off. In Eastern Europe the weak political and ideological powers of the bourgeoisie, their considerably weaker economic position compared to the West European cases, and the fact that the role of autocratic states as defenders of the exploiters in the first, rather than the last instance, made reformism a far less plausible alternative. Economic and political struggles were openly seen to be linked. Moreover, the splits in the East were the results of disputes on how to build workers’ parties. Neither Lenin, nor Jogiches, nor Blagoev, had to deal with the problem of splitting from a well-established party, hegemonic in the working class. It would be Gramsci and his comrades in Italy, and others in West Europe, who would confront this problem later. In Germany, in particular, a split meant turning one’s back on an organisation which already commanded the almost unquestioning loyalty of practically the entire class-conscious proletariat of the country. Historical backwardness in the East European cases became an advantage as it enabled the creation of firmly revolutionary parties. In Germany, by contrast, the one attempt to challenge the incipient slide into reformism by the group in the SPD known as *Die Jungen*, resulted in the complete isolation of the leaders of this group, when they founded the Independent Socialist Party in 1891-92. The revolutionary left in the SPD were intellectuals without any significant proletarian base until the shock of the betrayal of August 4, 1914. Indeed, in every case in Western Europe, where there had been a pre-war split, the result was the creation of groups possessing sectarian ideology unconnected by the need to draw in the working class. They included the British Socialist Labour Party, the Dutch Party of Anton Pannekoek and the forerunners of the German Communist Workers Party. Luxemburg had in 1908 warned her friend, Henriette Rolland-Holst, against such a split in Holland. [72]

The German Revolution and Convergence with Bolshevism

The process of forming the Communist party of Germany began after the SPD’s betrayal of the Second International in 1914. But it was the Russian Revolution that provided an alternative model for revolutionary party and the struggle for socialism. Even the advanced workers needed time and local experience to internalise these lessons. That was why Luxemburg and Jogiches felt that the communists should work within the USPD in order to win over its ranks. Klara Zetkin claimed in 1921 that Luxemburg’s strategy was to fight for a USPD Congress and to organise a break there. [73] This strategy was based on an appreciation of the reality that the rank and file of the USPD were revolutionary but they still trusted their centrist leaders. By late December 1918, the USPD leadership had rejected the call for a congress. Following this Luxemburg agreed on the need to immediately launch the Communist Party. The KPD programme, drafted by Luxemburg, stated:

“The Spartacus League is not a party that wants to rise to power over the mass of workers or through them. The Spartacus League is only the most conscious, purposeful part of the proletariat, which points the entire broad mass of the working class toward its historical tasks at every step....” [74]

In her speech on the programme at the founding congress of the KPD, she debunked all calls for socialist unity as an illusion and said that this slogan was “a fig leaf for the veiling of a counter-

revolutionary policy.” [75]

Between the launching of the RSDRP or even the final split between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1912 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, there were several years during which a leadership and its cadre base were gradually selected. The KPD by contrast was launched when the revolution in Germany was already unfolding. The development of a revolutionary leadership is a complex process. On the one hand the initiative of revolutionary groups is essential for the unification of militant workers. On the other hand, those who emerged as leaders in the initial stages have to take part in struggles, learn from the struggles and earn the confidence of the activists on the basis of that. That was how the Bolshevik party was built. In the German case, this process had not taken place in its entirety. However, the recent researches of William Pelz suggest that by the end of the War, “Spartakus had grown into an organisation of thousands with influence in numerous working class areas.” [76] Basing himself on Pelz, Paul Le Blanc suggests that “if her luck had run somewhat differentlyIf such people as Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Jogiches, and Eugen Levine had survived the abortive uprising of 1919, it seems not unlikely that around them a powerful, self-confident, increasingly experienced leadership core would have crystallised to lead a growing German Communist Party to victory.” [77] This is a more sensible argument than the one which seeks to present the dead Luxemburg as a tragic figure, doomed to destruction because hard forces were moving, and fragile persons like she could not survive. [78] But Le Blanc’s argument misses a point. True, all history is not rigidly determined. But if we examine the bad luck of Rosa Luxemburg, one element was her failure to curb the impetuosity of those who sparked off the untimely January uprising. The leadership of the Bolshevik party in 1917 were people trusted both by the party ranks and by an increasing number of worker militants, because of the role of the leaders in the class struggle. In good measure it was because of this authority that Lenin was able to win over the party to the April Theses. For the same reason the Bolsheviks were able to stop the demonstration of 3 July, 1917, from turning into an untimely insurrection. In every popular revolution, similar situations occur, where the vanguard tends to rush ahead of the entire country. One could talk about Marx’s warnings to his friends of the International against an untimely Paris Commune, as well as of other similar events at other times. Marx, like Luxemburg, was confronted with an actual uprising, and both decided rightly that in the face of open class struggle their place was with the revolutionary workers. So did the Bolsheviks. But as the history of the July Days show, they were able to place themselves at the head of the movement and to temper it, so that the revolutionary ardour of the vanguard was not unduly dampened yet a rash minority insurrection was not staged either. This is where Luxemburg’s weakness was most apparent. The KPD leadership was not authoritative. Even if we accept that the growth of the Spartakusbund had been underestimated in the past, it is necessary to recognise that the very process had been initiated only from the beginning of the war. It is quite possible to concede that had the key leaders survived, the KPD would have been a stronger party, and far less amenable to the kind of control that first Zinoviev and then Stalin tried to impose on it. But the relative weakness in how Luxemburg and the KPD handled the crisis of January 1919 sprang, not from any theoretical inadequacy, but from the much weaker position of the KPD on one hand, and the inability of Luxemburg to convince her comrades of her stand. Luxemburg’s position was that since the broad mass of the working class was in favour of participating in the National Assembly the KPD should not take an opposite stand. At the founding congress the Central Committee’s proposal to take part in the National Assembly elections was rejected by 62 votes to 28 showing the preponderance of ultra-leftism in the KPD. Karl Radek, envoy of the Russian communists to the congress, commented that many of the participants to the congress, like Johann Knief of the International Communists of Germany (IKD) were opposed to the kind of centralism that Luxemburg and Jogiches advocated. Radek also pointed out that at the congress, party building work was treated in a very immature way. [79]

Ultra-leftism was also strong outside the party. Where Lenin and the Bolsheviks had been able to

resist pressures for launching untimely offensives, Luxemburg was in no position to call off such attempts. She knew that the situation all over Germany was still short of a boiling point, and she was therefore opposed to an uprising in Berlin. She called on the Revolutionary shop Stewards and the radical forces in the USPD to “disarm the counter-revolution, arm the masses, occupy all strategic positions.” [80] But when Karl Liebknecht and Wilhelm Pieck jointed hands with shop steward’ leadership take action against the stand of the KPD Central Committee, Luxemburg sharply criticized them for untimely insurrectionism. These criticisms, however could not be turned into policy. The absence of the Workers’ Councils from the struggle, and the fight of the shop stewards without the support of much of their shop floor base, proved that a successful uprising could not be achieved .

Almost to the last, certain elements of her earlier conceptions remained with Luxemburg. In that sense, her theory of party had certain deficiencies. In *The Mass Strike* she had argued: “The social democrats are the most enlightened, most class conscious, vanguard of the proletariat. They can not dare not wait in a fatalist fashion with folded arms for the advent of the ‘the revolutionary situation’... they must now, as always, hasten the development ... seize and maintain the real leadership of a mass movement.” [81] At the same time, though, she was taking pains to emphasize that the revolutionary struggles would, under certain circumstances, occur regardless of the stand taken by the trade union and party leaderships. She made the point that when the period of open class struggles came up leaders who tried to resist the movement “will simply be swept aside by the rush of events, and the economic and the political struggles of the masses will be fought out without them” . [82] Though this counter-position was made in a polemical context, and though Luxemburg recognized the limits of spontaneity, these idea did condition that was required to build a leadership. Her decision to go along with the mistakes of the radical workers [in 1918-19] was correct and honourable. But it was made necessary because no vanguard party was in existence, able to sway the masses of militant workers. As late as 1913, she was writing, “ Leaders who hang back will certainly be pushed aside by the storming masses”. [83] However in the same passage she wrote that the political leadership of the revolutionary party could not sit back and wait for this result. “The task of Social Democracy and its leaders is not to be dragged along by events but to be consciously ahead of them, to have an overall view of the trend of events, to shorten the period of development by conscious action , and to accelerate its progress”. [84] This was the first time that a mass socialist party had been able to grow in conditions of legality for many years and to develop its own bureaucracy. This was a new problem requiring analysis and solution, Rosa Luxemburg’s emphasis on mass initiative while inadequate in itself was an important component of her solution.

The foregoing discussion thus leaves no doubt about certain striking similarities between Lenin and Luxemburg. Both of them stood on the revolutionary wing and waged an uncompromising battle against revisionism and ‘Centrism’. Both thought of the socialist party as the vanguard of the proletariat. Within this revolutionary framework, there were some differences. Luxemburg was right in criticizing a certain substitutionist logic in the early phase of Lenin’s arguments. Having said this it is equally necessary to emphasize that no comprehensive strategy of party building can be developed out of Luxemburg’s criticism of Lenin . Unlike Lenin, she did not contribute to party building consistently both in terms of theory and practice . It is only by making a serious attempt to piece together her ideas and activities historically on this issue that a full picture of her conception of party revealed itself , as Molyneux points out , in the fact that while Lenin always paid serious attention to party administration and routine , Luxemburg hardly took part in such matters. This would have made it difficult for a party to seize the political leadership as she had herself advocated. [85] Against bureaucratic deformation and substitutionism , caused by Stalinism and Social-Democracy, Luxemburg’s concepts of party and its relationship to the class remains a powerful corrective or a valuable addition to the Leninist theory of party . To turn her ideas into a rigid system as opposed to Leninism is not only to accept the Stalinist definition of Leninism. This is

also tantamount to distorting her lifelong struggle for socialist and proletarian democracy as well as her convictions when she said,

"The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of the historical possibilities. ...In this Lenin and Trotsky and their friends were the first, those who went ahead as an example to the proletariat of the world And in this sense, the future everywhere belongs to "bolshevism". [86]

P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] Extract cited from *Readings in Revolution and Organization: Rosa Luxemburg and Her Critics*, Selected and Introduced by S. Datta Gupta, Calcutta, 1994, pp.265-66.

[2] For Radek, see L. Basso, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Reappraisal*, London, 1975, p.7. For the Social Democratic hate campaign see J. Riddell ed., *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power*, New York, 1986, p. 263.

[3] See, for example, Rudolf Schlesinger, 'Marxism without an organizing party', *Soviet Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp.225-51.

[4] The crucial text is J. Stalin, 'Some Questions concerning the History of Bolshevism', in J. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, Moscow, 1947, pp.378 - 89.

[5] Generally, in this essay, the term Leninism has been used to denote the political ideas and practice of Lenin. However, at times, the term has also been used to indicate a codification of rules and norms in the interests of the bureaucracy. For a detailed analysis of how Stalin developed his 'Leninism', see V. Gerratana, 'Stalin, Lenin and Leninism', *New Left Review*, 103, May-June 1977, pp.59-71.

[6] L. Laurat, Preface to the first edition of *Marxisme Contre Dictature*, in D. Guerin, *Rosa Luxemburg et la spontanéité révolutionnaire*, Paris, 1971, pp.145-6. See for similar positions Bertram D. Wolfe ed., *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?*, Ann Arbor, 1961, p.11 (Leninism or Marxism was Wolfe's retitling of the essay 'Organisational Questions...'); Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, London 1970, pp.30-56; G. Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study*, London, 1964, p.337; E. H. Carr, 'Red Rosa', in *1917: Before and After*, London, Melbourne and Toronto, 1969, pp.44-57; L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, vol.2, Oxford 1982, p.95.

[7] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, (hereafter LCW), vol.7, Moscow 1977, p.381.

[8] R. Luxemburg, 'Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in D. Howard., ed, *Selected Political Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, (Hereafter cited as Howard), New York and London, 1971, pp. 288-9; also Datta Gupta, op. cit., pp.27-28.

- [9] Howard, p.290, Datta Gupta, pp. 28-29.
- [10] Datta Gupta, p. 33.
- [11] Howard, p.304.
- [12] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke*, Band 38, Berlin, 1967, pp. 87, 95.
- [13] E. Mandel, *Power and Money*, London and New York, 1992, p. 66.
- [14] Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', in M. A.; Waters ed., *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, (hereafter cited as Waters), New York, 1980, p.216.
- [15] Howard, p.290.
- [16] R. Michels, *Political Parties*, Glencoe, Ill., 1949.
- [17] *LCW*:5, Moscow 1977, pp.375, 83.
- [18] See, for example, A. N. Potresov, cited in T. Dan, *The Origins of Bolshevism*, New York, 1970, pp. 237-8, and A. K. Wildman, *The Making of a Workers' Revolution*, Chicago, 1967, p. 264.
- [19] *LCW*:5, p.512.
- [20] *Ibid*:4, Moscow, 1977, pp.367-8.
- [21] *Ibid*:5, pp. 464-6.
- [22] Datta Gupta includes it in his anthology, but makes no use of it in the section of introduction, entitled 'Rosa Luxemburg in Perspective', where he discusses 'Democracy and Organisation'. See Datta Gupta, pp. 43 - 53 for the article, and pp. i - xxxi for the introduction.
- [23] *LCW*:7, pp.472-73.
- [24] Howard, p. 286.
- [25] *LCW*:7, p. 472.
- [26] *Ibid.*, pp. 392-3.
- [27] *Ibid.*, p. 323.
- [28] *Ibid.*, p. 473.
- [29] Howard, p. 291.
- [30] *LCW*:7, 387-9.
- [31] Howard, pp. 302-4.

[32] *ibid.*, p. 296.

[33] L. Trotsky, *Stalin*, London, 1946, p.61.

[34] N. Doroshenko, the Bolshevik activist quoted by S. M. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905*, Chicago, 1967, pp. 66, 68-9. For Lenin's response see LCW:10, Moscow, 1978, pp.160-1.

[35] J. L. H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia*, Oxford, 1968, p.230.

[36] S. M. Schwarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-4. See also L. Trotsky, *My Life*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p.181.

[37] D. Lane, *The Roots of Russian Communism*, Assen, 1969, p.88.

[38] J. Stalin, *Works*, vol., 1, Moscow, 1947, p. 80.

[39] Quoted in L. Trotsky , *Stalin*, p. 164.

[40] Tretii S" ezd RSDRP , Moscow , 1959, p. 255.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 265, 267, 335, 362.

[42] LCW:8, Moscow, 1977, pp. 409-10.

[43] LCW:12, Moscow, 1977, p.396; *ibid.*: 10, p. 127; O. Pyatnitsky, *Memoirs of a Bolshevik*, London, 1933, pp.90, 103-4; LCW:11, Moscow 1978, p. 434.

[44] P. Broué, *Le Parti Bolchevique*, Paris, 1963, p.36.

[45] J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Oxford, 1969, abridged edition, p. 206.

[46] Waters, p.185.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 185-6.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

[49] *Ibid.* p.207.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 207-10.

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 211-2; J. Molyneux, *Marxism and the Party*, London, 1978, p.101.

[52] For the ascendancy of Bolshevism, see V. E. Bonnell, *Roots of Rebellion*, Berkeley, 1983.

[53] Nettl, *op. cit.*, p.181.

[54] *Ibid.* pp.186 - 191.

[55] Howard, p.286.

[56] Ibid., p.290.

[57] R. Luxemburg, 'Blanquism et Social-Democratie', cited in N. Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, London, , 1985, pp. 102-3, f.n. 30.

[58] Nettl, op. cit., p. 340.

[59] For Luxemburg's collaboration with Lenin, see Nettl, p.334. For the Revolutionary Fraction, see pp.335 – 7. See also Luxemburg's article, 'A Monument of Shame', cited in P. Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, New York and London, 1972, p. 112.

[60] See for example, her letter to Jogiches, December 14, 1913, in E. Ettinger ed., *Comrade and Lover*, London, 1979, p. 182.

[61] Quoted in Nettl, pp. 444-5.

[62] Howard, p.282.

[63] LCW:35, Moscow, 1980, pp.167-9.

[64] Cited from *Theory and Practice*, in P. Le Blanc (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg: Reflections and Writings*, New York, 1999, pp.148 –9.

[65] Ibid., p. 170.

[66] Nettl, op. cit., p.405.

[67] Waters, pp.372-4.

[68] Molyneux, op. cit, p.112. Molyneux quotes the unabridged Nettl text, Vol. II, p. 724.

[69] T. Cliff, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London, 1986, is a reprint of a work originally written in 1959. See pp. 41- 54 for a highly positive assessment. See also the introduction by Lindsey German, p.10, where the tactical necessity of using Luxemburg to fight the Leninism of the orthodox Trotskyists is openly admitted. For the turn, see T. Cliff, *Lenin*, vol. 2, London, 1976, p. ix, where Cliff finds Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* to be at fault for underestimating the role of the party!!! Molyneux, op. cit., p. 116 contains the charge of fatalism. See further D. Gluckstein, 'The Missing party', *IS* , Sr. 2, No. 22, Winter 1984, and A. Callinicos, 'Party and Class Before 1917', *IS* Sr. 2, No. 24, Summer 1984.

[70] LCW:20, Moscow, 1977, pp. 254-8.

[71] Cited in R. Black, *Fascism in Germany*, London, 1975, p.164.

[72] Cited in Nettl, p. 405.

[73] J. Riddell, op. cit., p. 157.

[74] Howard, pp.375-6.

[75] Ibid., p.391.

[76] William A. Pelz, *The Spartakusbund and the German Working-Class Movement, 1914-1919*, Lewiston, N.Y., 1987, p.286.

[77] P. Le Blanc, 'Introduction', p.25, in P. Le Blanc, op. cit.

[78] Apart from texts already cited one could mention F. L. Carsten, 'Freedom and Revolution', in L. Labedz (ed), *Revisionism. Essays in the History of Marxist Ideas*, London, 1962.

[79] Riddell, op. cit., pp.162-3.

[80] Ibid., p.251.

[81] Waters, p.200.

[82] Ibid., p.207.

[83] Quoted in P. Frolich, op. cit. p.143

[84] Ibid.]

This is a measure of the exact nature of her errors. It should be quite clear from the above that she did assign a vanguard role to the revolutionary party. There is absolutely no ground for believing that she had a blind faith in the masses or a mystique of spontaneism, as so many commentators have claimed. The real problem was her inadequate understanding of the damaging role that a reformist or reactionary workers' party could play. She expected that the masses would remove from their path all non-revolutionary parties. The so-called overestimation of the masses – sprang from the fact that Luxemburg was a revolutionary who recognized that great historical revolutions have to be made by the masses. Such a recognition can be found in Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as well. Against claims that overemphasis on the mass strike and Soviets could lead to syndicalism and anti-party tendencies it is worth keeping in mind the admonition of Paul Frolich that "she wrote for her own time and for a German working class movement whose organisation had developed from a means to an end". [[Ibid, p.142. For criticism, Callinicos, op. cit. p.99.

[85] Molyneux, op. cit, p.104.

[86] Waters, p.395