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City University of New York, 1987

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REINTERPRETING ROSA LUXEMBURG'S THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE: CONSCIOUSNESS, ACTION, AND LEADERSHIP

by

LORRAINE COHEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1987

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

REINTERPRETING ROSA LUXEMBURG'S THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE: CONSCIOUSNESS, ACTION, AND LEADERSHIP

by

Lorraine Cohen

Adviser: George Fischer

This dissertation has constructed a new reading of the political writings the European Marxist intellectual and leader Rosa Luxemburg. I emphasize a much less well known dimension of her theorizing: her consistent emphasis throughout her life and work on the primacy of the masses, the oppressed themselves, as the decisive agents of social change. This lifelong emphasis radically challenges the dominant Marxist paradigm of her own time, a paradigm that sees leaders, intellectuals, parties, trade union organizations as the indispensable central agents of social change. In her view this reduced the masses to little more than instruments of leaders in their struggle to acquire political power.

In making this shift to the masses, I argue that Luxemburg opens and develops an analysis of the subjective dimension of social change, the importance of consciousness and the capacity for action as necessary conditions of class

struggle. Luxemburg strongly suggests that social change begins from reflection of the oppressed themselves on their own lived experience, their conditions of oppression, and their struggles to change those conditions. I call this dynamic a dialectic between objective and subjective factors.

Out of her conception of this dynamic developmental process she gives us a strong glimpse of a new type of Marxist democratic-interactionist leader. This is a leadership that is not based on domination and control but on empowering the masses to act as the agents of their own liberation.

I suggest that Luxemburg is a little recognized founder of what has come to be known as cultural Marxism. Within this heterogeneous grouping I see her work as anticipatory of a group of feminists who I call Cultural-Marxist-Feminists. In conclusion, Luxemburg's radical transformation of the relationship between masses and leaders strongly links her to the issues of contemporary Marxist theorizing today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The genesis of this dissertation begins with the stories told to me in my childhood by my parents--Shirley and Herman Cohen--about their lives and struggles growing up on the Lower East Side of New York. In listening to their stories I first became aware of the profound importance of a sense of community as a means of surviving the hardship of poverty, the forces of anti-semitism, and the degradation of political powerlessness. Their battles and struggles left an indelible mark on my consciousness. I wish to thank them for their continued ongoing support over the years.

I wish to thank the faculty members who constituted my dissertation committee. Professor George Fischer enabled me to continuously maintain a connection with my own sources of strength and power as an intellectual, an activist, and a woman. He helped me to develop and structure my ideas into a coherent meaningful work. I am forever grateful to him for sharing with me his intellectual passion and accumulated wisdom. I wish to thank Professor Roslyn Bologh for the intelligence, energy, and enthusiasm she has brought to our discussions over the years. She has encouraged the development of this project from the early days of its inception to its completion. Her courage and rigor as a theorist have consistently been empowering to me. Professor Michael Brown

never failed to raise important theoretical issues for me to reflect upon. He consistently forced me to sharpen my ideas. He too was a continuous source of encouragement and support. Professor William Kornblum helped me to make my ideas clearer to those in sociology who were outside a Marxist intellectual sociological tradition.

I would like to also thank the members of my dissertation support group, Celene Krauss and Terry Haywoode. Their support, vision, and criticism were indispensable at every stage of this project.

Finally I would like to thank my husband Michael Gold for his continuous love and labor on my behalf. I would like to thank him for all of the additional hours that he has cared for our beloved son Jacob, and the extra burdens he has willingly taken on in caring for our household. His commitment to my finishing has immeasurably contributed to my determination to complete this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ROSA LUXEMBURG AND A CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRATIC CULTURAL MARXISM

This dissertation comes out of a contemporary debate within critical social theory on the problems and possibilities of creating a democratic cultural Marxism. In the context of this debate, I undertake in this work, a new reading of some of the political writings of the important European Marxist leader, Rosa Luxemburg (1878-1919). I shall argue that this reading reveals dimensions of Luxemburg's theory that have not been seen by other interpreters of her work and that these dimensions make her highly relevant to the contemporary debate in general, and most specifically to a cluster of ideas I call here Cultural-Marxist-Feminism.

J. P. Nettl in his acclaimed biography of Rosa Luxemburg suggests that Luxemburg was the potential architect of an alternative Marxism.[1] By that he meant an alternative to the dominant tradition of her time and ours, the tradition of the Second International and Leninism. This work attempts to elaborate and specify the truth of that insight.

In this work I argue that Rosa Luxemburg makes an important and largely unrecognized contribution to an emerging democratic cultural Marxist theory of social change. She develops a strong, powerful, criticism of the prevailing Marxist tradition. Such a tradition, she implies, has become much too instrumental and scientistic. Despite a widely accepted discourse which speaks in the language of class struggle, the masses, and democracy, she argues that the assumptions and practices of the Marxism of her time were undeniably elitist and hierarchical. Luxemburg as I interpret her writings in this work challenges at its core the prevailing assumption of the major Marxist leaders of her time. This assumption implicitly and explicitly sees parties, leaders, intellectuals, and centralized trade union and political organization as the primary agents of social change. According to this view the masses are little more than instruments, necessary conditions for Marxist parties and leaders to acquire power.

Luxemburg shifts the focus in her analysis away from the party and central leadership to the masses themselves. She insists that it is the masses who must become the primary agents of social change. Broad democratic social change from below--the class struggle--becomes for her more than a rhetorical device useful to leaders. It is the only conceivable means through which a genuine socialist transformation can become a reality.

In making this shift away from leaders to masses Luxemburg criticizes and opens up the prevailing assumptions of most Marxist leaders of her time. They argue that an analysis of the objective historical conditions, the economy and the state are sufficient to explain the dynamics of social change. While consistently asserting that these conditions shape historical possibilities, she also insists that this dimension alone is insufficient to understand class struggle. She incorporates in her analysis a strong suggestion of the subjective dimension of social change, the role of consciousness, and a capacity for action which are necessary developments in order to account for class struggle. She implicitly asks and answers the question of how it is possible to theorize about class struggle, revolution, major structural transformation if the masses are seen as only objects and victims of oppression. For her they are much more: they are the life giving creative force in history. They are the repository of a universal human capacity for consciousness and a capacity for action.

Luxemburg's clear consistent strong emphasis on the masses throughout her life and work I argue is her central contribution to an emerging democratic cultural Marxist theory of social change. She provides a clear strong glimpse of how it becomes possible to theorize an alternative Marxism which begins out of the struggles and reflections of the oppressed themselves; a Marxism that looks at change from the bottom up rather than the top down. Her

work constitutes nothing less than a reversal of the taken for granted conception of the relationships between masses and leaders.

Luxemburg has been read by many interpreters as a classic type of Marxist political intellectual. She achieved fame and recognition in her own time as a passionate and brilliant expositor of Marxist political economy.[2] Social theorists in our own time have been influenced by her efforts to extend Marx's analysis of the dynamics of capital accumulation to the problem of modern day colonialism and imperialism, and her unorthodox views on national liberation movements.[3] These readings of Luxemburg have conceived of her as building upon a language and problematic in which the emphasis is consistently on the primacy of objective historical conditions that shape the possibilities of political action.[4]

In this work I argue that Luxemburg's attempt to reinterpret and creatively apply Marx's critique of political economy to the changing conditions of her own period is an important dimension of her theoretical analysis. She always sees the possibilities of social change as structured and delimited by the existing set of historical conditions. I contend, however, that interpretations which only see this dimension of her analysis have missed what makes her truly unique within the Marxist tradition.

I have deliberately focused my own reading on those political writings which have attempted to redefine the

Marxist problematic. I elaborate Luxemburg's strong criticism of the leading Marxist theorists of her own time, including Eduard Bernstein, the chief expositor of the reformist wing of the SPD, Karl Kautsky, the officially sanctioned leading interpreter of Marxism within the SPD, and V. I. Lenin, the recognized intellectual and political theorist of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Her critique powerfully suggests that she viewed any attempt to define the possibilities of class struggle exclusively in terms of objective historical conditions as one-sided and inadequate. My reading of her claims that she developed an analysis of social change in terms of a mutually transforming dynamic between the objective historical conditions of capitalism--the state and political economy--and the subjective conditions, the existing and potentially immanent consciousness and capacity for action of the oppressed themselves.

By the subjective dimension I mean the insights that emerge out of the living, personally felt and experienced struggles of people as they engage in the process of political action. I claim in the present work, she brings to life the previously slighted subjective dimension of politics. She displays it as an ever present reality and potentiality within movements and struggles for social change. In so doing Luxemburg shows through her own theorizing the possibility and the necessity of an alternative Marxism that recognizes the mutually transforming dynamic, or dialectic between subjective and objective

forces. The claim that such a subjective-objective dialectic lies at the heart of both Luxemburg and an emerging democratic cultural Marxism informs my whole work.

I argue that Luxemburg was implicitly attempting to break new ground. Often choosing to justify her departure within the conventional terms of Marxist orthodoxy, i.e., paying homage to the primacy of objective historical conditions and the great theorists and activists within the tradition, she moves beyond it. Sometimes the move is subtle, sometimes explosive. What she introduces through her strong language, imagery and argument is the necessity for Marxists to recognize the significance of the interaction between these two factors, objective and subjective to understand and shape the possibilities of social change. This turn away from the conventional Marxism of her own time points to an explanation as to why she has been treated with great ambivalence within the orthodox tradition and has more recently been claimed by feminists, and other heirs of the New Left.[5]

In asserting that Luxemburg takes decisive steps to put her outside of the accepted theoretical presuppositions of the Second International, I see her as making an early and important contribution to an alternative Marxist tradition. This tradition over the last ten or fifteen years has been referred to by various names. Perry Anderson in his well known work calls it Western Marxism. Dick Howard in an important collection of essays published in

1972 entitles his book The Unknown Dimension.[6] Others refer to it as cultural Marxism.

Those theorists who have been included in this tradition include such well known figures as Lukacs, Gramsci, Sartre, and certain members of the Frankfurt School such as Habermas and Marcuse. More recently within the United States and Great Britain the work of E. P. Thompson and raymond Williams has had an important impact in opening up the dominant Marxist tradition to critical scrutiny.

Though broadly diverse and heterogeneous this group of theorists is linked together by a common set of concerns. First and foremost they reject the scientism and economism that they argue has characterized the prevailing Marxist tradition. They argue for the necessity of creating a Marxist theory which incorporates a strong subjective dimension. They are critical of the way in which the prevailing tradition looks at subjectivity as a lesser byproduct of changes in the material conditions. This group of theorists asserts the necessity of a Marxist theory which sees subjectivity, consciousness and culture as a relatively autonomous and significant factor within a broader Marxist theory of social change.

Several members of this broad heterogeneous group, most importantly the Frankfurt School, have powerfully raised the problem of domination and hierarchy as issues with which a contemporary Marxism must come to terms. The problems of bureaucratization, ossification, and new forms

of domination are important themes taken up by this alternative group.

Most important to the reinterpretation of Rosa Luxemburg's writings that I develop in the present work are the writings of a much less well known group of theorists who I also place within this alternative Marxist or cultural Marxist tradition. In order to distinguish this cluster of ideas from the larger body of thought that also identifies with Marxist-Feminism and Socialist-Feminism I am calling the smaller cluster Cultural-Marxist-Feminist. In terms of abstracting or generalizing on the plane of social theory, so far the Cultural-Marxist Feminist cluster of ideas adds up to what may be called an ethos, by which I mean a distinctive way of approaching the understanding of social and political reality. Yet in ways specified below that present day ethos does make claims to becoming a source for an alternative Marxist theory. The Cultural-Marxist-Feminist ethos has at its root the belief that a Marxist theory of social change and revolution must take into account and incorporate the personalized subjective insights which come out of the reflections of oppressed groups on their own lived experience. I ground my reading of Rosa Luxemburg in this emergent contemporary alternative to established Marxism, the Marxism of social democracy and Leninism.

Within this work I have drawn most heavily upon the writings of Shiela Robawtham, Nancy Hartsock, and Dorothy Smith in constructing a conception of the Cultural-Marxist-

Feminist ethos. Several other Marxist-Feminist theorists also clearly belong in this sub-grouping including the works of Roslyn Bologh, Sara Ruddick, Celene Krauss, and Terry Haywoode.

This Cultural-Marxist-Feminist ethos emerged out of the reflections of a certain group of women active within the Marxist left and the New Left of the late 60's and early 1970's on their historical experiences of that period.[8] A small and often changing group of theorists now attempts to lay the foundation for an alternative Marxist theory and practice that builds upon these ideas. Several important categories and concepts have received emphasis within this body of work. Especially important here are the concept of lived experience, the concept of empowerment, and the concept of process. These concepts often remain elusive and on the level of taken for granted assumptions within Marxist-Feminist writings. I attempt to make these concepts explicit as I appropriate them to reveal the subjective-objective dialectic as central to Luxemburg's theorizing.

The primary emphasis that I derive from Cultural-Marxist-Femininsm in doing this new reading of Luxemburg's political writings is the central importance of the consciousness to the understanding of the dynamics of social change. Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have done a great deal of important theoretical work in looking at the process through which ordinary women--women who have never defined

themselves as political or become activists--have become self-conscious of themselves as agents of change.

This emphasis on consciousness, change from below, I see as a very important link between contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists and Luxemburg herself. Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have developed an important vocabulary and set of analytic concepts which illuminate this process. I draw upon these concepts, the subjective reflection on objective conditions of oppression, oppression as lived in day-to-day life and experience, a sense of a dynamic non-linear process, a recognition of oppression as internalized in consciousness, and a new term for the liberation from this kind of consciousness-empowerment, as important tools which enable me to do this new reading of Luxemburg's work.

These feminist concepts, I argue illuminate aspects of Luxemburg's work as a theorist and a political leader that have remained submerged by other interpreters. I am not arguing, however, that Luxemburg was a feminist in the usual ways that we use that term today. Like Nancy Hartsock, I am suggesting that the feminist experience of the late 1960's and early 1970's offers a specific approach to theorizing which goes beyond the specific of womens' oppression as a social and historic category.

> At bottom, feminism is a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, a way of asking questions and searching for answers, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women.[9]

Luxemburg does stand out as a harbinger or forerunner of an alternative Marxism that is both contemporary and feminist. That link stands out in Luxemburg's own alternative perspective on the class struggle. Central to that perspective, as I read it here, is her conception of the masses as the ubiquitously decisive primary force at each and every moment.[10] She saw the emergence of the masses themselves as the agent of radical social transformation. To her that is by far the main process of revolutionary change. Luxemburg's analysis of the masses goes beyond any definition and conception of the leading theorists and political leaders of her own historic period. She argues against a view of the masses as objects and instruments to be maneuvered by the leadership in order to achieve state power. Leadership is an important factor in the revolution, but no more than a necessary condition for achieving power. The heart or essence of the revolution is the process by which the masses become transformed into active agents, subjects who themselves have become capable of exercising power. This process which Cultural-Marxist-Feminists today refer to as the process of empowerment, Luxemburg analyzes within the traditional Marxist analytic and historical framework of the class struggle.

This means that Luxemburg turns her attention as a theorist to analyzing the process by which the masses become transformed. In contrast to the leading Marxist leaders and intellectuals of her time, she puts first emphasis on the

transformation of oppressed subjects. She places the stress on process defined in terms of movement from unself-conscious to self-conscious actors, from oppressed to liberated. Luxemburg's perspective resembles that of many feminists, even without a stress on women.

Within Luxemburg's stress on subjectivity as well as objectivity, her concept of class consciousness stands out. Time and again she dwells on its importance for winning the political struggle for hearts and minds. It is this emphasis on the importance of consciousness which primarily distinguishes her outlook from that of her colleagues. She criticizes their highly instrumental conception of consciousness as mere training, as the learning of technique or discipline. She sees their conception of the masses as endangering the possibilities of developing a genuinely socialist movement from below.

Luxemburg's concept of consciousness brings to light new moral and spiritual elements. Her concept is grounded in a view of the masses as autonomous subjects with the potential to become whole thinking, acting, and feeling human beings. Luxemburg calls the process by means of which the masses become conscious their awakening, rebirth, coming to life. She sees the process of achieving consciousness as a collective struggle to break through the moral, intellectual and spiritual bondage which keeps them passive and fatalistic. Luxemburg displays an understanding of the

meaning of class as it is lived in experience as a sense of subordination, powerlessness, and hopelessness.

Luxemburg views as a long struggle the process by which the working class becomes aware of itself as an historical subject. As Luxemburg analyzes it, this journey does not proceed in a straight linear fashion but through a developmental process which is grounded in the historical or objective contradictions of capitalism. In this way a growing class consciousness is integrally part of the subjective-objective dynamics of class struggle. In turn, Luxemburg's particular dialectic of class struggle brings her close to the Cultural-Marxist-Feminism of our own time, and the work of others in this alternative tradition.

In the long journey of revolution there are moments of intense activity and deeper insight into the nature of society and the meaning of oppression. Similarly, the process has its darker side, its moments of despair and great moral confusion. It is characterized by intense periods of rapid change and quieter periods of integration and reflection. Objective historical circumstances both structure and set limits on its development, but the process has a dynamic autonomous life of its own which can set in motion and open up possibilities that were not anticipated. Here the concept of class consciousness stands for a highly experiential subjective process. As such the concept is unique within Marxism. It constitutes the cornerstone of Luxemburg's new integration of subjective and objective forces.

The underlying principle of Luxemburg's subjective-objective synthesis is her view of the masses as having infinite potential. Her faith in their potential is the source of her own hope and positive outlook in contrast to the more pessimistic, instrumental, and conservative outlook of the other leaders. This faith is grounded in a belief that people have the capacity to learn and develop through their own experience. For this reason she views the autonomous self-determined activity of the masses as crucial for their development. It is through the process of trial and error and experimentation that they come to see the truth about the society in which they live. They become aware of their strengths and shortcomings, their historic links to past struggles and potential new allies. This self-transformation from passive victims to conscious aware fighters is forged through the experiential catalyst of class struggle.

The belief that the experience of the class struggle is the primary way in which people form new bonds of solidarity and become conscious of existing ones gives Luxemburg a different way of looking at centralized political leadership, the role of political intellectuals, and formal organization. These elements, though important, play a much more circumscribed or secondary role than in the perspective articulated by the leading Marxist leaders and intellectuals of her time. If leaders are to successfully contribute to the struggle, they must see themselves as

secondary to an overall process of empowering the masses. Like Luxemburg's view of the masses, this view of leadership was new and unique within Marxism.

Luxemburg's priority for the subjective development of the working class provides her with a different way of looking at questions of strategy and tactics and in evaluating the successes or failures of action. Victories and defeats cannot be mainly looked at in instrumental quantitative terms as to what has been won or lost. They must be looked at through the broader framework that recognizes the ways in which the masses have learned or become transformed by their experiences. This way of seeing provides a new starting point and allows for hope even moments of apparent and real defeat. Once again Luxemburg's perspective places as high a value on the ongoing process as the final outcome.

A great deal of Luxemburg's overall contribution, all through this work, took the form of a critique of the other Marxist leaders of her own time. Her critique reveals their commitment to a reading of Marx that we would today call positivist or scientistic. She argues against a conception of objectivity in which the determination of what are the "facts" is taken for granted uncritically in which those "facts" are divorced from a self-conscious process of reflection on the assumptions which make them appear as unquestionable authoritative realities. Such a positivist view of Marxism allows these leaders to sustain an illusory view of themselves as science-guided practitioners who have

the power to control the historic process as well as the masses.

Luxemburg criticizes these leaders' failure to recognize the limits of their own power. She argues that any attempt to enforce the domination and control of the leadership over the masses is self-defeating: the dynamics of the historic process do not fit neatly into the inductive chain of external cause and effect espoused by the leadership.

Luxemburg argues that what we now call positivist or scientistic Marxism is in the final analysis destructive of historical possibilities. It undermines the dynamic creative possibilities inherent in the thought and activity of the masses themselves. Luxemburg affirms her belief in a more dialectical Marxism. Such an alternative Marxism does not neglect or deny objective historical constraints but still leaves room for subjective interpretation, conscious action, and choice. It is this conception of political leadership for which objective historical conditions is not a sufficient explanation but an internal condition of action that brings her into conflict with the major leaders of her own time: Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, and Vladimir Lenin. Their arbitrary use of the concept of objectivity, or science, obscures the role of subjective choice and action. It hides their underlying values which allow them to see only a given set of options, as necessary or realizable.

Cultural-Marxist-Feminists speak of a kind of masculine leadership. They have in mind just what Luxemburg criticized, the divorce of objectivity from subjectivity. In this type of leadership the reality of relationships of domination and subordination are hidden behind the legitimacy of the claims of logic and science, necessity, and universality. These assumptions produce a style of leadership that is coldly calculating, distant and detached.

Luxemburg's critique of the arrogance, elitism, and the egocentrism of her male comrades, their emotional and psychological distance from the masses, takes on a much more significant meaning in light of the current Cultural-Marxist-Feminist critique. Though Luxemburg does not use the language of "male" and "feminist," her critique of the leadership of her own time gives further substance and clarity, and adds a historical dimension, to the current analysis of Cultural-Marxist-Feminism. Luxemburg's critique points to a type of leadership that is attempting to maintain control rather than foster the masses' transformation of themselves and the world. Throughout her analysis she raises the issue of the contradiction between a Marxism that is in principle committed to radical change and the day-to-day practice of the leadership that sustain relationships of hierarchy, domination, and control.

Luxemburg's alternative perspective becomes very visible when she speaks of political leadership. She goes further than any Marxist in her own time and perhaps ours in

attempting to develop a theory of political leadership that is consistent with her commitment to the process of the creation and self-creation of the masses. As both theorist and political leader she breaks new ground. She provides a strong glimpse of a model of the Marxist political leader and political intellectual that has not been theorized either in the dominant Marxist tradition or even within the new emerging democratic cultural Marxism.

Like her theorizing on the masses, this theory of leadership is one of her great contributions to a new Marxist dialectic between objective and subjective conditions. Luxemburg's way of theorizing about leaders as well as masses anticipates a new model inherent in the emerging Cultural-Marxist-Feminist perspective. This double model juxtaposes traditional male leadership to an alternative kind, close to present-day feminism. As against the male part of such a double model, the alternative or feminist leader keeps foremost lived experience, ongoing process, and the importance of empowerment. Luxemburg herself did not theorize this alternative model adequately. But the new double model strongly suggests itself as I analyze her theorizing here in the context of an alternative contemporary Marxism.

Luxemburg's faith in the masses is the ground for her conception of a new kind of leadership and a new type of Marxist political party. Such a party must build upon the lessons and insights that come out of the struggle itself.

This type of party would be much more democratic and attentive to internal processes and relationships. Cultural-Marxist-Feminism and other theorists and activists who were shaped by the New Left, have gone much further than Luxemburg in exploring the importance of democracy, participation, and openness as principles for political organizing and organization. Luxemburg does not go this far. Though she restricts the role of formal theory, political intellectuals and leaders, she still gives them a greater role than would be acceptable to contemporary Marxist-Feminists and others who emerged out of the radically democratic New Left of the 1960's. She, however, goes much further than any of her colleagues in laying the groundwork for a much more democratic and egalitarian Marxist movements in which leaders and intellectuals are accountable to the masses and share their gifts in ways that are empowering rather than diminishing.

Technically, the reading of Luxemburg offered here is helped by the recent publication in English of many important works by and on Rosa Luxemburg. Within the last fifteen years Peter Nettl's major two volume biography was published. Most recently a new biography by Elzbieta Ettinger has been published.[11] At the same time, Paul Frolich's older biography was translated and published in the United States. Most of her major speeches and writings have also been translated in the United States and England. Several volumes of her letters have recently been published,

as well as a few recent secondary works. In addition, within the United States there has been a renewed interest in Luxemburg both by thinkers associated with the New Left and the contemporary feminist movement.[12]

The reader should note that I have chosen certain selected texts of Luxemburg to document a new reading. They by no means encompass all her theorizing. I do not, for example, attempt to analyze the economic writings for which she has been best known. Nor do I look at her writings on the national question. These works are very important and their contents could be used as a basis for another reading and image of Luxemburg as a theorist or leader. The rationale for my selectiveness is that I am not attempting to give an overall portrait of Luxemburg. I am reading her in light of very specific aims and a specific context: her contribution to the development of an alternative contemporary Marxism.

For the purposes of clarifying what I have argued are central differences between Luxemburg's approach to radical social change and that of the dominant tradition in both her time and ours I have treated her work theoretically or analytically, rather than biographically or chronologically. In my reading however there is a chronological and historical dimension.

Luxemburg lived during a time of enormous political fermentation and promise on the European left. She witnessed and participated in the growth of the largest Marxist

party in the world, the German Social Democratic Party, with its massive trade union membership and auxiliary cultural, women's, and youth organizations. In addition other socialist, anarchist, and explicitly Marxist groups flourished. Links between many of these groups existed under the umbrella of the Second International. Very important for the entire left of that period was the emerging revolutionary movement in Russia. Vying for the leadership of that movement was Lenin and his Bolshevik Party. Only narrowly less important were the peculiar revolutionary pains and problems of her native Poland, not least the Jewish Bund. Luxemburg had ties and an interest in all of these developments.[13]

In line with my focus on Luxemburg's theorizing on masses and leaders as against economics or nationalism, I chose political writings that cluster around two major historical periods. The first period is from 1903 to 1907. During this period Luxemburg wrote two major relevant works, The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions came out in 1907. The second work is Organizational Questions of Russian Democracy, written in 1903. The pamphlet on Lenin though on a different and very particular question (the role of centralized organization in a developing social movement) touches on many of the same themes as The Mass Strike and brings out well emerging theoretical differences between Luxemburg's perspective and the Bolshevik leadership. These two works provide the basis for my

argument that Luxemburg was constructing an alter- native perspective that move beyond the dominant Marxist paradigm of her period.

The second period in Luxemburg's theorizing on which my work clusters is the period from 1914 until she was murdered in 1919. This period has been seen by many historians and analysts as a turning point in the history of the European left. During this period of war crisis and revolution, Luxemburg deepened her objective-subjective synthesis and especially her analysis of the subjective development of the masses. At the same time she created a more fully developed theory of leadership. This more comprehensive view of the problem of political leadership came in response to the major events outlined above. I hold that the events of the Russian Revolution of 1917 evoked the most developed formulation of her new synthesis within Marxism. I devote an enlarged sixth chapter to this later period (1914-1917) and the first five chapters to the earlier one (1903-1907).

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has stressed that Luxemburg makes an important and largely unrecognized contribution to an alternative Marxist tradition. Her contribution is to show how major social change emerges primarily out of the struggles and reflections of the oppressed themselves, as opposed to a view that attributes primacy to leaders, parties, intellectuals, and organizations. She creates a

strong glimpse of a broadly democratic Marxist theory of social change. This theory has at its heart a dialectical conception of social change in which subjective factors, consciousness and action, are in a continuous mutually dynamic and transforming interaction with objective factors, capital and the state. From this conception of social change emerges a new vision of political leadership. This new view of social change has been aided by the lens of a new contemporary group of feminist theorists that I have called Cultural-Marxist-Feminists. In the conclusion I will specify Luxemburg's theoretical contribution to those who are attempting to create a democratic cultural Marxist theory for our time. There I will deal more fully with the interplay between subjective and objective forces and between Marxism and Cultural-Marxist-Feminism.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. P. Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1:12, 2:827.

[2] See Luxemburg's pamphlet Reform or Revolution for her important reinterpretation of Marx's political economy in the famous debate with the reformists, otherwise known as "revisionists," within the German SPD. This early important work won her a position of influence within the leadership of the SPD. It also does provide a strong intellectual justification for other interpretations of Luxemburg's contribution to Marxist social theory. This pamphlet is reproduced in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Walters (Pathfinder, 1970), pp. 33-90.

[3] For a short overview and critique of Luxemburg's theory of imperialism, see Stanley Aronowitz, "The End of Political Economy," Social Text 2 (Summer 1979): 3-52. For a sympathetic interpretation of Luxemburg's perspective on national liberation movements and struggles, see the introduction by Horace Davis in Rosa Luxemburg: The National Question, ed. Horace Davis (New York: Monthly Review, 1976), pp. 9-45.

[4] A contemporary work which interprets her writings from this angle against more anarchist and syndicalist interpretations of her work is that of Norman Geras, The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg (London: New Left Books, 1976).

[5] Two recent interpretations of Luxemburg's work have drawn upon New Left and feminist critiques of authoritarian and bureaucratic conception of social change that they see as endemic to the old left. While these books touch on some of the same questions that I have explored in the present work, they do not attempt to systematize the alternative theory implicit in Luxemburg's writings. See Stephen Eric Bronner, A Revolutionary for Our Times: Rosa Luxemburg (London: Pluto, 1981). See also for some interesting case studies and comparisons of women revolutionaries, Marie M. Mullaney, Revolutionary Women: Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role (New York: Praeger, 1983).

[6] See Perry Anderson, Considerations Within Western Marxism (London: New Left Books, 1976); see also Dick Howard and Karl E. Klare, eds., The Unknown Dimension: European Marxism Since Lenin (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

[7] The following books and articles attempt to take important steps towards laying the foundation for a more dialectical Marxism: Shiela Robawtham, Lynn Segal, Hilary Wainwright, Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism (Boston: Alyson, 1979); Nancy Hartsock, "Feminist Theory and Revolutionary Strategy," in Zillah Eisenstein,

ed., Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist-Feminism (new York: Monthly Review, 1978), pp. 56-77; Dorothy Smith, "A Sociology for Women," in Julia Sherman and Evelyn Torton Beck, eds., The Prism of Sex: Essays in Sociology of Knowledge (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1979), pp. 135-187; Roslyn Bologh, Dialectical Phenomenology: Marx's Method (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking," Feminist Studies 6 2 (Summer 1980); Celene Krauss, "Modest Struggle: Understanding Everyday Resistance Through Citizen Activism in the 1970's" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 1982); Terry L. Haywoode, "Working Class Feminism and Higher Education: Everyday Life Community and Institution Building" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Graduate Center of the City University of New York, forthcoming).

[8] For a good overview of the historical condition which gave rise to the ethos and practice of many women who can be said to belong to the Cultural-Marxist-Feminist subgroup, see Sara Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1980); for a more anecdotal but also interesting account of the same phenomenon in Great Britain, see Shiela Rowatham et al., Beyond the Fragments, pp. 21-43.

[9] Hartsock, "Feminist Theory and Revolutionary Strategy," pp. 58, 59.

[10] Given the argument that I made u until this point the term "the masses" may take the reader by surprise. It has frequently been used by sociologists and political theorists to denote a faceless, depersonalized collectivity. As I shall show in my analysis of the text one of the important ways in which Luxemburg is distinctive within the Marxist tradition is in her attempt to transform the meaning of this term. The masses in her writings become a vital, creative force with an ongoing potential for conscious action.

[11] In addition to the Nettl work already cited, see Paul Frolich, Rosa Luxemburg, (London: Left Book Club, 1940); reprint ed., London: Pluto, 1972); Elzbieta Ettinger, Rosa Luxemburg: A Life (New York: Beacon, 1987).

[12] See bibliography for a list of Luxemburg's writings available in English and older and more recent secondary interpretations.

[13] See bibliography for a full reference to the most important historical works in English covering the period of Luxemburg's life and work.

CHAPTER TWO

LUXEMBURG'S CRITIQUE OF A TYPE OF INSTRUMENTAL LEADERSHIP

In this chapter I begin to elaborate and specify Luxemburg's critique of a type of Marxist leadership of her time, which strongly parallels Cultural-Marxist-Feminism's criticisms of a type of masculine leadership. Luxemburg begins to develop a critique of a type of leadership which refuses to recognize the primacy of the masses, and sees themselves as the indispensable agents of social change. I display this critique through my interpretation of Luxemburg's famous and important pamphlet, The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, written in 1906.

Luxemburg begins to locate the sources of their elitism in the scientistic views of the German party and trade union leaders. She does this through an interesting and ironic double critique of the anarchists, who were historically most closely identified with the conception of a mass strike or general strike, and the prevailing German leadership. Through this double critique she shows the limitations and unintended similarities of both these points of view in terms of comprehending the Russian mass strikes of 1905.

Luxemburg suggests through her critique of these leaders that they attempt to distance themselves from the mass strikes and the historical possibilities embodied in it by calling it "an anarchist" phenomenon. Luxemburg simultaneously attempts to retrieve what she acknowledges as the positive powerful emphasis of the anarchists on direct mass action, struggle from below, and the importance of ideals, consciousness and awareness to the process of social change. At the same time she retains her Marxist criticism of the anarchists. They do not acknowledge or understand that consciousness does not drop from the sky. It too is a product of development through mass struggle and action. Whereas the anarchists reject the current mass strikes in Russia because they see them as merely reformist, she argues that these "reformist struggles" carry within them the revolutionary possibilities.

At the same time Luxemburg rejects the social-democratic leaders' efforts to contain the mass strikes within a reformist framework. Ironically, like the anarchists, they too retain a voluntaristic conception of history. Through their claims to knowledge about the laws of social development they believe that they can master these laws to achieve their aims. Here Luxemburg decisively distinguishes between her conception of objective historical conditions as rooted in the contradictions between labor and capital and the view of the German leaders that objective conditions are knowable, calculable and controllable. Both

the anarchists and the German leaders maintain a one-sided view of change. Neither takes into account she suggests the dynamic interaction between the objective historical conditions--the dynamics of the process of capitalist exploitation, and the policies of the state, and the changing consciousness and awareness of the masses. Neither sees social change as a developmental process.

A cursory reading of this text might lead the reader to view these early pages as reflecting a more orthodox Luxemburg. Her emphasis, like that of the Marxist leadership of her time, is on the importance of the analysis of objective conditions as the primary conceptual apparatus necessary for theorizing about social change. She appears more orthodox also because she is so critical of the anarchists. Also she develops her argument within a traditional debate around the question of reformism versus revolution. She also emphasizes the role of leadership. Yet my reading of her in this chapter will bring out how her alternative perspective emerges through her double critique--a critique both of overly subjective anarchists and of the objectivistic male leadership.

An important point that begins to emerge in this first section of Mass Strike is an alternative concept of leadership. Unlike both the anarchists of her time and certain strands within the New Left and feminism within ours, Luxemburg affirms the importance of leadership as an essential aspect of the struggle. She does not however see

leadership as the primary element, unlike her counterparts, however, for leadership to be effective it must work within the framework of what I call an objective-subjective dialectic.

Historically, the mass strikes that had erupted in Russia in 1905 and 1906 were the backdrop for Luxemburg's polemic against the German leadership. These strikes triggered intense debates within the socialist and Marxist parties in the West. For the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, the issues raised turned out to be of great importance and divisiveness: the debate about the mass strike became a central agenda item for both the yearly trade union and party congress in 1905. The trade union congress which took place at Cologne took a strong position condemning the mass strike. The Jena Congress of the party took a more moderate position. But it did no more than accept the mass strike as a tactical weapon under certain specified circumstances.

Luxemburg, on the other hand, voices enthusiasm for the mass strikes. Her sense that they embodied the form of revolution for the West as well as the East represented a major turning point in the development of her own political perspective and in her relationships to all leaders. A newcomer of Polish and Jewish origin in the 1880's, she was strongly allied with the central leadership of the SPD, who saw themselves in opposition to the growing reformist wing within the trade union and the party. She was well known as

one of the main architects of the party's theoretical defense against revisionism and in favor of the traditional conception of the party as committed to a revolutionary perspective. In 1898 she wrote her classic work in defense of this position, Social Reform and Revolution.

A decade later, however, Luxemburg's favorable view of the mass strike increasingly isolated her from the central leadership of the German party. While still retaining her personal friendship and political alliance with some of the major party intellectuals, notably Karl Kautsky, she now found herself in less and less agreement with most leaders. This trend of increasing conflict that accounts for The Mass Strike continued throughout the remainder of her active involvement with the SPD, onto World War I.

Luxemburg does not begin by directly expressing her alternative theoretical perspective in opposition to the perspective of the German Marxist leaders. Her perspective emerges gradually. It comes out more strongly in each succeeding section of The Mass Strike, reaching its fullest explication in her terminal analysis of the larger mass strikes in 1905. She rests her own interpretation on her reading of Marx and Engels of their criticism of the anarchist view of the general strike. The difference between her reading of Marx and that of the SPD leadership becomes the basis for her critique of what she treats as their instrumental, scientistic perspective on change.

It should not be surprising that she would base her own analysis on the authority of Marx and Engels. The SPD defined itself as the most important party in the West, not only numerically but because it was the bearer of the classical tradition. What becomes interesting and important from the point of view of this reading, however, is her use of Marx in contrast to the way in which he is used by the male leadership. She argues that they invoke Marx's and Engels' writings without critically examining the underlying assumptions and methods that govern their approach. She argues for a reading of Marx that extracts the method and applies that method in a creative way to look at the much changed historical experience of one's own time.

The main point that Luxemburg derives from her reading of the debate between the anarchists of the mid-nineteenth century and Engels is that Engels argued against the general strike not because he did not believe in spontaneous mass movements, but because he believed in the necessity of a dialectical and historical conception of the revolutionary process. She argues that Engels took issue with the anarchists because he did not believe in revolution as a single cataclysmic event. She contrasts this reading of Engels with those by German male leaders who argue that Engels' emphasis on the "day to day struggle" was strong evidence of his hostility to direct mass action.

Luxemburg begins to develop her reading of Engels' criticisms of the anarchists by suggesting that his emphasis

on the day to day struggle does not mean that he opposed the emergence of such spontaneous mass actions as the mass strikes taking place in Russia. She distinguishes between Engels' criticism of a view of revolution as a single action which will bring down the regime and a view of revolution as built upon a historical foundation in which the objective conditions are created by the continued ongoing struggle of the masses. This begins to suggest what Luxemburg means by "objectivity" and a "dialectical" theory of change.

> It [Engels' criticism] is based on the anarchist theory of the general strike--that is, the theory of the general strike as a means of inaugurating the social revolution, in contradistinction to the daily political struggle of the working class--...[1]

For Luxemburg the important distinction is not, as it is for the SPD leadership, the importance of <u>choosing between</u> reform and revolution. Engels' quarrel with the anarchists is that they saw the general strike as a single act which could of itself be the "means of inaugurating the social revolution." Luxemburg implies that Engels' emphasis on the "day to day struggle," was his way of talking about the ever dialectical and objectively grounded interrelationship between the struggle for reform and revolution.

Luxemburg indirectly accuses the leadership of attempting to suppress the question of revolution from the dialogue taking place on the mass strike. Whatever the limitations of the anarchist vision of revolution, its strengths lay in precisely its concern with revolution and direct action. These ideas, though inadequately theorized

by the anarchists, do have an "inherent strength" which was bound to reemerge once the masses returned to the center of the historical stage. The leadership, she argues, has mistakenly thought it had succeeded in killing off the anarchist threat with the superiority of its theory and the institutionalization of its practice. In line with its reading of Engels, parliamentary activity has become its major strategy for achieving socialism.

> A tendency patterned entirely upon the "first blow" and "direct action," a tendency "revolutionary" in the most naked pitchfork sense, can only temporarily languish in the calm of the parliamentarian day and, on a return of the period of direct open struggle, can come to life again and unfold its inherent strength.[2]

At the same time Luxemburg sees here the limitations of the anarchist view of revolution. She makes this clear through her disparaging use of such images as the "first blow," and revolutionary "in the most naked pitchfork sense." Here she is criticizing the anarchist's overly simplistic view of revolution and their worship of violence as both necessary and sufficient for achieving their aims. However, she is also arguing that the underlying reality which nourishes the anarchist vision does make sense, the importance of the "direct open struggle." The importance of the direct action of the masses can not arbitrarily be wiped off the agenda for discussion.

Rather than face its own fears and ambivalences about direct mass action, the party leadership rests comfortably on its claims to being the "true" interpreters

of Marx's theory of historical materialism. The anarchist view of revolution resting as it does on the power of consciousness alone allows the German party and trade union leadership to see itself as representing the Marxist commitment to historical materialism. They see themselves she implies as being the hard-headed realists; the only significant political force which takes into account historical limits.

> The opponents of the mass strike do indeed claim for themselves the merit of taking into consideration the historical groundwork and the material conditions of the present situation in Germany in opposition to the "revolutionary romanticists" who hover in the air, and do not at any point reckon with the hard realities and the possibilities and impossibilities.[3]

The SPD leadership has now claimed its turf. In claiming for itself the grounds of "scientific thinking," it has also found the basis for opposing those in its own party, such as Luxemburg or others who see the mass strike as a powerful weapon of working class struggle. Like the anarchists of old, these "romantics" do not base their own views on a supposedly realistic assessment of what is possible.

Luxemburg refuses to accept the dichotomous relationship that the leadership has set up between revolution and reform. She strongly hints in her descriptions of the actual developments in Russia that these phenomena are inextricably interconnected.

> On the other hand, the mass strike in Russia has been realized not as a means of evading the political struggle of the working class, and especially of

> parliamentarianism, not as a means of jumping suddenly into the social revolution by means of a theatrical coup, but as a means firstly, of creating for the proletariat the conditions of the daily political struggle and especially of parliamentarianism.[4]

Luxemburg's description of the mass strikes that are taking place in Russia provide us with a glimpse of the dialectic between objective and subjective factors in the struggle. The masses are creating through their activity the objective historical conditions, parliamentary rule, which becomes the framework for their own continued struggle to achieve a social revolution. They are not like the anarchists; they are not treating the mass strikes as a "theatrical coup," as the single blow that will produce revolution. Here she is implicitly recognizing a level of political maturity and consciousness by the masses. They are creating the conditions for their ongoing struggle. In this conception of revolution, reform is not an end in itself but an aspect of a more total struggle.

Luxemburg further attacks the false distinction that the male leadership has constructed between objective and subjective factors by arbitrarily separating the process of reform from that of revolution. She argues that the mutually transforming interaction between those factors is the essence of Marx and Engels' critique of the anarchists.

> The revolutionary struggle in Russia, in which the mass strikes are the most important weapon is, by the working people, and above all by the proletariat, conducted for those political rights and conditions whose necessity and importance in the struggle for the emancipation of the working class Marx and Engels first pointed out, and in opposition

> to anarchism fought with all their might in the international.[5]

The subjective factor in the struggle is the implicit consciousness and awareness of the "working people and above all the proletariat." They have recognized out of their own struggle the need to create a parliamentary form of government which guarantees certain democratic rights. This is not yet the "socialist revolution," the struggle does not immediately lead to the socialization of the means of production or the transformation of the czarist centralized state into a socialized form of government. This struggle for reforms however is a "revolutionary struggle," as she suggests in the first line of the quote. It is not first or primarily a struggle to achieve reforms as an end in itself but a critical first step in laying the objective historical conditions that will provide the social and political framework for "the struggle for emancipation."

Reform and revolution are aspects of the dialectical interaction between subjective and objective forces of the struggle. This conception of change which is obliquely suggested here is fully elaborated in later parts of the text. Here however she is attempting to lay to rest the theoretical justification for the leadership's exclusive preoccupation with reformist activity.

Luxemburg takes this criticism of the SPD leadership one step further. She insists that the essence of Marxism is not in slavishly repeating Marx's specific position on any particular question, but in consciously and creatively

applying his method to the analysis of current conditions. Thus she reveals another dimension to her critique of a scientistic reading of Marx. Her criticism strongly implies that the leadership has turned Marxism from a living theory which can interpret new conditions as they emerge to a catechism of specific positions which are invoked as the need arises.

> Thus has historical dialectics, the rock on which the whole teaching of Marxian socialism rests, brought it about that today anarchism, with which the idea of the mass strike is indissolubly associated, has itself come to be opposed to the mass strike in practice; while on the contrary, the mass strike which, as the opposite of the political activity of the proletariat, was combatted appears today as the most powerful weapon of the struggle for political rights.[6]

The rock of Marx's teaching is "historical dialectics." This remains the edifice through which to look at change. This edifice remains intact despite the change in objective historical conditions. Now, it is the anarchists who are marginal because they do not see the significance of the day-to-day struggle. Those who call themselves Marxist must see that the Russian mass strike fits precisely into the conception of change argued by Marx and Engels. It is a reformist struggle with revolutionary possibilities.

Luxemburg brings this point home with much irony. If Marxists now accept the mass strike and support it, this is because only they have a methodological approach which can recognize and interpret the changing objective historical circumstances which demand a rethinking of their former position. Though these Marxists may appear to be

"inconsistent," their actions must be seen as coming out of their most principled commitment to their perspective.

> If, therefore, the Russian Revolution makes imperative a fundamental revision of the old standpoint of Marxism on the question of the mass strike, it is once again Marxism whose general methods and points of view have thereby in a new form, carried off the prize. The Moor's believed can die only by the hand of the Moor.[7]

Only Othello, "the Moor," has the right to kill Desdemona, "his beloved." Only Othello who has given fully of his love to Desdemona can now decide to kill her out of his overwhelming but apparently betrayed love. Only the Marxist thinker who is committed to the necessity of looking at history as an unfolding dialectical process of transformation can with good conscience change his or her position. This change is not arbitrary but comes out of a consistent application of the original methodological approach of Marx.

Luxemburg refuses to give up the ground that these leaders claim for themselves, the ground of historical objectivity. She challenges their claim that they are the true bearers of Marx's theory of historical materialism, and as a corollary, their claim of "objectivity." She attempts to show that, despite the German party leaders' image of themselves as the opposite of the anarchists, they share many of the same underlying assumptions.

> The apparent polar opposites do not mutually exclude each other but, as always condition, and at the same time supplement each other.[8]

Neither the overly subjective view of the historical process espoused by the anarchists nor the false conception of historical materialism espoused by the SPD leaders constitute an adequate theoretical perspective to understand the mass strike. Both of these represent the other side of the same coin, a one dimensional view of the process of change.

Luxemburg similarly compares the anarchists to the German leaders for not recognizing historical circumstances and conditions of the mass struggle that generate revolution.

> For the anarchist mode of thought is direct speculation on the "great Kladderadatsch," on the social revolution merely as an external and inessential characteristic. According to it, what is essential is the whole abstract, unhistorical view of the mass strike and the conditions of the proletarian struggle generally.[9]

Having become so focused on the "big uprising," the anarchists simply do not recognize the relationship between the struggles for reform and the revolution. They see the revolution as standing outside or external to these earlier struggles. The revolution is finally an "inessential characteristic." Once again Luxemburg is arguing for the necessity of seeing revolution as immanent within the struggle for reform. Luxemburg argues that similarly the leadership of the SPD does not recognize this relationship and the conditions of working class struggle.

Luxemburg takes this criticism further by pointing out that like anarchists the SPD leadership is now calling

for the masses to be exclusively concerned with the narrow goals of the trade union struggle.

> The same mode of reasoning recently gave the result that the trade-union struggle was the only real "direct action of the masses" which as is well known, is the latest notion of the French and Italian "syndicalists."[10]

Adopting the rhetoric of revolution, the emphasis on "direct action," the male leadership attempts to channel the masses into reformist trade union activity. This is no different than the policies of the French syndicalists who were at the time heirs to the anarchist tradition.

At some length Luxemburg agrees with the prevailing Marxist criticism of the anarchists, that their view of revolution is in fact romantic. They do not take into account existing historical possibilities and limitations; they place their faith in the sufficiency of good intentions and hopes.

> For the anarchists there exist only two things as material suppositions of his "revolutionary" speculations--first imagination and second goodwill and courage to rescue humanity from the existing capitalist veil of tears. This fanciful mode of reasoning sixty years ago gave the result that the mass strike was the shortest surest and easiest means of springing into the better social future.[11]

Luxemburg's choice of imagery sets up the contrast in which she brings out the strengths of Marxism and the weakness of anarchism. The one is based on fantasy imagination, pure speculation, good will. Its adherents project revolution in their minds without having to take account of the existing historical possibilities. This pure romanticism has gotten them into plenty of difficulty.

Without having taken into account the constraints imposed by objective historical conditions, they sometimes unintentionally helped the reaction.

> The fatal thing for anarchism has always been that the methods of struggle improvised in the air were not only a reckoning without their host, that is, they were purely utopian, but that they, while not reckoning with the despised evil reality, unexpectedly became in this evil reality, practical helps to the reaction, where previously they had been, for the most part, revolutionary speculations.[12]

This strong, though ironic, criticism once again affirms Luxemburg's belief that it is essential that would-be revolutionaries take into account objective historical conditions in making their judgments. Despite the appearance of innocence and good will on the part of the anarchists, their refusal to consider these factors can have extremely dangerous consequences. In not taking into account historical limits as well as possibilities the anarchists do not anticipate the power of the repressive apparatus.

She argues, however, that the male leadership is similarly infused with fantasy and illusion about its role in the revolutionary struggle. It too thinks it can set into motion at will the mass strike through the exercise of its power, or through a similar exercise of will prevent it. This is a leadership that imagines itself to have total mastery and control over the masses and the conditions of struggle.

> On the same ground of abstract, unhistorical methods of observation stand those today who would, in the

> manner of a board of directors, put the mass strike in Germany on the calendar on an appointed day, and those, who, like the participants in the trade union congress at Cologne, would by a prohibition of "propaganda" eliminate the problem of the mass strike from the face of the earth.[13]

The image of the "board of directors" is striking. These would-be socialist leaders see themselves in the same relationship to the masses as the board of directors would at a meeting of the stockholders. They believe that they can routinely schedule the mass struggle as easily as a board can schedule a meeting. This view of themselves, Luxemburg asserts, is far away from reality. It is "abstract" and does not deal with concrete particular circumstances that create the conditions of struggle, nor is it "historical." It does not take into account the objective historical developments that create the limitations and possibilities of each struggle. Luxemburg asserts that the leadership's view of its own capacity to control events is just as "subjective," just as insulated or out of touch with reality, as that of the despised anarchists.

Luxemburg continues to underscore the parallels between the male leadership's assumptions and those of the anarchists. Both rest on a view that the leadership can use the masses and the mass struggle as a strategic intervention to do whatever they have in mind.

> Both tendencies proceed on the common purely anarchistic assumption that the mass strike is a purely technical means of struggle which can be "decided" at please--and strictly according to conscience, or "forbidden"--a kind of pocket knife which can be kept in the pocket clasped "ready for

> any emergency," and according to the decision, can be unclasped and used.[14]

"Both tendencies" refer to both the German trade union leaders who oppose the mass strike and the SPD party leaders who cautiously support it only within limits. Luxemburg sees little difference between these two groups. They both presuppose that they can pull the mass strike out of their hats like a magician pulls out the rabbit. This view of history makes historical events dependent on pure whim, volition, the will of leaders. The masses from this point of view become the pawns of the leaders' plans and schemes.

This highly subjective, voluntaristic concept of change is hidden behind the claims of scientific objectivity. Luxemburg attempts to show the character and the limitations of the leadership's concept of objective historical conditions. Returning to the image of the businessman, Luxemburg ironically suggests that the male leaders' concept of the "facts" is no different than that which would be considered by an bourgeois banker.

> "Facts and figures; figures and facts!" they cry, like Mr. Gradgrind in Dickens' Hard Times.[15]

What are apparently the only "facts" that count for the male leadership are material resources that are finite, tangible, quantifiable.

This suspicion is confirmed by Luxemburg's further elaboration of the leadership's conception of historical materialism. The leadership bases its own conception of

power strictly according to their evaluation of the material resources at the disposal of the party and trade union organization at any particular moment. Strength and power can be quickly calculated according to the balance sheet of available material resources.

> What the trade-union opponent of the mass strike understands by the "historical basis" and material conditions is two things--on the one hand, the weakness of the proletariat, and on the other hand, the strength of Prussian-German militarism--these are the facts and figures upon which the trade union leaders base their practical policy in any given case.[16]

The trade union leaders' concept of power is no different than that of any advocate for the bourgeoisie. What is taken by these leaders as indices of power remains, she implies, within the context of bourgeois thought, money, votes, bodies. This perspective isolates these facts from an overall social and historical context of class relations and class struggle. They become disembodied "facts." Neither the structural and historical conditions of class struggle nor the consciousness and awareness of the masses enter into the calculations and predictions of the leadership. The only thing that matters is a capacity to win within the conventional rules of the game. The winning factors are military strength, organization, and money.

Luxemburg likens this view of historical materialism to the police view of reality. It has nothing to do with Marx's concept of historical materialism.

> Now when it is quite true that the trade-union cash box and the Prussian bayonet are material and very historical phenomena, but the conception based upon

> them is not historical materialism in Marx's sense but a policemanlike materialism in the sense of Pulkammer.[17]

Luxemburg criticizes the male leaders for having exactly the same limited concept of how to evaluate the objective historical conditions as the police. Like the police they believe that the strength of the labor movement can be effectively judged by its accumulation of material resources, numbers, votes, capacity to exact obedience and discipline from its members. Since on those grounds it appears to be objectively weaker than its opponents, the police like the labor leaders believe that the workers must lose in any political or military confrontation with the authorities.

The police like the SPD leadership base their calculations on the ultimate effect of the movement on these "facts and figures."

> The representatives of the capitalist police state reckon much, and indeed exclusively, with the occasional real power of the organized proletariat as well as with the material might of the bayonet, and from the comparative example of these two rows of figures the comforting conclusion is always drawn that the revolutionary labor movement is a product produced by individual demagogues and agitators: and therefore there is in the prisons and bayonets an adequate means of subduing the unpleasant "passing phenomena."[18]

The false view of the objective historical conditions which define the parameters of the labor struggle lulls the police into a false sense of security. Not recognizing the conditions which move the masses to

struggle, they believe the movement can be stopped and controlled by the simple use of force.

Quite pointedly Luxemburg introduces the forgotten and suppressed reality. She brings to the fore the class conscious workers who have created the labor movement out of their struggle to transform their conditions.

> The class-conscious German workers have at last grasped the humor of the policemanlike theory that the whole modern labor movement is an artificial, arbitrary, product of a handful of conscienceless "demagogues and agitators."[19]

Similarly, the male leadership of the SPD has an exaggerated concept of the potential power of those leaders who advocate the mass strike. They attempt to delegitimize dissenting leaders like Luxemburg herself by seeing them as "dangerous romantics" out of touch with the objective historical realities.

> It is exactly the same conception, however, that finds expression when two or three worthy comrades unite in a voluntary column of nightwatchmen in order to warn the German working class against the dangerous agitation of a few "revolutionary romanticists" and their "propaganda of the mass strike,"; ...[20]

The SPD leadership projects its own aggrandized view of the power of leadership to control the struggle onto its alleged enemies, those who support the mass strike. In treating the masses as pawns of the leadership it genuinely believes that it has something to fear from the mere advocacy of the mass strike by the opposition. Luxemburg compares this self-righteous belief to that of nightwatchmen who view themselves as the true protectors of those who

cannot help themselves. The leaders' view of the masses as lacking critical capacity for judgment clearly emerges here as it does in the next several quotes.

Luxemburg's analysis of how to see "objective historical conditions" sharply differs from that of the male leadership. These conditions are not created or eliminated at the whim of those who either support or oppose the mass strike. They are deeply rooted in the objective historical contradictions of capitalism.

> If therefore the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches us above all that the mass strike is not artificially "made" but "decided" at random, not "propagated," but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment results from social conditions with historical inevitability.[21]

Luxemburg's concept of objective conditions focuses on the tensions and conflicts that result from historical conditions. These conditions force themselves upon the masses. The mass strike is the form in which these conditions appear. This view of the objective sources of mass struggle reorients attention away from the activities of the leadership to the activities of the masses. It minimizes the role of leadership in generating the struggle as compared to the role of objective historical conditions.

In keeping with this general conception of the primacy of objective historical conditions in generating the sources of the mass strike, Luxemburg gives short shrift to the view that ideas alone are sufficient to generate the struggle.

> If anyone were to undertake to make the mass strike generally, as a form of proletarian action, the objective of methodical agitation, and to go house to house canvassing with this "idea" in order to gradually win the working class to it, it would be as idle and profitless and absurd an occupation as it would be to make the idea of the revolution or the fight at the barricades the objective of a special agitation.[22]

The leaderships' worries about the "romantics" who support the mass strike can only be understood within the context of their failure to recognize the relationship between ideas and the objective historical conditions which are the context in which those ideas are received. Ideas alone do not create struggle. Only those ideas take root which speak to the reality of the class contradictions experienced by the masses.

> "Revolution" like "mass strike" signifies nothing but external form of the class struggle, which can have sense and meaning only in connection with definite political situations.[23]

Idle talk about revolution and mass strike are powerless to effect reality unless that talk connects to a definite political situation.

Luxemburg's initial critique of Germany's Marxist leadership begins to anticipate an alternative present day model of leadership. This alternative model of leadership, suggests that the leader must be primarily a certain type of educator, one who emphasizes the capacities for thought and action of the masses themselves. The leader can help the masses clarify their analysis and recognition of their own potential to act. This model contrasts with the German

leaders' emphasis on controlling or using the masses for ends defined by the leadership.

> It is a testimony to the sound revolutionary instinct and the quick intelligence of the mass of the German proletariat that, in spite of the obstinate resistance of the trade-union leaders, they are applying themselves to this new problem with such keen interest.[24]

Despite the ambivalence of the leadership, its refusal to understand the primacy of the role of the masses, the masses act out of their intelligence. They demand to know more about the mass strike. Clearly they recognize what their leaders do not, that this Russian phenomenon relates in some way to their own situation as workers. Leaders can neither create nor stop the struggle. Nor can they control the questions and issues that will be raised by the masses in the course of their struggle. If leaders are to have influence, they must see themselves as working with the masses rather than controlling them.

These leaders have an obligation to educate the masses, to share with them the fruits of having a broader analysis of the process of social change. Luxemburg does not deny the importance of leadership playing this important role. The purpose of this education is, she agrees, to strengthen the intellectual awareness and capacity to act of the masses themselves. In the language of today Cultural-Marxist-Feminists would translate this concept of leadership into one based on the concept of empowerment.

> ... [the workers] should be enlightened on the development of the Russian Revolution, the international significance of that revolution, the

> sharpening of class antagonisms in Western Europe, the wider political perspectives of the class struggle in Germany, and the role and the tasks of the masses in the coming struggles. Only in this form will the discussion of the mass strike lead to the widening of the intellectual horizon of the proletariat, to the sharpening of their way of thinking, and to the steeling of their energy.[25]

Luxemburg lays important groundwork in this section for the development of her alternative perspective on the development and the meaning of mass struggle. She has shifted the debate from looking at the primacy of the party to the role of the masses themselves.

Luxemburg's critique challenges a type of leadership that is unself-conscious and takes its primacy for granted. It is a type of leadership that does not reflect upon its deepest assumptions about the nature of the struggle, its own role, its view of the masses. It relies on its claims to scientific expertise and tradition as a way of buttressing its authority. Similarly, without seriously examining the arguments of the opposition, it attempts to undermine its organizational as well as doctrinal credibility through the use of distinctions which are self-aggrandizing. Luxemburg has made an important contribution towards analyzing a type of scientistic thinking which within our own time has been recognized as one of the primary buttresses of male domination.[26]

As reconstructed in this chapter, Luxemburg's initial theorizing suggests that mass movements emerge out of the objective historical conditions of capitalism but that subjective consciousness and awareness are also essential

factors. We get here a first attempt to break through the prevailing leaderships' claims to having an adequate perspective, be it grounded in science or bureaucracy. This first step opens up the possibility of a new conception of the relationship between leaders and masses. Initially, however, these possibilities have barely begun to be suggested. Luxemburg develops these themes much more in subsequent theorizing.

ENDNOTES

[1] Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, reprinted in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 156.

[2] Ibid., p. 157.

[3] Ibid., p. 159.

[4] Ibid., p. 158.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 159.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 160.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 161.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 162.

[26] For an interesting and important feminist critique of scientism in mainstream and Marxist social thought, see the collection of essays in Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics, eds. Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn (Montreal: Black Rose, 1982).

CHAPTER THREE

THE EARLY STRUGGLES IN RUSSIA: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In this chapter I specify and elaborate Luxemburg's strong glimpse of the process through which the masses themselves become agents of their own struggle for liberation. I emphasize in my interpretation of her writings the subjective dimension of the subjective-objective dialectic that I argue constitutes her alternative to the scientistic instrumental Marxism of her own time. I develop my interpretation based upon her continued dialogue and polemic with the Marxist leaders in the German SPD in a later section of the pamphlet The Mass Strike.

Here Luxemburg introduces the subjective dimension through the struggles that took place in Southern Russia from 1896 to 1904. These struggles she sees as the historical antecedents of the later better known mass strikes of 1905 and 1906. Her discussion of these early struggles, is mainly descriptive and suggests the importance of consciousness and experience strongly but indirectly.

Two more preliminary points seem in order:

1. "Subjective"

Unlike contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminist and other theoretical perspectives which have emerged within the last thirty to fifty years, Luxemburg does not use the term subjectivity or subjective except in a pejorative sense. In this way she reflects the predominant Marxist assumptions of her own time. However, my reading will demonstrate that the problems of the development of consciousness and awareness and the role of experience as a catalyst for this development, are primary problems for her as a theorist. From our own historical vantage point we can now more clearly see her attempt to define a new Marxist theory in terms of change integrating the subjective dimensions of change along with the objective one.

2. Male Leadership

The pre-1905 struggles do not fit the model of the SPD leadership which attempts to see the mass strike as arising from predictable, calculable, causes and taking a uniform direction. True, Luxemburg displays a pattern which shows these struggles to be intermittent, spontaneous, and emerging out of worker's own responses to their local economic and political conditions. Through her analysis of these struggles, however, she emphasizes their extraordinary significance as opposed to the leadership's view of them as "fruitless."

In section of The Mass Strike, the St. Petersburg struggle in 1896 seems to hold a special significance for

Luxemburg. It is the first of the early struggles and illustrates the main dynamic between subjective and objective dimensions.

> ...everyone who knows the inner political development of the Russian proletariat to their present stage of class consciousness and revolutionary energy will realize that the history of the present period of the mass struggles begins with those general strikes in St. Petersburg. They are therefore important for the problem of the mass strike because they already contain in the germ, all of the principal factors of later mass strikes.[1]

Here Luxemburg already suggests a developmental process by indicating that the early strikes at St. Petersburg contain "the germ" for later mass struggles. As Luxemburg writes, what is important about this aspect of the process is the "inner political development" of the proletariat, by which she means the development of their "class consciousness and revolutionary energy." In this section she is thus already announcing her project here: how to make plausible and comprehensible the process through which the consciousness of the masses develops and their capacity for action. From the first she is focusing the reader's attention on what she believes is important.

The "germ," or the principal factors that constitute the dynamics of the development of the mass struggles are from her point of view the masses' reflection on their own experience of their conditions of oppression. In this section, Luxemburg frequently uses the word "appearance" in an ironic fashion. At this initial stage in the struggle the causes of the struggle "appear" to be purely economic:

intolerable working conditions, terrible wages, arbitrary and cruel acts by management.

> [In Petersburg] The general strike of 1896 appears as a purely economic partial wage struggles. Its causes were the intolerable working conditions of the spinners and weavers in St. Petersburg; a working day of thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen hours, miserable piecework rates, and a whole series of contemptible chicaneries on the part of the employers.[2]

These strikes begin with what appear to be purely limited economistic demands for immediate reform of the immediate conditions of labor. In virtually every city that Luxemburg discusses the beginning point of the struggle are the immediate conditions of work and labor. In Kiev, for example, "...a strike began on the railway workshops on July 21. Here also the immediate cause was the miserable conditions of labor, and wage demands were presented." p.167 In Elisavetgrad: "...on July 4, a strike began in all the factories with purely economic demands." p.166

When Luxemburg describes the outbreak of the strike in the Caucasus, however, she more clearly reveals her ironic use of the word appearance.

> The outbreak of the Caucasian strike in March 1902 was apparently as accidental, as much due to purely economic partial causes (although produced by quite other factors) as that of 1896.[3]

To the masses the strike appears to be caused by specific economic factors. As a way of highlighting the ways in which these strikes are more than what they appear, Luxemburg sets the backdrop for the local struggle in the larger national economic and political setting.

> It [the outbreak of the strike] was connected with the serious industrial and commercial crisis which in Russia was the precursor of the Japanese war and which, together, with it, was the most powerful factor of the nascent revolutionary ferment.[4]

In emphasizing the connections between the national industrial crisis and the "nascent revolutionary ferment," she underscores the implicit link between the objective, and subjective dynamic of the struggle. Luxemburg is implicitly contrasting the way in which the workers experience the immediate causes of their dissatisfaction and the deeper objective structural conditions which are responsible for that experience.

Furthermore, the beginning point of the struggles is not simply the existence of these objective conditions. The beginning point of these struggles is the moment in which workers, angered by these conditions, begin to act. This moment, Luxemburg argues is not predictable.

The element of unpredictability can be seen when we return to the struggle in the Caucasus: It not only appears to be related to the immediate economic conditions, it is also "accidental." Her use of "accidental" is also ironic, in that it is rooted in the larger objective structural conditions. All the same, the moment of struggle, of workers responding to their conditions, cannot be predicted. This ironic use of the term "accidental" can be seen in her summarizing words of the strikes of this early period.

> Thus the colossal general strike in south Russia came into being in the summer of 1903. By many small channels of partial economic struggles and

> little "accidental" occurrences it flowed rapidly to a raging sea.[5]

The accidental, unplanned nature of these struggles is vividly dramatized in her depiction of the process through which the St. Petersburg strike developed. She gives the reader an insight into the subjective feelings and consciousness of the workers in Petersburg. They had patiently endured their conditions for a long time, "till an apparently trivial circumstance filled the cup to overflowing, the workers angered at this began to move."[6] It is this moment, which could not be predicted, which sets the strike in motion.

This dynamic between objective and subjective factors is the basis for her critique of the view of the SPD leadership which refuses to recognize this dynamic. Most SPD leaders insist on seeing the strike through a preconceived framework, in which the strike arises from predictable causes and is set in motion by the call of the leadership.

> In Baku, Tiflis, Batum, Elisavetgrad, and Odessa and Kiev, throughout Southern Russia in the spring of 1903 several major cities were engaged in the general strike... But here again the movement did not arise from any preconceived plan from one another; it flowed together from individual points in each one from different causes and in a different form.[7]

Luxemburg's emphasis on the concrete, the immediate, the experiential, stands in sharp contrast to the very general abstract concept of change espoused by the male leadership. This emphasis on the concrete can be seen

throughout her descriptions of these early struggles as she sees step by step how they move from reformist economistic struggle to become small movements with revolutionary aims.

In seeing a developmental process that is grounded in reflections on lived experience, Luxemburg emphasizes the importance of "beginnings," the moment at which workers come to protest their conditions. For each struggle she describes the first act of struggle.

> [In Baku] The beginning was made in Baku where several partial wage struggles in individual factories and departments culminated in a general strike.[8]

> [In Tiflis] The strike was begun by 2000 commercial employees who had a working day from six o'clock in the morning to eleven at night.[9]

Later, she also notes the importance of beginnings when she discusses the later attempts at unionization. "These were the first difficult beginnings."[10]

What is clearly implied in this emphasis on starting points is a dialectical process of transformation. The moment of action and struggle is simultaneously a moment of inner awakening, a moment of collective consciousness and awareness. This reading will become more clearly legitimized in Chapter Five, in which I discuss the more analytic sections that follow as Luxemburg discusses the later mass struggle. Glimpses and hints of this process, however, are scattered throughout her descriptions of these early struggles.

The main dynamic in this process is the masses' movement from an understanding of the struggle as simply

being an economistic struggle to achieve immediately tangible goals, to the beginnings of an awareness that Luxemburg calls "revolutionary." She does not define in this section of the text what she means by the term "revolutionary." Yet the implications of it becomes clear from the context of her descriptions. To be revolutionary is to be in militant ceaseless opposition to those in authority and power, to want their removal and to begin to conceive of an alternative form of rule. This new stance vis a vis the authorities is what emerges out of these struggles.

Luxemburg makes the point most strongly about the revolutionary implications of the struggle in St. Petersburg. From a purely quantitative perspective this local general strike may appear to be relatively insignificant. When the objective historical conditions which the workers were struggling against are taken into account this small struggle is in fact a "revolution in little." The militant opposition to the authorities is tantamount to revolution. It represents an enormous challenge to the taken for granted social relationships between the classes.

> Today this event, measured by the gigantic mass strike of the revolution, may appear a little thing. In the political polar rigidity of the Russia of that time a general strike was something unheard of; it was even a complete revolution in little.[11]

In other words, when viewed against the objectively oppressive conditions of the time, a local general strike implies enormous risks. In this sense it signifies something larger even in its smallness. She brings out the

implicit changes in the subjectivity of the working class that propels them to take these enormous risks.

The change in consciousness to which Luxemburg alludes seems to be propelled by two major dynamics that often occur simultaneously: workers being to experience their own collective strength and solidarity. They see, for the first time, their collective potential to change their conditions of existence. The second dynamic is integrally related to the first. The authorities tend to resist even the modest and reasonable demands on the part of the workers and use brute force and the threat of violence to put down these struggles. Through this use of force the workers begin to see a system of oppression. Now they see clearly how the state and the employers support one another's power and control.

Luxemburg describes the growing strength and solidarity of the workers. In several cities initial actions by hundreds engage the support and participation of thousands.

> [In Petersburg] After a conference of about three hundred intelligent workers in the Ekaterinhof Garden a strike was decided upon, and the following demands were formulated... This happened on May 24. In a week every weaving and spinning establishment was at a standstill, and 40,000 workers were in the general strike.[12]

As in the case of St. Petersburg, for many of these actions workers for the first time planned and organized them. This fact becomes important later, when she looks at

the relationship between the established parties and the masses.

In Tiflis, Luxemburg displays the process by which workers also for the first time begin to call upon the support of other types of workers to achieve their demands. As they succeed thousands of others then join in.

> In Tiflis the strike was begun by 2000 commercial employees who had a working day from six o'clock in the morning to eleven at night. On the fourth of July they all left their shops and made a circuit of the town to demand from the proprietors of the shop that they close their premises. The victory was complete; the commercial employees won a working day from eight in the morning to eight at night, and they were immediately joined by all the factories, workshops and offices, etc. The newspaper did not appear, and tramway traffic could not be carried on under military protection.[13]

Here the strike has gone beyond a "partial economic action" on the part of one group of workers. It has extended to the entire city and stopped the usual routine of daily life. Even the state force cannot return the situation to what has been viewed as "normal." It is this quality of creating an entirely novel situation that Luxemburg sees as "revolutionary" about these general strikes. They are a harbinger of future possibilities.

In Odessa, similarly, the strike which began with autonomous action by the workers was then further organized by the social democratic leadership. Luxemburg describes almost a carnival atmosphere in which thousands of different workers of different occupations begin to join. The strength of this collective action ineluctably draws in many others who have never participated.

> On the first of July 2500 dockers struck work for an increase of wages from eight kopeks to two roubles, and the shortening of the working day by half an hour. On the sixteenth of July the seamen joined the movement. On the thirteenth, the tramway staff began to strike. Then a meeting took place of all the strikers, seven or eight thousand men; they formed a procession which went from factory to factory growing like an avalanche, and presently a crowd of forty to fifty thousand betook themselves to the docks in order to bring all work there to a standstill. A general strike soon reigned throughout the city.[14]

We see this powerful example of both solidarity and the first experiences with democracy as the thousands of workers meet to plan their next action.

The other dynamic that moves the struggle beyond mere reform is the response of the state, and the subsequent attempts of political leadership to draw the lessons out of these experiences.

> [In Petersburg] Further the strike was outwardly a mere economic struggle for wages, but the attitude of the government and the agitation of the social democracy made it a political phenomenon of the first rank.[15]

In Batum, the repressive action on the part of the government, which forcibly attempted to remove striking workers to another part of town, resulted in mass protest.

> One such measure, which was to affect about four hundred petroleum workers called forth a mass protest in Batum, which led to demonstrations, arrests, a massacre, and finally to a political trial in which the purely economic and partial affair suddenly became a political and revolutionary event.[16]

These experiences of workers struggling against their conditions of oppression, Luxemburg suggests, lay the foundation for the development of a much broader political

consciousness and awareness. They open up new possibilities for social democratic leaders to express socialist ideas explicitly.

In Rostov, as in several of the previous examples, workers from every industry join for the first time in collective action. She calls this "an unprecedented state of affairs."

> ...every industrial workplace was at a stand still, and every day monster meetings of fifteen to twenty thousand were held in the open air, sometimes surrounded by a cordon of cossacks...[17]

She continues dramatically recreating the moving atmosphere in which workers for the first time respond to radical political ideas.

> ...at which for the first time social democratic speeches on socialism and political freedom were delivered and received with immense enthusiasm and the revolutionary appeals were distributed by tens of thousands of copies.[18]

Once again she suggests that these first experiences that become seminal and transforming in the lives of the workers.

Luxemburg emphasizes equally the gains and also the suffering that accompanies these struggles as workers are subjected to the brutality of the authorities. The costs and sacrifices are enormous but through these struggles workers often do win unprecedented victories.

> [In Rostov] In the midst of absolutist Russia the proletariat won for the first time the right of assembly and freedom of speech by storm. It goes without saying that there was a massacre here.[19]

> [In Tiflis] ...the victory of the workers was complete.[20]

This juxtaposition of the urge to struggle despite the awareness of the workers that their lives and families are threatened is most dramatically depicted in Kiev. Here we see a powerful example of the solidarity between workers and their families, and of different groups of workers with one another. Here also is the violence of the state.

The strike was begun by the railway men, followed by the foundrymen. Two union delegates were arrested. This "gave the signal for the general strike."

> At the station all the strikers with their wives and families sat down on the railway track--a sea of human beings. They were threatened with rifle salvos. The workers bared their breasts and cried "Shoot"! A salvo was fired into the defenseless crowd and thirty to forty corpses, amongst them those of the women and children remained on the ground.[21]

Surprisingly the workers do not give up. The desires for freedom and justice that have been unleashed by this process can no longer be suppressed. These victims now become martyrs and symbols of continued struggle. This movement has gone far beyond mere economism to become a revolutionary struggle against the authorities.

> The corpses of the murdered workers were raised on high by the crowd and carried around in a mass demonstration. Meetings, speeches, arrests, isolated street fights--Kiev was in the midst of the revolution.[22]

Though the Kiev workers actually won several important demands through their struggle, what seems to be important to Luxemburg is the process of struggle itself. Throughout this section as well as the discussion of the

later mass strikes, she is constantly reminding the reader that the workers often win and then have their gains taken away. They lose the struggle one year but then mysteriously pick up the fight again the next year. Other workers in other cities and occupations within the same city are moved by these struggles and begin to organize around their own demands. All of these comments speak to her understanding of the importance of the subjective dimension of the struggle.

> [In Petersburg] and lastly the strike was suppressed; the workers suffered a "defeat." But in January of the following year the textile workers of St. Petersburg repeated the general strike once more and achieved this time a remarkable success: the legal introduction of a working day of eleven hours throughout the whole of Russia.[23]

> [In Rostov] In the midst of rigid absolutist Russia the proletariat of Rostov won for the first time the right of assembly and freedom of speech by storm. It goes without saying there was a massacre here.... As an echo to this there followed immediately a general strike at the station of Tichoretkaia on the same railway.[24]

> [In Batum] The reverberation of the wholly "fruitless" expiring strike in Batum was a series of revolutionary mass demonstrations of workers in Nizhni Novgorod, Saratov and other towns, and therefore a mighty surge forward of the general wave of the revolutionary movement.[25]

Her use of the term "fruitless" and "defeats" in quotes points to the importance of seeing the subjective dimension of the struggle rather than simply the external achievement or long term organizational gains and material victories. This back and forth between victory and defeat, progress and setback, is the central meaning of Luxemburg's concept of a dialectical process between objectivity and

subjectivity. Progress cannot be viewed in strictly linear and organizational terms. In a later summary statement, speaking of the whole period including the early general strikes and later mass strikes Luxemburg makes this point explicitly.

> The Moscow events show a typical picture of the logical development and at the same time of the future of the revolutionary movement on the whole, their inevitable close in a general insurrection, which again on its part cannot come in any other way than through the school of preparatory partial insurrections, which therefore meantime end in partial outward "defeats" and considered individually, may appear to be premature.[26]

In this section on the early struggles, Luxemburg's concluding remarks explicitly moves towards acknowledging the importance of lived experience as a source of consciousness. The results of these struggles in Southern Russia have been the transformation of consciousness. In place of isolation, despair, and a sense of fatality, the workers now experience a sense of collective power, hope, and the glimpse of a vision of a future society. They have been transformed. These changes in consciousness may not be permanent as she tells us later, but these experiences become a resource which can be called upon for future struggles.

> Thus the colossal general strike in south Russia came into being in the summer of 1903... Brotherly embraces, cries of delight and of enthusiasm, songs of freedom, merry laughter, humor and joy were seen and heard in the crowd of many thousands of persons which surges through the town from morning till evening. The mood was exalted one could almost believe that a new better life was beginning on the earth. A most solemn and at the same time an idyllic, moving spectacle.... So wrote at the time

the correspondent of the Liberal Osvoboshdenye of Peter Struve.[27]

In this chapter we have seen how Luxemburg begins to develop her understanding of the subjective dimension of the dialectic between subjective and objective factors of basic social change. These struggles are intermittent, spontaneous, and emerge out of the masses' response to their immediate felt experience of oppression. In this section we have seen her description of a dynamic process of change, most of all in which workers through the struggle against the objective conditions of oppression have moved from an understanding of their struggle as partial and economistic to a larger collective struggle which is revolutionary. Luxemburg has also continued to develop her critique of the SPD leaderships' perspective and her alternative conception of change. She has illustrated her own concept of objectivity in opposition to that of the male leadership.

To the male leadership these gains may appear to be ephemeral, the struggles small and inconsequential. To Luxemburg who sees the transformation of the masses into a decisive and empowered force for change, these struggles are critical. They are necessary developments in the process of revolution. Revolution begins as much in this moment of conscious subjective recognition of oppression as with the objective historical conditions. For Luxemburg, each make the other conceivable. That is the crux of her objective-subjective dialectic.

ENDNOTES

[1] Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, reprinted in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 164.

[2] Ibid., p. 165.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 168.

[6] Ibid., p. 164.

[7] Ibid., p. 166.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 170.

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[25] Ibid., p. 165.

[26] Ibid., p. 181.

[27] Ibid., p. 168.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RUSSIAN MASS STRIKES OF 1905: CLASS STRUGGLE RECONCEPTUALIZED AS THE MUTUALLY TRANSFORMING DYNAMIC BETWEEN THE FORCES OF OPPRESSION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The next section of the Mass Strike pamphlet deals with the later larger mass strikes of 1905 and 1906. In this fourth section Luxemburg develops explicitly the insights that I have suggested were implicit in her discussion of the early struggles. Two major tenets of her alternative conceptual framework emerge as central in this section.

The first is her sense, her brief, but powerful argument that revolution is the dialectic between objective and subjective forces. The later mass strikes represent a higher level of the struggle. They affect millions of more workers, and set in motion large scale organizing efforts. These struggles reflect a deeper level of class consciousness and awareness. These subjective developments constitute the beginning of a new historical era, a new objective set of historical conditions. For Luxemburg, however, this set of conditions cannot be viewed as separable from the living process of struggle which has created

these conditions. She continues to emphasize the importance of class consciousness and awareness as critical factors that open up these new historical possibilities.

Secondly, she treats still more explicitly the development of class consciousness as a process which is grounded in the lived experience of the participants. What is crucial in its development is action. Action opens up a deeper and broader awareness of the sources of oppression. In this section Luxemburg more strongly implies that individuals experience and reflect upon their conditions of oppression as social beings within a larger community.

Once more, Luxemburg's efforts to describe oppression in these terms anticipates contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists. Here the prefiguring has to do with the present-day emphasis on the intimate relationship between the personal and political dimensions, and between action and changing consciousness. Another way that present day Cultural-Marxist-Feminists speak of this relationship is to point towards the interconnections between lived experiences, reflection, and empowerment.

Her two major points, as presented in this section, become the basis of Luxemburg's continued critique of the political perspective of the German SPD leadership. We see in this section how she continues to sharply reveal the differences between their assumptions and expectations and her own.

Through Luxemburg's analysis of the later mass strikes she clarifies the meaning of her concept of a dialectical historical process. Building on her introductory remarks to the early struggles, in which she argues that the early struggles contain "in the germ" all the major factors of the later mass strike, Luxemburg shows how the later struggles undergo a very similar process of development as the earlier struggles. At the same time there are important differences in both their form and their content.

The St. Petersburg struggle of 1905 in many respects follows the same pattern of development as the earlier struggles. An incident, one that is local and on the surface appears to be relatively minor, sets in motion a process which results in a major confrontation between the workers of St. Petersburg and the central political authorities. She underscores the significance of this quick broadening.

> The conflict of the two Putilov workers who had been subjected to disciplinary punishment changed within a week into the prologue of the most violent revolution of modern times.[1]

As in the earlier struggles, Luxemburg points out that the causes of the strike were "trivial," the firing of two workers who were attempting to organize a union. Once this action was taken by the authorities, thousands of workers join in solidarity with the railroad workers.

> The unrest among the Putilov workers communicated itself quickly to the remainder of the proletariat, and in a few days 140,000 workers went on strike.[2]

The workers then took the next step towards their collective self organization. Helped by party activists, they created a proclamation of a charter outlining their demands for freedom.

> Joint conferences and stormy discussion led to the working out of that proletarian charter of bourgeois freedom with the eight hour day at the head with which on January 22, 2000,00 workers led by Father Gapon, marched to the Czar's place.[3]

Similar to the early struggles, Luxemburg points out that the escalation of the struggle which brought in millions of workers from the entire Czarist empire came about through the brutally repressive actions of the government. Now it took the form of the famous massacre of the workers at the Czar's palace.

> The events that followed upon this are well known; the bloodbath in St. Petersburg called forth gigantic mass strikes and a general strike in the month of January and February in all the industrial centers and towns in Russia, Poland, Lithuania, the east to the west.[4]

Yet despite the similarities in the pattern of development between the earlier and later movements Luxemburg is careful to point out that there are significant political differences.

> On closer inspection, however, it can be seen that the mass strike was appearing in other forms than those of the previous period.[5]

These differences can be seen to be the product of historical development, bearing out Luxemburg's understanding of change as being brought about by the mutual transformation of objective and subjective factors in the struggle. The experiences of the early struggle produce, as

she suggests in her introduction to the early struggles, "the inner political development of the Russian proletariat to their present stage of class consciousness and revolutionary energy."[6]

This "present stage" she now comments on as a marked increase in class consciousness and awareness. In the earlier struggles workers implicitly recognized their bonds with other workers in struggle by taking up the struggle around their own immediate demands. In this stage workers explicitly act in the name of solidarity with the St. Petersburg workers. This support takes the form of active confrontation with the authorities.

> Everywhere at that time the social democratic organizations went before with appeals; everywhere was revolutionary solidarity with the St. Petersburg proletariat expressly stated as the cause and aim of the general strike; everywhere, at the same time, there were demonstrations, speeches, conflicts with the military.[7]

One of the important new developments during this later period is the increased role of social-democratic leadership. Luxemburg comments on the increasing legitimacy of the social democratic leadership in the eyes of the masses in different parts of the Russian empire directly before and after the Petersburg massacre.

> In Baku some weeks in the midst of the general strike the social democrats ruled as absolute masters of the situation...[8]

The heightened visibility of the leadership is also referred to in the quote above on page on the increased signs of class consciousness and awareness.

> Everywhere at that time the social democratic organizations went before with appeals,...[9]

Still, Luxemburg emphasizes that the leadership was responding to the growing consciousness and awareness of the masses. She speaks clearly in contrast to the conception of change held by the leadership of the SPD. The leadership did not orchestrate this increased level of political awareness: it emerged "spontaneously" out of the struggle.

> But even here there was no predetermined plan, no organized action, because the appeals of the parties could scarcely keep pace with the spontaneous risings of the masses; the leaders had scarcely time to formulate the watchwords of the onrushing crowd of the proletariat.[10]

Luxemburg continues to strongly criticize the claims that the SPD makes for their monopoly on "scientific truth" and expertise. She implies that this stance leads them to negatively evaluate any struggle which is not under their direct control.

> According to the theory of the lovers of "orderly and well disciplined" struggle, according to plan and scheme, according to those especially who always ought to know better from afar "how it should be done,"...[11]

She contrasts the distant relationship that the SPD leaders maintain from the masses and their struggle to that of the social-democratic leaders in Russia. Here she begins to suggest an alternative model of the Marxist leader. The leadership's knowledge of how best to conduct the struggle, she argues, must come out of their having an internal relationship to the struggle itself and especially to the masses.

> But social democracy in Russia, which had taken part in the revolution, but not "made it," and which first had to learn its law from the course itself...[12]

Luxemburg directly and indirectly continues to challenge the scientistic views of her German party and trade union colleagues. The dynamics of social change do not conform to a preconceived plan or strategy which the leadership controls. Change arises out of the ever dialectical interplay between objective and subjective conditions of struggle and takes different forms dependent on a variety of conditions. Later in Mass Strike she makes this point strongly.

> ...in every individual act of struggle so very many important economic, political, and social, general and local, material and psychical factors, react upon one another in such a way that no single act can be arranged and resolved as if it was a mathematical problem.[13]

In form, too, Luxemburg sees important shifts between the later mass strikes and the earlier ones. These shifts represent a response by the masses to the new objective as well as the subjective conditions that have developed since the earlier struggles. She describes this shift: In the earlier struggles the movement developed from economistic, small, local and particular struggles to much larger struggles with a national program for change. In the later struggles the movement begins at the national level under the direction of social-democratic leadership and only later breaks up into small, local, economistic struggles.

> Further, the early mass and general strikes had originated from individual coalescing wage

> struggles, which in the general temper of the revolutionary situation and under the influence of the social democratic agitation, rapidly became political demonstrations; the economic factor and the scattered condition of trade unionism was the starting point; all-embracing class action and political direction the result. The movement was now reversed.[14]

> The general strikes of January and February broke out as unified revolutionary actions to begin with under the direction of the social democrats; but this action soon fell into an unending series of local partial economic strikes in separate districts, towns, departments and factories.[15]

This new form of the strike the SPD leadership sees as a sign of degeneration. It can only view this shift from an organized national struggle to local, partial, economistic struggles as representing a return to a less mature level of struggle. They see it as a "decay" or a "dissipation of action." From the external vantage point of the German leadership:

> ...the decay of the great political general strike of January 1905 into a number of economic struggles was probably a 'great mistake' which crippled that action and changed it into a 'straw fire.'[16]

Luxemburg sees this shift as "inevitable," structured by the objective historical conditions of capitalism. The defeat of the czarist authoritarian regime cannot be accomplished without attacking it at its own base of power. The struggle moves organically from one level of struggle, the state, to the other the economic institutions which bolster the power of the czarist regime. The defeat of absolutism cannot be conceived of as separable from the proletariat's struggle against capital. This internal process is the masses' increasing collective awareness and

organization aimed against the conditions of their own oppression. This shift from the national to the local level of struggle is not a "decay, a dissipation of action," but a recognition that the struggle to defeat the czarist regime must attack the regime at the base of its own power.

> The economic struggle was not here really a decay, a dissipation of action, but merely a change of front, a sudden and natural alternation of the first general engagement with absolutism, in a general reckoning with capital, which in keeping with its character, assumed the form of individual, scattered wage struggles.[17]

Moreover, it reflects the masses' own emergent understanding of what the national action could achieve at this particular historical moment. The form of capital is by its very nature experienced as local and decentralized. It appears in region by region, city by city. Thus she sees a rationality and logic to this shift.

> Not political class action was broken in January by the decay of the general strike into economic strikes, but the reverse; after the possible content of political action in the given situation and at the given stage of revolution was exhausted, it broke, or rather changed into economic action.[18]

It is this realization that the Russian Social Democrats achieved when they learned about "its law from the course, itself,..." They too were originally put out by this turn of events and could look at the later localized strikes in no other way except as a wasteful chaotic use of energy.

> But social democracy in Russia,...was at the first glance put out of countenance for a time by the apparently fruitless ebb of the storm flood of the general strike.[19]

Luxemburg's imagery of the "storm flood" indicates what she felt to be the German leaders' concerns about a general lack of discipline and control over the actions of the masses. But the Russian leaders learned its law from participating and observing the experience of the strike at first hand, at no distance at all.

Luxemburg sees this bit of learning from the vantage point of change as a dialectical process. Action does not simply have external consequences: it also changes the actors themselves. The shift from the national political to the local economistic struggles has an inner logic when viewed from an objective historical and developmental perspective. It also has an inner logic when viewed from the internal perspective of how class consciousness is formed. The actions taken by the proletariat around their immediate local conditions of oppression are once again the vehicle for their own increasing national class awareness. Class consciousness begins with the struggle to come to terms with immediate felt, lived experience. In this way Luxemburg anticipates the theoretical insight of contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists, that the objective-subjective dialectic forms consciousness through a close bond between personal (and face-to-face) and the political (and more global). For example we see Luxemburg begin to incorporate this concept of class consciousness as rooted in reflection on the experience of struggle as she colorfully describes the class composition of the many groups who

participated in the January struggle. She gives us an active sense of who this wide variety of strata and groups within the working class are touched by the experience of joining the general strike.

> ...and the whole long scale runs from the proletariat to the regular trade-union struggle of a picked and tested troop of proletariat drawn from large-scale industry, to the formless protest of a handful of rural proletarians, and to the first slight stirrings of an agitated military garrison, from the well educated and elegant revolt in cuffs and white collars in the counting house of a bank to the shy-bold murmurings of a clumsy meeting of dissatisfied policemen in a smoke-grimed dark and dirty guardroom.[20]

Luxemburg's vivid presentation enables us to see real people as they are caught in a situation not entirely of their own making. There are the trusted troops, the "regular proletariat" who like the army are accustomed to going into the field of battle. Then there are those strata who have heretofore never imagined themselves as participating in a general strike, the soldiers, the bank clerks and the policemen. These unlikely "revolutionaries," are forced because of the largeness and effectiveness of the strike, to reflect for the first time on their own conditions of life and labor. We see their first "slight stirrings" and first "clumsy meeting."

She continues her polemic against the male leaders in the German party who viewed this movement to the local economic level as a "mistake." To her, they simply fail to recognize the incalculable value that this shift had for the future development of class struggle.

> History, however, which had made that "great mistake," thereby accomplished, heedless of the reasonings of its officious schoolmaster, a gigantic work for the revolution which was as inevitable as it was, in its consequences, incalculable.[21]

Luxemburg becomes even more explicit about this objective-subjective dialectic, the interaction between action and consciousness. In perhaps the most suggestive quotes in the entire Mass Strike, she alludes to the shortsightedness of a theoretical perspective which sees as significant only the achievement of clearly measurable external victories. Instead she argues that the outward aims, the immediate overthrow of the Czar, though significant leaves out much more of the story. To start with, she acknowledges that:

> The sudden general rising of the proletariat in January under the powerful impetus of the St. Petersburg events was outwardly a political act of the revolutionary declaration of war on absolutism.[22]

To this she adds immediately, however, that the struggle touched levels of political consciousness that went much further than the struggle for a constitutional regime. The act itself awakens the ideals and emotions of the class struggle.

> But this first general direct action reacted inwardly all the more powerfully as it for the first time awoke class feeling and class consciousness in millions upon millions as if by an electric shock.[23]

Luxemburg through her careful language creates a powerful sense of the inner experience of transformation, the sense of a sudden sharp awakening of consciousness that had been dormant. Though Luxemburg usually does not speak

of individuals as separate from the collective, this reference to "millions upon millions," implies a recognition of the class experience as both collective and individual. By speaking of millions of individuals, she makes these millions become less abstract and more particular. At the same time their individual experience of transformation is an awakening of their understanding of their class situation. What each of these individuals experiences is the emergence of a "class feeling and class consciousness." For Luxemburg, this experience of individual transformation takes place in the context of collective group action, and must be understood accordingly.

Luxemburg continues to describe the different moments of illumination in this process. Suddenly the masses make links between their past and present. They suddenly come to see that the past which they had patiently endured was unbearably oppressive. The masses clarify and recover a past that has been lost to them.

> And this awakening of class feeling expressed itself forthwith in the circumstances that the proletarian mass, counted by the millions, quite suddenly and sharply came to realize how intolerable was that social and economic existence which they had patiently endured for decades in the chains of capitalism.[24]

The strike has raised fundamental questions in their lives. They can never look at themselves and their relationship to their conditions in the same way, they have permanently changed. Luxemburg's reference to "patient endurance" resonates with her earlier examination of the

very first St. Petersburg strike in the earlier struggles. These first workers also "patiently endured" their conditions. There, too, she hinted of the liberating experience of action. In this section Luxemburg looks at the moment of recognition more analytically. She gives us a fuller sense of what is involved in this internal process of recognition.

Luxemburg's use of metaphorical language is also an important clue to her attempt to formulate a theory of a subjective process. The "chains of capitalism" cannot be viewed as a literal description of the nature of capitalism. It is a description that is infused with highly charged multi-leveled meanings. To the extent that the "chains" have been internalized as a set of beliefs and feelings that life was fate, that the social and economic existence that the workers had suffered for decades was to be "patiently endured," they are as much constraints as the use of force or violence to keep the status quo.

A newly found capacity for action follows upon the conscious recognition by the masses that they are both individually and collectively oppressed by this system. This capacity for action first develops only as a cautious intermittent process.

> Thereupon began a spontaneous general shaking of and tugging at these chains.[25]

The word "spontaneous" here indicates her affirmation that this is an organic process that emerges naturally out of people's reflection on their own experience. What

goes on however is "tugging," tentative initial attempts at changing these conditions.

This newly gained consciousness is like a sea-change. There is a continuous process of opening up new understandings that have long been suppressed.

> All the innumerable sufferings of the proletariat reminded them of the old bleeding wounds.[26]

Once again her language implies a complex psychic process, the resurrection and reconstruction of the past. Each worker begins to reflect on his or her collective history of oppression.

Luxemburg describes the enormous energy that becomes released through this interaction between action and consciousness. Here we see Luxemburg's important insight that class consciousness is particular as well as general. It takes the form of personal and collective struggle against those who have immediately been experienced as the agency of oppression.

> Here was the eight-hour day fought for, there piecework was resisted, here were brutal foremen "driven off" in a sack on a handcar, at another place infamous systems of fines were fought against, everywhere better wages were striven for and here and there the abolition of homework.[27]

This quote emphasizes the element of action. Her short phrases accentuate the verbs. The quote underlines too, the variety of struggles: "here," "there," "everywhere." Yet though the struggles are all different, Luxemburg relates all of them to the general class situation of each.

Continuing with her polemic against the SPD leaders Luxemburg strongly argues that, although concrete material achievements are an extremely important outcome of the class struggle, equally are the changes in consciousness and awareness that emerge out of the struggle. These changes can potentially have a more permanent and lasting impact and guarantee the future of the struggle. Having enumerated for several pages the concrete material gains that followed upon the January strike, she warns:

> The material standard of life as a permanent stage of well being has no place in the revolution. Full of contradictions and contrasts it brings simultaneously surprising economic victories, and the most brutal acts of revenge on the part of the capitalists; today the eight hour day, and tomorrow lockouts and starvation for millions.[28]

What is important as a legacy of these struggles is the intellectual and cultural growth of the proletariat. Once again she refers to this as a process.

> The most precious, because lasting, thing in this rapid ebb and flow of the wave is its mental sediment: the intellectual and cultural growth of the proletariat, which proceeds by fits and starts, and which offers, an inviolable guarantee of their further irresistible progress in the economic as in the political struggle.[29]

Something is gained even when there is material loss. These changes in the proletariat's consciousness, "which proceed by fits and starts" is what guarantees continuation of the struggle. Luxemburg has here developed a very different standard for measuring progress than her male counterparts, for whom the achievement of tangible material gains, such as social legislation, is seen as the

only valid measure of political action. The importance of process, the changes in the masses, is what stands out to Luxemburg.

Luxemburg dramatizes the degree to which virtually every oppressed group is pulled into the struggle as a consequence of these January strikes. Her vivid description stands as a warning to those who look at social class through purely abstract economic categories. Her emphasis on the subjective side of the class struggle opens up the possibility of seeing the potential of many different groups to become politically conscious and active. The mutually transforming interaction sets in motion the activity of many different strata of people who now recognize themselves as oppressed. People from many different backgrounds and experiences begin not only to recognize their right to make demands against those who have traditionally kept them in bondage, but to act on that right.

> Backward degraded occupations in large towns, small provincial towns which had hitherto dreamed in an idyllic sleep, the village with its legacy from feudalism--all these suddenly awakened by the January lightening, bethought themselves of their rights and now feverishly sought to make up for their previous neglect.[30]

This quote strongly suggests the process that Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have called "empowerment." As workers begin to experience themselves in new ways, to affirm themselves as subjects and not just objects, they begin to see themselves as having the right to claim a different kind of treatment. They no longer allow themselves to be seen

and treated as subordinates. Now they feel powerful. Their experience empowers their own selves. This is a very important moment in the development of a movement for social change. It represents once again a permanent change in the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. For Luxemburg, of course, the oppressed are always directly and indirectly related to their objective historical class situation. But her analysis opens up the possibility for a much broader interpretation of history as the struggle between oppressor and oppressed, a struggle that goes far beyond externals and specifics.

It is not economic gains alone that signal a real process of transformation. Next to greater consciousness Luxemburg gives much weight to developing permanent workers' organizations on the local level; such local organization fundamentally alters the power relationship between workers and employers. This change at the grassroots level of struggle underpins her notion expressed in part 1 of the Mass Strike that the essence of Marxism is change as a developmental process. Change does not come out of the air but is built on a foundation. Within existing historical limits a new foundation is created. It grows out of conscious choice and action. This is the subjective moment of the process. The new objective historical conditions that come into existence to a large extent come about through the class struggle, through the conscious activity of the proletariat.

> But in order to be able to overthrow it, the proletariat requires a high degree of political education, class consciousness and organization. All these conditions cannot be fulfilled by pamphlets and leaflets, but only by the living political school, by the fight and in the fight, in the continuous course of the revolution.[31]

In contrast to the SPD leadership who she puts down the "officious schoolmasters," who see themselves as the source of political consciousness, the real school for politics and for intellectual and political development is the struggle itself. Experience more than "pamphlets and "leaflets" is what develops "political education, class consciousness, and organization."

This statement goes much further than her earlier formulation of the critique of the role of the party. The class struggle is clearly primary, the role of leadership secondary.

Luxemburg emphasizes again the dialectic between the objective factors in the struggle and the subjective ones. Social transformation is a complex long term developmental process. Certain objective historical conditions are required before the Czarist regime can be overthrown. Each social class, and within that class different political views must achieve clear organizational form and expression.

> Before absolutism can, and so that it may, be overthrown, the bourgeois Russia in its interior, in its modern class divisions, must be formed. That requires the drawing together of the various social layers and interests, besides the education of the proletarian, revolutionary parties, and not less of the liberal, radical pettibourgeois, conservative, reactionary parties: it requires self-consciousness, self knowledge and the class consciousness not

> merely of the layers of the people, but also of the layers of the bourgeoisie.[32]

She argues once again, however, that these conditions cannot come into existence except through the struggle.

> But this also can be achieved and come to fruition in no way but in the struggle, in the process of the revolution itself, through the actual school of experience, in collision with the proletariat as well as with one another, in incessant mutual friction.[33]

Proletarian class consciousness and organization of the proletariat emerges through its struggle with the other classes and with the political representations of these classes. It does not, and cannot, take place in isolation from the clarification and development of the other classes and of their struggle to define their social and political identity. That is to say she believes that the proletariat comes to define both what it is and what is not in the course of the struggle in "collision" with other classes. This process of clarification for both bourgeoisie and proletariat cannot be achieved simply through thought, it comes through the brutal collision with different classes and the reflection on its meaning.

We now see what Luxemburg means by "self consciousness." This awareness is the affirmation and clarification of a collective social identity which becomes meaningful in opposition to the identities of other social historical groups.

Summary

In the fourth section of Mass Strike, in sum, we have seen Luxemburg flesh out and make more explicit her conception of a dialectical process of change. This conception of dialectic begins with the importance of action and struggle as transforming elements in the formation of both objective and subjective conditions. The new objective conditions that are created form the backdrop for new struggles and yet a still deeper development of class consciousness and awareness.

Luxemburg also attempted here to analyze much more concretely her notion of class consciousness as a developmental process--a process grounded in the reflections of workers on their own lived experiences. She has explored much more than she did in her discussion of the earlier struggles the inner terrain of changing consciousness and awareness. This terrain suggests the close bond between personal and political dimensions of changing consciousness. These two dimensions mutually reinforce and interact with one another. In this process, what is central is reflection on lived experience here. Experience is understood as subjective reflection on the objective conditions of both personal and collective oppression.

By a powerful brief argument, Luxemburg makes it possible to adumbrate a whole dialectic between objective and subjective forces, and a mutually transforming dynamic between action and consciousness. Within her strong

anticipation of an objective-subjective dialectic, we see her innovate once more by giving very important weight to the subjective factor, to what present-day Cultural-Marxist-Feminists specify as the process of lived experience and the resulting self-reflection and self-empowerment.

Rosa Luxemburg's development of this concept of objective-subjective dialectic emerges out of her continuing criticism of German Marxism's male leaders. And more and more clearly her own alternative theorizing prefigures self-empowering action and reflection upon experience by the mass of people as the heart of grand social change.

ENDNOTES

[1] Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, reprinted in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 170.

[2] Ibid., p. 169.

[3] Ibid., p. 170.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 164.

[7] Ibid., p. 170.

[8] Ibid., p. 169.

[9] Ibid., p. 170.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 171.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., p. 188.

[14] Ibid., p. 170.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 171.

[17] Ibid., p. 172.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 171.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 176.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., p. 172.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

CHAPTER FIVE

LUXEMBURG'S CRITICISM OF HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION: A GLIMPSE IN THE EARLY PERIOD OF A NEW TYPE OF DEMOCRATIC MARXIST LEADERSHIP

In this chapter I continue to develop Luxemburg's criticisms of the major Marxist leaders of her time. Luxemburg clearly identifies as a major danger to a developing mass movement the bureaucratic, elitist, hierarchical form of organization advocated by both the German leaders and Lenin in Russia. This criticism is made in light of the importance which she attaches to the process through which the masses develop their own consciousness of their objective conditions of oppression, and an awareness of their own collective power to resist authority. I have elaborated her conception of this process in Chapters Three and Four.

While continuing to be highly critical of the German leaders in the Mass Strike, what is of particular interest to those who are creating a contemporary democratic cultural Marxism are the similarity of criticisms she wages against the much more revolutionary Lenin with those she has made against the reformists. In my reading of her criticism I shall display the important similarities in her criticism of the top down hierarchical concept conception of change,

which she finds in the reformist and the revolutionary Marxist leaders of the period.

In the pamphlet Organizational Questions of Russian Democracy of 1903, Luxemburg makes a powerful argument against Lenin's conception of the highly centralized tightly controlled vanguard party. She sees such a form of organization as hostile to the conditions of development of the masses themselves. Luxemburg raises new questions for a Marxist analysis. She focuses her criticism of both German reformists and Russian revolutionaries on the dangers of domination from within the movement itself. Through this criticism she poses even more sharply the importance of the historical process through which the masses achieve class consciousness and an increasing capacity for collective action.

In criticizing the concepts of organization and leadership taken for granted by the prevailing Marxism of her time Rosa Luxemburg creates an important conception of an alternative model of organization and leadership. She reverses the belief shared by Lenin and the German leaders that the development of organization is a prior central condition for the development of the masses. Organization and leadership must always recognize their relationship to the growing consciousness and awareness of the masses themselves. The two are not separate analytically or chronologically but mutually changing and transformation.

Luxemburg's Critique of the SPD Leaders

Luxemburg's criticisms of the German Marxist leaders reveals the degree to which they wish to maintain control over the agenda of the socialist movement in Germany. For them the goals of reform, "industrial constitutionalism," represent the outer limits of their vision and concept of social change. In order to sustain this view they deliberately isolate themselves from a broader view implicit in the mass struggle. Luxemburg contrasts the stifling deadening repetition of their parliamentary maneuvers with the living creative vital energy of a mass movement. In the Russian movement, she notes once more, the achievement of reforms such as greater legal recognition for the trade unions and suffrage are perceived as inseparable from a broader revolutionary process, in which the masses play the leading role.

> And what is more, that longed-for 'industrial constitutionalism' for which there is so much enthusiasm in Germany, and for the sake of which the advocates of opportunist tactics would keep every keen wind from the stagnant waters of their all-suffering parliamentarism has already been born, together with political 'constitutionalism' in the midst of the revolutionary storm, from the revolution itself![1]

Luxemburg's quotation marks contrast the formalism of the German leaders' thinking with the broadly dialectical frame of reference of the Russian masses. These German leaders attempt to separate from the overall context of mass struggle the goals of trade union and political rights. In order to maintain control they attempt to keep these issues from becoming broader mass struggles. The achievement of these rights in Russia comes out of the vital struggles of

these rights in Russia comes out of the vital struggles of the masses below then from the deadly cordoned off atmosphere of parliament.

These leaders' determination to maintain as separate and within their control struggles to achieve economic gains takes the form of a determined effort to suppress organizing that is begun by the masses themselves. She ironically dismisses their efforts to maintain the sanctity of the centrally organized trade unions against the onslaught of the masses.

> Dame history, from afar smiling hoaxes the bureaucratic lay figures who keep grim watch at the gate over the fate of the German trade union...[2]

Here Luxemburg's special muse, "Dame History," is of course the sweeping process of the class struggle. Luxemburg implies that the conditions which generate the struggles of the masses and their reflection on those struggles are beyond the control of the bureaucratic lay figures who in vain attempt to protect the exclusive claims of legitimacy of these organizations.

These leaders attempt to maintain their control by arguing that the building of "firm" strong centralized organization is the precondition for mass struggle. This conception is couched in scientific language. This linear and top down conception of social change is argued as an "indispensable hypothesis." Again and again Luxemburg argues that in Russia through the mass strikes these

organizations emerge as part of the workers' conscious efforts to achieve their own liberation.

> The firm organizations which are the indispensable hypothesis of an eventual German mass strike should be fortified like an impregnable citadel--these organizations are in Russia on the contrary already born from the mass strike.[3]

Luxemburg strongly suggests the degree to which these German leaders deny the potential of an autonomous mass movement to create lasting powerful trade union organizations. These leaders insist on seeing themselves as the critical factor that insures the survival, stability, and success of any mass initiative. Like an overly anxious parent these leaders cannot conceive of significant organizational developments that emerge from the masses themselves. The Russian experience proves the opposite: it is precisely their conditions of birth--the power, spirit and strength of the masses that has assured the success of their attempts to create their own trade unions.

> And while the guardians of the German trade unions for the most part fear that the organizations will fall in pieces in a whirlwind like rare porcelain, the Russian Revolution shows up exactly the opposite picture, from the whirlwind and the storm, out of the fire and glow of the mass strike and the street fighting rise again, like Venus from the foam, fresh, young, powerful, buoyant trade unions.[4]

Once again she suggests the degree to which these leaders think in terms of extreme dichotomies. They juxtapose the inherent tendency of the masses towards anarchy or self-destruction in which their creations are destined to "fall in pieces." Because the masses are not under the direction of centralized leadership, they assume

they lack of the benefits of the leaders' expertise. Luxemburg reads the experience of the Russian masses from a completely opposing point of view. It is precisely the intensity of the struggle, its power to transform the masses "its fire and glow," that can generate institutions that embody the life, spirit, freshness of the movement. Unlike the stagnant parliamentary cretinism that she describes earlier, these vibrant institutions are full of life, they are fresh, not weighted down like the older German ones.

Luxemburg shows how this dialectic works in relationship to the creation of organization in Russia. The January strikes have resulted in the achievement of a new constitution which for the first time promises political freedom. Luxemburg shows how this victory has powerfully propelled the workers into taking the next step to consolidate the gains they have achieved through their own struggle.

> The workers threw themselves with fiery zeal into the waves of political freedom in order to use it forthwith for the purpose of the work of organization. Besides daily political meetings, debates and formation of clubs, the development of trade unions was immediately taken in hand.[5]

Luxemburg emphasizes the passion that has been liberated through the struggle, "they threw themselves with fiery zeal" into this work. The established trade union leaders can neither compete with nor contain the energy that is pushing these workers to take step, after step in their own struggle for freedom.

Luxemburg is explicit about the process that propels the workers to create their own organizations. Through the reflection on their own experience of the struggle they have arrived at an understanding of their own political needs. Part of that understanding recognizes themselves as agents of their own liberation. Only they can create the instruments of their struggle.

> The workers in large numbers have learned by experience to appreciate and understand the importance of organization, and that only they themselves can create these organizations.[6]

She makes it clear that these Russian workers do not require outside experts to tell them when they need greater centralized coordination, or publications which link together the various struggles. They arrive at this understanding in due time out of reflection on their own experience.

> In October and November forty new trade unions appeared in St. Petersburg. Presently a "central bureau," that is a trade union council, was established, various trade-union papers appeared, and since November a central organ has also been published, The Trade Union.[7]

Luxemburg's quotes around "central bureau" is another jab at the German leadership who reifies the importance of prior centralization. Here once again she sees it as only part of a process that workers see as necessary at a given stage of their own struggle.

The same untrustworthy masses also engage in disciplining their own members when that is seen as necessary. They do not require formal rules or lines of authority to be

able to decide when it is important that collective decisions be enforced.

> It was decided that the trade unions should discipline their members and restrain them from street rioting because the time is not considered opportune for the mass strike.[8]

Luxemburg turns upside down the image of the masses implicit in the theory and practice of the German leaders. Her criticism suggests that which these leaders deny the rich intellectual, political, and emotional development that the masses undergo in the course of their struggle. These leaders deliberately objectify the masses, seeing them as incapable of thought or action without the indispensable role of leaders.

If Luxemburg sees the subjective reflection on the living experience of the struggle as the logic of the Russian mass strike. She warns against leaders who attempt to undermine that process by superimposing their own formally abstract conceptions and models on the actual process. Her criticisms point to a type of leadership that claims for itself a monopoly over science, logic, and rational thought processes. Luxemburg hammers at the efforts by the German male leaders to delegitimize the mass strike by claiming for itself a monopoly on intellect and expertise.

Again Luxemburg attacks the formalism and grandiose claims that the leaders make for their own intelligence. They did not invent the mass strike as an interesting tactic to achieve reformist aims. The mass strike arises out of

the deeper contradictions between labor and capital. The mass strike is the form in which the masses express the struggle to change their conditions of oppression.

> In a word the mass strike, as shown to us by the Russian Revolution, is not a crafty method discovered by subtle reasoning for the purpose of making the proletarian struggle more effective, but the method of the proletarian mass, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution.[9]

She continues to criticize their attempts to turn the mass strike into an instrument of social reform by refusing to recognize the interrelationships between the economic and political struggle. They attempt to justify this concept by superimposing on the reality a formal model that creates the appearance of logic and rationality but which violates the inner unity between the political and economic aspects of the struggle.

> Here also the reality deviates from the theoretical scheme and the pedantic representation in which the pure political mass strike is logically derived from the trade union general strike as the ripest and highest stage, but at the same time is kept distinct from it, is shown to be absolutely false.[10]

Luxemburg strongly criticizes the strategies adopted by the German leaders to defeat the possibility of a Russian type of mass strike. Economic strikes, she argues, under the authority and control of the trade union leadership are not the "logical precondition" of strikes with broader political objectives. In Russia she argues that the "reality" is quite different than this abstract linear concept of change. There is continuous mutual interaction between the economic and political struggles.

These leaders hide their attempt to maintain control over the potentially revolutionary implications of the mass strike by creating an illusion of their own expertise. They create "pedantic representations" which in abstract terms appear to provide a scientific justification for their scheme. This logic collapses in the face of the reality in which it becomes clear that the struggle to achieve economic gains is not a separate and distinct struggle from the struggle to achieve greater political power for the masses.

She goes even further in criticizing a form of scientific reasoning that isolates and compartmentalizes different phenomena, treats political struggles as separate and distinct from economic struggles. This process of classification may appear to be a sophisticated form of analysis but it completely distorts the inner connections that sustain the living whole. In dissecting the phenomena in this way these leaders will not see it more clearly but rather destroy it.

> Sophisticated theory proposes to make a clever logical dissection of the mass strike for the purpose of getting at the "purely political mass strike," it will by this dissection as with any other, not perceive the phenomenon in its living essence but will kill it altogether.[11]

Luxemburg here issues a strong warning against this attempt to hide the significance of their analysis of the mass strike behind "sophisticated theory." Their clever intellectual maneuvers appear to be neutral. They are only they argue "getting at the 'purely political mass strike,'" its true essential character. Behind this act of intellec-

tual analysis, however, Luxemburg sees destruction of the vital interconnections that constitute its reality.

Luxemburg juxtaposes the cold, bloodless, sterile concept of the mass strike as it is conceived of by the leaders with the vital quality of the strike as it exists in reality. She points out that their scheme which relies heavily on centralized direction and control misses the complex interaction of all of the different roots and branches of the struggle.

> Instead of the rigid and hollow scheme of an arid political action carried out by the decisions of the highest committee furnished with plan and panorama, we see a bit of pulsating like of flesh and blood which cannot be cut out of the large frame of the revolution but is connected with all parts of the revolutionary by a thousand veins.[12]

The use of organic imagery is striking. The reader can almost feel the visceral quality of the revolution as a living body, which heart, blood, and veins. The multitude of different struggles, "the thousand veins," feed the revolution. The body is kept alive by all of these different struggles. This contrasts with the German leadership's view that only the "head" the directing committees keep the body alive. The body is not only the head. It is a complex unity of many organs working in relationship to one another.

The German leaders' fear of the potential of the masses to create their own struggle finds its way in their use of certain kinds of objectifying language. Luxemburg continues her battle against the scientism of the German

leaders. Their generalized fear of mass struggle, she suggests, leads them to see "revolution," which terrifies them, as an inevitable outcome of the mass strike.

> When to be sure, the representatives of our German opportunism hear of "revolution," they immediately think of bloodshed, street fighting or powder and shot, and the logical conclusion thereof is: the mass strike leads inevitably to the revolution, therefore we dare not have it.[13]

Luxemburg reemphasizes her conception of social change as a dialectic between objective and subjective factors. Only under specific historical conditions can mass strikes emerge. In contrast to the German leaders who see the mass strike as inevitably leading to revolution, Luxemburg argues that "the revolution" is the underlying structural conflicts between labor and capital that have set the stage for this particular form of struggle. Only under certain historical conditions, when these tensions have reached a heightened stage of development, can mass strikes emerge.

> We have seen above the inner mechanism of the Russian mass strike which depends upon the ceaseless reciprocal action of the political and economic struggles. But this reciprocal action is conditioned during the revolutionary period. Only in the sultry air of the period of the revolution can any partial little conflict between labor and capital grow into a general explosion.[14]

Revolution does not just erupt as an accidental, uncontrolled, spontaneous struggle. Here Luxemburg once again implies a similarity between the anarchists and the so-called scientific Marxist leaders. Neither taken into account the specific historical conditions that make certain

types of struggle inevitable. As an illustration Luxemburg contrasts the specific historical conditions that currently exist in Germany with those that exist in Russia. While in German, like Russia, violent struggles can be found, in the former case these struggles do not lead to deeper and broader class struggle. They remain contained and isolated within specific communities and sectors of the working class. Under the historical conditions that exist in Germany at the present moment these struggles don't have the same potential.

> Punishment of organized workers in Petersburg and unemployment as in Baku, wage struggles as in Odessa, struggles for the right of combination in Moscow are the order of the day in Germany. No single one of these cases however suddenly changes into a common class action. And when they grow into isolated mass strikes, which have without question a political coloring, they do not bring about a general storm.[15]

At the same time Luxemburg strongly disagrees with the premise of the German leaders that the existence of parliament and other conditions of Western industrial society inevitably lead to routine means for solving social conflict. She argues that the objective historical conditions in parts of Germany closely resemble those to be found in Russia. These conditions set the stage for the possibilities of similar mass strikes as are presently found in Russia.

> Let us consider the <u>poverty of the miners</u>. Already in the quiet working day, in the cold atmosphere of parliamentary monotony in Germany... the wage struggle of the mine workers hardly expresses itself in any other way than by violent eruptions from time to time, in mass strikes of typical elemental

> character. This only shows that the antagonism between labor and capital is too sharp and violent to allow of its crumbling away in the form of quiet systematic, partial trade union struggles.[16]

Moreover she insists that under different historical conditions, in a period of mass struggle, those oppressed workers who already have a strong antagonism to capital will develop socialist aims. In a period in which disorder and struggle challenge the routines of day-to-day life these workers' consciousness will undergo profound change.

> The misery of the miners, with its eruptive soil which even in "normal" times is a storm center of the greatest violence, must immediately explode, in a violent economic socialist struggle, with every great political mass action of the working class, with every violent sudden jerk which disturbs the momentary equilibrium of everyday social life.[17]

Luxemburg's perspective that social change emerges out of a relationship between objective and subjective factors leads her to be much more optimistic than the German social-democratic leaders. Against their objectification of certain sectors of workers as "unorganizable," she retains faith that under certain kinds of historical conditions these workers will organize themselves.

> However, it would be an altogether false psychological reckoning if one were to assume, with the German reaction, that the slavish obedience of the German railway and postal workers will last forever, that it is a rock which nothing can wear away.[18]

> ...the deep seated, long suppressed resentment of the uniformed state slaves will inevitably find vent with a general rising of the industrial workers. And when the industrial vanguard of the proletariat, by means of mass strikes, grasp at new political rights or attempt to defend existing ones, the great army of railway and postal employees must bethink themselves of their own special disgrace, and at last rouse themselves for their liberation from the

> extra share of Russian absolutism which is specially reserved for them in Germany.[19]

Luxemburg has here suggested that there is an inner logic to violent struggle and mass strikes. Violence has roots in the conditions of people's lives and existence. Under certain conditions this violence explodes and takes the form of mass strikes. Similarly, she argues the possibilities for organizing workers, particularly certain types of workers are structured and conditioned by the degree of class conflict within a particular historical moment. Under "normal times" when class conflict is less visible and apparent workers remain passive. In periods when class conflict has become more pervasive, the consciousness of those who have been passive and acquiescent can quickly change. Thus the predictions, calculations of the German leaders leave out the importance of this dialectical understanding of social change. Subjective development is conditioned by objective historical conditions and vice-versa. Luxemburg criticizes the German leaders for equating "political maturity," with the suppression of spontaneity, strong feeling, and a capacity for action. They deny the universal significance of the Russian experience by explaining it as the product of underdevelopment. With the creation of Western style institutions with their established routines the Russian masses would act in more disciplined less unpredictable ways.

> And finally, the stormy revolutionary course of the Russian mass strike, as well as their preponderant spontaneous elementary character, is explained on

> the one hand by the political backwardness of Russian, by the necessity of first overthrowing Oriental despotism, and on the other hand by the want of discipline of the Russian proletariat.[20]

Here again she points to their highly sophisticated use of Marxist theory, the emphasis on the necessity for developing certain objective historical conditions as the exclusive measure of political development. For these leaders political maturity is measured by the masses being willing to accept internal controls on their own spontaneous desires.

The German leaders, she argues, go even further in equating organized bureaucratic institutional life with a concept of civilization itself. The youthful ungoverned passion of the Russian masses is seen as behavior which corresponds to a primitive barbarous society. She paraphrases the position of the SPD leaders.

> In a country in which the working class has had thirty years experience of political life, a strong social-democratic party of 3 million members and a quarter of a million of picked troops organized in trade unions, neither the political struggle nor the mass strike can assume the same stormy elemental character as in a semi-barbarous state which has just made the leap from the middle ages to the modern bourgeois order.[21]

While arguing for the importance of objective historical conditions, i.e., the development of industrial capitalism, on the level of consciousness of the masses, she strongly argues against the view that these experiences alone are the exclusive means through which the masses become cultivated.

> With paupers no revolution of this political maturity and cleverness of thought can be made, and the industrial workers of St. Petersburg and Warsaw, Moscow, and Odessa, who stand in the forefront of the struggle are culturally and mentally much nearer to the Western European type than is imagined by those who regard bourgeois parliamentarism and the methodical trade union practice as the indispensable, or even the only, school of culture for the proletariat.[22]

Luxemburg goes very far in suggesting that class consciousness about the underlying causes of class oppression has become internalized so deeply in the Russian masses that it has become assimilated into their deepest feelings. The quickness and directness of their response to their own oppression is not a consequence of "youthful immaturity," but its opposite, a clear development of understanding that comes out of mature reflection on their own experience.

> That means nothing however, than at present, paradoxical as it may sound the class instinct of the youngest, least trained, badly educated and still worse organized Russian proletariat is immeasurably stronger than any of the organized, trained and enlightened working class of Germany or of any other west European country. And that is not to be reconciled a special virtue of the "young unexhausted East" as compared with the sluggish West," but is simply a result of direct revolutionary mass action.[23]

Socialization, formal education, membership in formal organization is not the measure of class consciousness, or a capacity for action. Nor is it formed primarily as a consequence of the intervention of leaders through these hierarchical institutions. The greatest teacher, the main school for cultural development Luxemburg sees in the

direct encounter with the Russian masses against their oppressors.

Applying these lessons to Germany Luxemburg argues that what the masses need in Germany is not better discipline, socialization and training but a year of struggle and engagement in a revolutionary experience.

> A year of revolution has therefore given the Russian proletariat that "training" which thirty years of parliamentary and trade union struggle cannot artificially give to the German proletariat.[24]

Luxemburg here affirms the development model of mass consciousness and empowerment that I suggested in Chapters Three and Four. This time, however, she does it specifically in relation to the question of the role of organization and leadership. Elaborate organization and leadership are not a substitute for living experience.

Finally, Luxemburg's faith in the objective-subjective dialectic reiterates her belief in the possibility of building broad mass movement in Germany among those who seem unreachable by traditional top down organizing approaches.

> Six months of a revolutionary period will complete the work of training of these as yet unorganized masses which ten years of public demonstrations and distributions of leaflets would be unable to do.[25]

Rather than a leadership seeing itself as the decisive critical force she attempts to develop a concept of leadership that can work with and through the grassroots of struggle of the masses. They must see their own power not as total but as more limited and in relationship to the masses' own developing movement.

> Further there are quite definite limits set to initiative and conscious direction. During the revolution it is extremely difficult for any directing organ of the proletarian movement to foresee and calculate which occasion and factors can lead to explosions and which cannot.[26]

Here she cautions against a concept of leadership as all knowing experts. Rather than see themselves as the initiators and in command she implies that they must accept their more limited role.

While establishing clear limits on the role of leaders Luxemburg at no point rules them out as a potentially important factor.

> They cannot and dare not wait in a fatalistic fashion with folded arms for the advent of a "revolutionary situation," ... On the contrary, they must always hasten the development of things...[27]

Luxemburg is once again indirectly challenging a type of leadership who assumes that their expert knowledge will predict a given set of outcomes. They must not passively wait for their predictions to come true. She argues that they must themselves always be alert to the living possibilities within the situation and attempt within the limits of their power to accelerate the possibilities that exist. They must combine theoretical knowledge with activism as a part of the process of revolutionary development.

Luxemburg's critique opens up for further development and elaboration an alternative model of leadership. Through her criticism of an objectivistic, deterministic concept of social change which sees leaders as indispensable

elements, Luxemburg has shifted the analysis to the primary role of the masses themselves. Leaders continue to play a role but it is in relationship to the struggles and reflections of the masses themselves. Thus far this is her glimpse of an alternative model of the Marxist leader, one which can give up its own grandiose claims for authority and control and accept a more limited role.

Luxemburg's Critique of Lenin and the Bolsheviks

In some respects Luxemburg's criticisms of Lenin's theory of organization are different from her criticisms of the German SPD. Yet, in one significant aspect they are the same: To her, the German leaders and Lenin conceive of the masses and treat them similarly as mere instruments of the leaders' accession to power. The development of the masses is not a condition of the achievement of socialism. Rather socialism is conceived by both reformists and revolutionaries as a takeover of political power or state with leaders in charge.

Throughout her criticism of Lenin, the overall theme that Luxemburg returns to is the degree to which his concept as she elaborates it in Organizational Questions on Russian Democracy of 1983, of the party concentrates power in the hands of a very small leadership group. This concept of the party not only excludes the masses in any decision-making capacity but it also excludes party members who are outside the inner circle. She sees this extremely centralized form of organization as clearly creating a dangerous division of

labor between those who think and those who become mere instruments of the central committee.

> Now the two principles on which Lenin's centralism rests are precisely these: 1. The blind subordination, in the smallest detail, of all party organs, to the party center, which alone thinks, guides, and decides for all. 2. The rigorous separation of the organized nucleus of revolutionaries from its social-revolutionary surroundings.[28]

The extremity of this centralization emerges in her choosing to highlight Lenin's belief in "blind subordination" the unquestioned obedience of the party organ members, publications, committees etc., even with regard to the smallest detail. Nothing escapes from the eyes and power of the center. It also is given the task of thinking, reflecting and guiding. She also notes that there is an even further sharp distinction that Lenin makes between party members and the "social-revolutionary surroundings outside the party." The masses are relegated to an even lower place in the order. They are treated as having the false consciousness of social revolutionaries as opposed to the true consciousness of the Bolshevik center.

Luxemburg clearly reverses Lenin's stand on the relationship between the party and the masses. The party does not dictate to the masses. She argues that a socialist revolution requires a concept of the relationship which first and foremost sees the party and its leadership as an outgrowth of the dialectical process of the masses' own historical development. The party does not come first, nor does it define its activity in isolation from the mass

struggle. She argues that the role of the party, its activity, is determined and constantly changing in relationship to the development of the masses' consciousness of their conditions of oppression. Though she consistently creates the image of a dialectical mutually transforming relationship, clearly her emphasis is on the party serving the mass movement and on the masses more in the forefront than the opposite picture painted by Lenin.

> However, Social Democratic activity is carried on under radically different conditions. It arises historically out of the elementary class struggle. It spreads and develops in accordance with the following dialectical contradiction. The proletarian army is recruited and becomes aurae of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself. The activity of the party organization, the growth of the proletarian's awareness of the objectives of the struggle and the struggle itself, are not differing things separated chronologically and mechanically. They are only different aspects of the same process.[29]

Luxemburg's emphasis on the subjective dimension of the struggle gives her a very different view on the question of internal democracy within the movement itself. She is highly critical of Lenin's concerted efforts to discredit and delegitimize views on questions of social change that are different than his own. She notes on several occasions his attempt to attribute more democratic concepts of organization to "anarchistic intellectuals."

> He declares that "it is no longer the proletarians but certain intellectuals in our party who need to be educated in the matters of organization and discipline." [She is quoting from Lenin's pamphlet <u>One Step Backwards, Two Step Forward</u>.][30]

For Lenin even the mere suggestion that centralized bureaucratic forms of organization are antithetical to the conditions sanguine to the development of the masses is a form of political heresy. He decries the opportunism of those intellectuals who see contradictions between his emphasis on bureaucracy and a conception of a democratic organization.

> Luxemburg quotes Lenin, "To oppose bureaucracy to democracy," writes Lenin, "is to contrast the organizational principle of revolutionary social democracy to the methods of opportunist organization."[30]

Luxemburg points to the ludicrousness of Lenin's assumptions about the nature of the masses themselves. He seems them as without any ability to exercise power over their own fate. She strongly suggests this view of the masses reads like a conventional sexist conception of women--people who are in need of external controls. They desire the firm hand of authority, discipline, and control. The German leaders, in more pedagogical style denied the capacity of the masses to create their own organization and conduct their struggle. Lenin, she implies, as can be seen in the quotation below, hides behind his pretensions to being democratic.

> Lenin says that intellectuals remain individualists and tend to anarchism after they have joined the socialist movement. According to him, it is only among intellectuals that we can note a repugnance for the absolute authority of the Central Committee. The authentic proletarian, Lenin suggests finds by reason of his class instinct a kind of voluptuous pleasure in abandoning himself to the clutch of firm leadership and pitiless discipline.[32]

This kind of flattery of the masses' alleged desire for control Luxemburg sees as dangerous. Lenin depicts them as unwilling and unable to become autonomous. They are driven by a supposedly higher level of knowledge, "class instinct" to give up their own freedom. This is a kind of masochistic image of the masses in which pain is looked upon as pleasure.

Like the German leaders, she sees him denying the problems of bureaucratic centralized organization by glorifying the discipline and organization of the bourgeois socialization process. He romanticizes the success of the efforts of factory owners to teach the masses obedience and discipline.

> He glorifies the educative influence of the factory, which he says, accustom the proletariat to "discipline and organization. [She quotes from Lenin's pamphlet, One Step Backward, Two Steps Forward.][33]

Luxemburg reminds Lenin that there is nothing inherently revolutionary about the masses learning to accept the dictates of authority. It is precisely this lesson that is taught and reinforced by the entire apparatus of bourgeois society.

> The discipline Lenin has in mind is being implanted in the working class not only by the factor but also by the military and the existing state bureaucracy--by the entire mechanisms of the centralized bourgeois state.[34]

Luxemburg notes the parallels between Lenin's emphasis on centralization and the highly centralized institutions of the bourgeois state. Both treat the masses

as objects to be pacified and socialized into acquiescence to the existing order.

Luxemburg sees Lenin's attempt to achieve his will as having no boundaries. For him the ends totally justify the means. She accuses him of deliberately deceiving himself and others for the purpose of denying the differences between men whose socialization has turned them into automatons, and men who have freely chosen to discipline and regulate themselves in order to achieve their own emancipation. For Lenin the discipline imposed by the bourgeoisie is equated with the discipline that is self-imposed by an autonomous working class movement.

> We misuse words and we practice self-deception when we apply the same term--discipline--to such dissimilar notions as: 1, the absence of thought and will in a body with automatically moving hands and legs, and 2, the spontaneous coordination of the conscious, political acts of a body of men. What is there in common between the regulated docility of an oppressed class and the self discipline and organization of a class struggling for its emancipation.[35]

Again she returns to the same theme--Lenin's totally instrumental view of the masses makes him unable or unwilling to recognize the difference between a totally pacified group of workers who have been turned into moving parts without the essential human qualities of a will and a mind, and workers who act like subjects. To the extent that this process has been achieved through bourgeois socialization this level of internalized oppression has become routinized and invisible. It appears to be workers who are going about their business. What does this kind of loss of these

essential human qualities, "regulated docility" she asks, have to do with self-created discipline and obedience that comes out of conscious choice and reflection as part of a political struggle?

Luxemburg makes a powerful argument for the importance of Lenin recognizing the implications of his own belief in domination and centralized control. Socialism is not the replacement of one form of domination with another. It is fundamentally a new form of self-rule. The ends cannot be divorced from the means. The condition of socialist transformation is the struggle of the masses against their very own history of bourgeois socialization and conditioning. They must liberate themselves precisely from the old habits of obedience and authority.

> The self-discipline of the Social Democracy is not merely the replacement of the authority of the bourgeois rulers with the authority of the central committee. The working class will acquire the sense of the new discipline the freely assumed discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the capitalist state, but by extirpating to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility.[36]

Unlike Lenin, who remains thoroughly skeptical about the possibilities of the masses' capacity to direct their own struggle, Luxemburg affirms her trust in the process through which the masses will transform themselves. Since Lenin does not recognize domination as an issue he does not deal with the question of the conditions under which the masses may become capable of leading their own struggle. Luxemburg's emphasis on the masses opens up in her analysis

the enormous significance of internalized oppression. Socialism is not a takeover of power by a party leadership, it is fundamentally a process through which the masses increasingly become capable of self-rule.

So far Luxemburg's argument against a type of leadership who objectifies and instrumentalizes the masses suggests its opposite, a leadership that can foster and nurture the potential of the masses themselves. Luxemburg sees Lenin's conception of the relationship between party and masses based on complete subordination as destroying creativity and the potential for growth. The heavy hand of authority constricts the development of a mass movement. In strong language she compares Lenin to a slavemaster brutally exploiting the labor of the masses and seeing them only as a means to achieve his aims.

> The ultra-centralism asked by Lenin is full of the sterile spirit of the overseer. It is not a positive and creative spirit. Lenin's concern is not so much to make the activity of the party more fruitful as to control the party--to narrow the movement rather than to develop it to bind rather than unify it.[37]

Again Luxemburg uses strong direct language. The kind of hierarchical centralized control embodied in Lenin's form of organization will "enslave a young labor movement." It is the antithesis of the conditions of the growth of class consciousness and empowerment. It will stop the movement dead, "immobilize" it and turn it into a robotized instrument of the top. Intellectuals like Lenin who wish to

oversee every move of the masses can potentially destroy the seeds of growth.

Again, as she did with the German leaders, she returns to the question of the primacy of the subjective process, the process through which the masses develop their own awareness, skills, capacity for creation. A leadership that attempts to prevent mistakes by suppressing freedom is destroying the very essence of movement's life force and vitality. The cure is worse than the disease. What emerges is a subjugated mass which has been irreparably harmed by the intervention.

> Stop the natural pulsation of a living organism, and you weaken it, and you diminish its resistance and combative spirit--in this instance, not only against opportunism but also ... against the existing social order. The proposed means turn against the end they are supposed to serve.[38]

Luxemburg's use of organic imagery as against the mechanistic imagery that Lenin has of the masses is significant. She juxtaposes the what she sees as the inherent life of the movement, its "pulsating as a living organism," against the bureaucratic conception of Lenin and his followers. The organism is not a hapless object, but has a life and will of its own. A leadership that does not recognize this poses a clear danger to the organism.

She emphasizes again that organization must develop its form and purpose out of the dialectic between consciousness and objective historical conditions. Lenin's concept can only prevail as long as the masses are not engaged in struggle.

> A manual of regulations may master the life of a small sect or a private circle. An historic current however, will pass through the mesh of the most subtly worded statutory paragraph.[39]

Bureaucratic regulations cannot for once and all time solve the problem of developing organization within the socialist movement. The class struggle itself will reopen these questions.

Similarly, she argues that organization must reflect the intentions and purposes of those who create them. She reverses the reified conception of organization that Lenin advocates. Members are not servants of this organization, but its opposite, the organization must serve the needs of the members.

> For us, it is not the letter, but the living spirit carried into that organization by the membership that decides the value of that organizational form.[40]

These two quotes suggest more concretely Luxemburg's alternative concept of organization and leadership. Organization is not a thing in itself, a lifeless machine. It must constantly be recreated and reexamined in light of the purposes and spirit of its members. It must itself become a living dynamic force, not a dead bureaucratic structure. As she did with the Germans, Luxemburg contrasts her own conception of organization as a function of the dialectical process of the masses' development with the rigid bureaucratic elitist conception of the leaders. The problem of organization cannot be legislated for all time, it must become an open ended question.

Similarly this conception of organization suggests a leadership that is not rigid, elitist, or hierarchical but a leadership who can work collectively with others to reflect upon the stage of development of the movement, the conditions facing the movement, and the purposes of the members.

Luxemburg's closing parody of the Bolsheviks suggests the sources of their authoritarian views as related to a class based isolation from the masses. Though these Bolsheviks see themselves as distinctly different than previous revolutionary organization Luxemburg notes the similarity with earlier 19th century terrorist groups.

> It is amusing to note the strange somersaults that the respectable human "ego" has had to perform in recent Russian history.
>
> Knocked to the ground, almost reduced to dust, by Russian absolutism, the "ego" takes revenge by turning to revolutionary activity.
>
> In the Shape of a committee of conspirators, the name of a non-existent Will of the People, it seats itself on a kind of throne and proclaims it is all-powerful.[41]

In order to be acknowledged by those in authority, these conspirators were compelled to do "strange somersaults." Totally isolated from the masses, they declare themselves to be revolutionaries and the legitimate representatives of the people.

Again, operating in a complete political vacuum, these same type of leaders emerge in the twentieth century. Ignoring the emerging mass movement they proclaim themselves to be the legitimate spokespersons for the movement. They

attempt to attract all of the attention away from this embryonic movement.

> In time we see appear on the scene an even more "legitimate" child of history--the Russian labor movement. For the first time, bases for the formation of a real "people's will" are laid on Russian soil.
>
> But here is the "ego" of the Russian revolutionary again! Pirouetting on its head, it once more proclaims itself to be the all-powerful director of history--this time with the title His Excellency the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Russia.[42]

Once again the self-appointed leaders are attempting to deflect attention from the "legitimate child of history." They compete with this child by doing pirouettes, clearly seeing themselves as the more talented. Still without any real links to the masses they declare themselves to be the legitimate representative of the movement.

Luxemburg argues strongly against what she sees as Lenin's implied emphasis on individual intelligence and cleverness against the collective process through which the masses themselves achieve consciousness. For Luxemburg, the process itself is more important to the development of socialism than the benefits that come from leaders who may be clever but are consistently elitist and authoritarian.

> ...The working class demands the right to make its own mistakes and learn in the dialectic of history.
>
> Let us speak plainly. Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee.[43]

Luxemburg ironically implies through her reference to the Kantian "ego" cleverness etc. a bourgeois intellec-

tual tradition which systematically sees the masses as inferior beings, Contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists see this view as also characteristic of relations of patriarchy. Luxemburg's criticisms of both German and Russian male leaders their scientism, their emphasis on hierarchy and domination anticipates a contemporary feminist critique of masculine leadership.

In this chapter I have developed another dimension of Luxemburg's criticisms of the most important Marxist leaders of her time. Building on her concept of the subjective-objective dialectic I have elaborated and specified in Chapters Three and Four, I have shown here her important criticism of their bureaucratic, elitist, and hierarchical form of organization. Where these leaders instrumentalize the masses and look at organization that is centrally controlled as a condition of socialist transformation, she argues the opposite. Organization must emerge as an aspect of the development of the masses themselves, their own consciousness and capacity for action. Where the leaders see a strong need for centralized control and domination, she argues that such controls destroy the very capacity of the masses to develop.

This reversal of priorities and conceptions creates a glimpse of a radically new conception of organization and leadership within Marxism. Organization and leaders must consistently recognize their relationship to the masses and must be open and responsive to the dynamic developments that

take place within the mass movement. They are not external or prior factors but integrally related and mutually transforming factors in the struggle. This conception of organization and leadership is clearly much more compatible with a commitment towards democracy and ground up activity and reflection.

ENDNOTES

[1] Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, reprinted in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, ed. Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 175, 176.

[2] Ibid., p. 176.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 177.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 177, 178.

[8] Ibid., p. 178.

[9] Ibid., p. 182.

[10] Ibid., p. 184.

[11] Ibid., p. 185.

[12] Ibid., p. 181.

[13] Ibid., p. 186.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 192.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 193.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 191.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 192.

[23] Ibid., p. 199.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 188.

[27] Ibid., p. 200.

[28] Rosa Luxemburg, Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy, reprinted in The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism, with an introduction by Bertram D. Wolfe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1961), p. 88.

[29] Ibid., pp. 87, 88.

[30] Ibid., p. 96.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., p. 90.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 94.

[38] Ibid., p. 106.

[39] Ibid., p. 103.

[40] Ibid., p. 95.

[41] Ibid., p. 107.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid., p. 108.

CHAPTER SIX

A DEMOCRATIC-INTERACTIONIST MODEL OF THE MARXIST LEADER: LEADERSHIP AS MASS EMPOWERMENT

In this chapter I draw on Luxemburg's writings to construct a model of a new type of democratic Marxist political leader. I call this a democratic-interactionist model. As I elaborate it here, emerges out of her criticism of an elitist bureaucratic model of change which she suggests is implicit in the theory and practice of the most important leaders of her own time. I have analyzed this criticism at length throughout the dissertation, but especially in Chapters Two and Five.

Luxemburg's reversal of the prevailing conception of masses and leaders has important implications for theorizing about the role of leaders in the class struggle. Luxemburg implies throughout her work and life that leaders must act in ways that affirm a vision of socialism based upon the primacy of the masses themselves. The masses are not a means for taking power. They are the end, the purpose and meaning of the struggle for socialism. It is because she criticizes the Marxist leadership for treating the masses as a means that I identify their leadership style as instrumental. In other words I distinguish between an instrumental

elitist form of leadership as against an interactionist democratic form of leadership.

Luxemburg offers a strong glimpse of the relationship between masses and leaders that goes beyond the static hierarchical conception of the major Marxist leaders of her time. It is a relationship that is dynamic and mutually transforming. Leaders bring into the picture their strengths, their understanding of history, class struggle, the dynamics of social change. They put to work their knowledge and experience of organization and the role of leadership itself. What is decisively different than the prevailing model however is that they do it in ways that are not diminishing, in ways that do not reproduce the traditional relationships of a class based society based on hierarchy and domination. They act in ways that facilitate, foster, and open up the sense of power and potential of the masses themselves.

What this means is that leaders must understand and work within the context of the dynamic developmental process which I have elaborated in Chapters Three and Four. They must work within the limits and possibilities established by the mutually transforming relationship between objective and subjective factors. In other words, leaders must consistently act with reference to the level of development of the masses themselves, their consciousness and their sense of empowerment. In Luxemburg's model, an awareness and

sensitivity to this dynamic unfolding process is a new and highly significant quality that leaders must cultivate.

Against the prevailing model of the leaders as science-guided practitioner Luxemburg brings leaders back to human dimensions. They make errors and mistakes, they make misjudgments and miscalculations. Neither leaders nor masses are treated as privileged from human error. Leaders themselves must grow, change and develop through reflection on their own experience including their relationship to the masses themselves. A mutually transforming dynamic relationship means that each side must be open to the other, each side must grow and learn through the shared situation. Leaders must become participants and develop through the struggle itself. A dynamic mutually transforming relationship means a commitment by leaders to recognize the potential of the masses themselves, and its reverse the masses look towards leaders when it is clear that leaders are committed to acting in ways that foster mass empowerment.

As in any relationship Luxemburg sees tension and problems between leaders and masses at different historical junctures. There are moments when the masses are clearly reactionary and leaders are progressive; there are moments when leaders are reactionary and the masses are progressive. The working out of this relationship is a problem of great magnitude within Marxism. Luxemburg does not provide all of the answers or specifics but what she does do is make the

relationship problematic--calling it into question within the prevailing Marxism.

In treating masses and leaders in a mutually transforming dynamic relationship, Luxemburg opens the way for seeing various configurations that this relationship can take in different historical moments. Leaders do not disappear in Luxemburg's glimpse of a democratic cultural Marxism. They remain constant elements whose importance and role depends upon circumstance. What becomes important to her however is the consistency of their commitment and action with regard to the empowerment of the masses themselves.

My elaboration of this democratic-interactionist type of Marxist political leader is based on Luxemburg's writings of what I have called the later historical period, from 1914 until her death in 1919. During this period Luxemburg is compelled by the events of her own time to give much greater weight and attention to the role of leaders than she did in the earlier historical period. These events include the devastating experience of World War I in 1917, a moment of potentially revolutionary transformation in the Spartacist Revolt of 1918 in Germany, and the victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917. Each of these historical moments provide an important occasion for Luxemburg to theorize about the relationships between leaders and masses.

In keeping with the parameters of this study, I will not attempt to judge the truth of the historical issues that

are raised by these events. They are for me a backdrop to looking at the broader question of Luxemburg's conception of the relationship between masses and leaders.

Marxist Leadership in a Period of Crisis: Maintaining Hope and a Glimpse of Democratic Possibilities

World War I represented perhaps the greatest personal and political challenge to Luxemburg's continued faith in the primacy of the masses. Though highly critical of the German leaders before the war, Luxemburg witnesses and testifies to the complete capitulation of the leadership of the German Social Democratic Party, and the International itself to the goals of imperialist and nationalist expansion. Even more significantly from the point of view of her analysis is the total capitulation of the masses themselves. Their passive acceptance of the war time ideology of nationalism and imperialism signifies to Luxemburg that for the moment they have been swept up in the dreams of the ruling class and abandoned their own critical historical perspective. In response to these events Luxemburg writes the Junius Pamphlet from her cell in prison in the spring of 1915.[1] She also writes a notable series of letters which provide important background insights into the period and her state of mind.[2]

While clearly shaken by the events of this period I stress that Luxemburg remains consistent in her argument for the primacy of the masses. Her theoretical analysis which sees change as the mutually transforming dynamic between

objective and subjective conditions becomes an important resource for her to withstand the difficulties of this period.

Because she has a different view of the masses than virtually everyone on the left, including her former friends and allies in the left wing of the German Social Democratic party, she takes a different view of the crisis. While recognizing the intensely reactionary climate that has shaped the beliefs and actions of the masses, she still affirms their capacity to become class conscious and capable of resistance.

Important to her evaluation of the historical possibilities in this kind of period is having a theoretical perspective which sees history not in linear terms but as moments marked by progressive as well as reactionary possibilities. She does not romanticize the masses, but neither does she write them out of history. Through a process of reflection and self criticism she sees the possibility for the masses to recognize and rectify mistakes, reemerging with greater clarity and consistency. Crisis is both an end and a beginning that may contain within it the seeds of new possibilities.

She sees a stronger more interventionist role for leaders in a period of reaction than when the masses are clearly moving. In this kind of period leaders must carry on the struggle virtually alone. They must become the repositories of a vision of socialism which the masses have

temporarily abandoned. More importantly they must act in ways that keep open the possibilities for the development of class consciousness and a sense of collective empowerment.

While recognizing the extremely unfavorable objective historical conditions, Luxemburg forcefully argues that leaders must do what they can to keep alive the possibilities of mass struggle. They must translate their potential consciousness into concerted action. First and foremost leaders must struggle to maintain existing democratic liberties in the hope that this will provide a forum for critical discussion of the war, imperialism, and the state. Without romanticizing the existing situation, she still argues that even under the most desperate conditions leaders can act. Through their actions they must attempt to keep open historical possibilities.

Luxemburg's conception of the reversal of the relationship between masses and leaders is the framework from which she continues her criticism of the German SPD leaders that she developed in the early period. They have taken their scientistic instrumental views one step further during the war and completely sacrificed the class struggle for the sake of appearing to be skillful players within the existing parliamentary system. Consistent with her earlier criticism she sees them as willing to seek any accommodation in order to maintain institutional power within the state.

Despite the continued formal existence of the SPD, its phenomenal form, she sees its vitalizing spirit, the

conscious opposition to the reactionary politics of the ruling classes no longer animating it. Though Luxemburg is clearly critical of the SPD in 1906, this post-mortem goes much further in pointing to the logic of a policy that sees the achievement of immediate tangible gains as more important than the overall health and importance of the class struggle.

> The social democracy did not adopt the wrong policy --it had not policy whatsoever. It has wiped itself out completely as a class party with a world conception of its own, has delivered the country, without a word of protest to the fate of the imperialist war without and the dictatorship of the sword within.[3]

Luxemburg argues that the SPD leaders have cut themselves off from the very root sources of their own existence. They have abandoned the masses to the repressive and imperialistic politics of the German state. They have demonstrated themselves to be a leadership without any recognition of their historic relationship to the mass movement.

> But more in refuting the existence of the class struggle, the social democracy has denied the very basis of its own existence. What is the very breath of its body, if not the class struggle, the fundamental principle of its existence.[4]

Insisting here on the reversal of the relationship between leaders and masses, socialist leaders did not create or invent the class struggle. Marxist leaders must recognize that their authority and power derive exclusively from their historic role as the embodiment of the potentials and possibilities of the masses themselves.

> How is this miracle to be understood? The class struggle is known to be not a social democratic invention that can be arbitrarily set aside for a period of time whenever it may seem convenient to do so. The proletarian class struggle is older than the social democracy, is an elementary product of class society.[5]

In abandoning the masses the SPD leadership has become not a significant force for resisting oppression but an integral part of the state apparatus. They have willingly let go of whatever legal safeguards the masses might have employed to resist the policies of the war and the repression at home. These leaders have become instruments of stabilizing the status quo and the existing class relationships.

> ...it [the SPD leaders] has handed over every weapon that the working class possessed that might have empowered the masses to mobilize public opinion in their own direction, to exert an effective pressure of peace. By assuring militarism of peace and quiet at home, the social democracy has given its military rulers permission to follow their own course without even considering the interests of the masses has unleashed the most unbridled imperialistic tendencies.[6]

This is leadership who sees its role not as one of empowering the masses but of delivering them to the camp of the government, Luxemburg is especially critical of their willing support of the repression of democratic rights and liberties. This acquiescence on the part of the leadership has undermined the will of the masses themselves to openly resist the authorities.

> The passive submission of the social democracy to the present state of siege and its vote for war credits without attaching the slightest conditions thereto, its acceptance of civil peace, has demoralized the masses, the only existing pillar of

> German constitutional government, has strengthened the reaction of its rulers, the enemies of constitutional government.[7]

Luxemburg addresses those within the SPD who are themselves disoriented by this complete turn around of positions and principles that the party had enunciated for years. She implies that the theoretical positions of the party on the war, imperialism and class struggle were never problematic. Its practice, however in the past and present subverted its principles. She excoriates the SPD leadership for its excessively instrumental policies that result in not merely compromising principles, but abandoning them. Those leaders who remain connected to the Marxist legacy must renew their own faith in these historic possibilities. Quoting Marx she makes the link with previous generations of Marxist leaders who felt abandoned by the party and by the masses themselves.

> With the strengthened confidence that he must win, he is more than ever certain that he and his party need no new principles, that events and conditions must finally come to meet them. [No reference to Marx's work given].[8]

She encourages these potential new leaders to recognize their links to the past. History is not a linear process without its backward and difficult moments. Leaders cannot look to the external situation for all of the answers that they need. They must take consolation in a recognition that their experience of demoralization and isolation is one that has been shared by others who have been part of the struggle to achieve socialism.

> Gigantic as his problems are his mistakes. No firmly fixed pain, no orthodox ritual that holds good for all times, shows him the path that he must travel. Historical experience is his only teacher, his Via Dolorosa to freedom is covered not only with unspeakable suffering, but with countless historical mistakes.[9]

To those leaders in despair the recognition that history is not linear but an uneven process is a source of hope. They can begin to conceive of a future in which other possibilities might emerge.

A first step towards the regeneration of both masses and leaders in this period is the engagement with the past, the reflection on history as a source of rectification for the future. Luxemburg addresses first the leaders who must take primary responsibility for the failures of this period.

> But the German social democracy was not only the strongest body, it was the thinking brain of the International as well. Therefore the process of self-analysis and appraisement must begin in its own movement, with its own case. It is honor bound ... to proceed with the unsparing criticism of its own shortcomings.[10]

Similarly she argues that not only leaders, but the masses themselves, must open up this process of self-reflection on their experience. Here again we see a link between objective and subjective factors. Objectively what is required is that masses and leaders chart a new course. She implies that they will be unable to do this without confronting themselves, their past and their mistakes. Subjective reflection on past experience is as necessary to achieving change as externally directed action.

> This unsparing self-criticism is not only a fundamental necessity but the highest duty of the

> working class as well. We have on board the highest treasure of humanity, and the proletariat is their ordained protector. While capitalist society, shamed and dishonored, rushes through the bloody orgy to its doom, the international proletariat will gather the golden treasures that were allowed to sink to the bottom in the wild whirlpool of the world war in the moment of confusion and weakness.[11]

Luxemburg here suggests that reflection on lived experience is the main way in which masses and leaders renew their historic commitments to socialist ideas and principles. This process of self-reflection opens up the personal and political links of the oppressed themselves to their own history and lived experience, "the golden treasures." It provides a means for leaders to examine their own mistakes. Such activity does not wipe out the past or set everything right, it does make it possible however to move on, to build on these lessons and act.

Because Luxemburg sees social change as a dynamic interaction between subjective and objective historical conditions however she does not see the masses as static unchanging objects. Though passive and reactionary at the moment she does not see this consciousness as necessary permanent and unchangeable. Both masses and leaders still have the potential to act in ways that renew the possibility of class struggle.

While calling upon both of these groups to engage in self-criticism, she places a special responsibility on the existing parliamentary leadership to act, partially because they are strategically placed to reach the widest audience. First and foremost they must use whatever resources exist to

renew debate, discussion, and action on the issues of the war and imperialism.

> Thus the parliamentary stage, for instance, the only far reaching and internationally conspicuous platform could have become a mighty motive power for the awakening of the people, had it been used by the social democratic representatives to proclaim loudly and distinctly, the problems and demands of the working class.[12]

Similarly she argues leaders must act in ways that fundamentally challenge the passivity and amorality encouraged by the ruling class. Leaders must become catalysts of renewed class struggle.

> The centuries have proven that not the state of siege, but relentless class struggle, is the power that awakens the spirit of self-sacrifice, the moral strength of the masses ...[13]

Luxemburg recognizes that in reactionary moments Marxist leaders who remain committed to a vision of social change from below can feel extremely isolated. Attacked by the government and by the masses themselves their choices go unrewarded and unrecognized in their own historical period. Thus she returns over and over to the examples of Bebel and William Liebnicht who resisted the temptation to be popular by renouncing their principles. They sustained their vision of the potentiality of the masses in the face of the evidence of the immediate empirical moment. Quoting from Liebnicht's diary:

> The hurricane of human passions, breaking, bending destroying all that stands in its way... At such a time what is the will and strength of the individual? Especially, when one feels that one represent a tiny minority, that one possesses no firm support in the people itself.[14]

Luxemburg acknowledges that leaders in this situation have limited powers. They cannot guarantee that their actions will produce the desired aims. However she strongly argues that leaders have an obligation to act, even if they do not succeed. In sustaining their principles they stand out as exemplary models for future generations.

> 'Would the masses have supported the social democracy in its attitude against the war?' That is a question that no one can answer. But neither is it an important one... They go into the fight, whenever necessity demands it, without previous assurance of success.[15]

What is important is upholding principles and ideals which sustain a link with the past and future. Moral action, action based on principle, has its own internal rewards. Quoting Liebnicht and Bebel, Luxemburg writes:

> 'A party that is to conquer the world must bear its principles aloft without counting the dangers that this may bring. To act differently is to be lost.'[16]

Luxemburg's conception of the leader has almost an existential quality. People of consciousness have an obligation to act despite potential negative repercussions, despite the possibility of failure. Without sustaining these ideals they spiritually die and the struggle dies with them. The struggle lives on primarily through the consciousness of those who carry it from one generation to the next. They leave an historical legacy.

> They [Liebnicht and Bebel] stuck to their posts, and for forty years the social democracy lived upon the moral strength with which it had opposed a world of enemies.[17]

Luxemburg argues that had the German social democratic leaders held on to this concept of class struggle and acted upon it they too could have sparked the masses to resist. The strength of the convictions of the leaders would have communicated itself to those among the masses who were more open to conscious reflection. These forces might have constituted the beginnings of a mass movement against the war and the state of siege.

> The voice of our party would have acted as a wet blanket on the chauvinistic intoxication of the masses. It would have preserved the intelligent proletariat from delirium, would have it [sic] more difficult for imperialism to poison and to stupefy the minds of the people. The crusade against the social democracy would have awakened the masses in an incredibly short time.[18]

In moments of crisis Luxemburg still puts her faith in the dynamic process between the objective and subjective dimensions of the struggle which allow for the possibility of the masses to become class conscious and capable of action. She treats the possibility of renewal of struggle as not simply determined by objective conditions, but by the conscious choices and actions that people take.

In moments of crisis, however, Luxemburg gives the more important role in facilitating and making possible the class struggle to leaders. When the masses have become reactionary it is up to leaders to carry on the historical and theoretical legacy of Marxist ideas and to act in ways that open up collective possibilities for mass consciousness and action.

Against the scientistic prevailing model of the Marxist leader, Luxemburg recognizes that leaders too go through crisis, experience despair and a sense of isolation. For them to assume this difficult role of catalyst they must reconnect with their own strengths, confront their mistakes, learn from past as well as present experience. Thus for Luxemburg the process of leaders engaging in self-reflection and reflection on the past becomes an important step in renewing the class struggle. Reflection is not subordinate to action but an important moment in its own right. This is consistent with Luxemburg's emphasis on inner processes, consciousness, as well as outer external ones, action.

Equally important is that leaders must take concrete steps which continue to open up the possibilities and potentials for mass action. Leaders have an obligation to keep open the institutional means for resistance and the arena for critical debate and discussion. Luxemburg does not delude herself that immoral and irresponsible action can be wiped out by good deeds and good intentions. Even in moments of crisis Luxemburg remains cognizant of the subjective factor in history. While recognizing the historical limits on the possibilities of class struggle during this period yet she expresses the hope that new conditions may bring forth renewed possibilities. In the meantime a historical perspective and a consciousness of the process through which both masses and leaders change can

create hope, or at least allow those who remain committed to survive.

A Democratic Marxist Leadership in a Period of Revolution

In this section I will look at how Luxemburg applied her democratic Marxist model of leadership during a time of revolution. I will examine Luxemburg's theory of leadership during what has been called the Spartacist Revolt in Germany. This revolt took place in early November 1918 and was crushed in January of 1919, at which time Luxemburg was murdered with her comrade Karl Liebknicht.

Specifically, in this chapter I will show just how Luxemburg's writings of 1918 and 1919 added a major contribution to a democratic-interactionist model of a Marxist political leader. To her this type of leader remains committed to a theory in which the masses are not only the dominant main agents of change but its primary force. Luxemburg retains this commitment to the primacy of the mass struggle until the end of her life.

The Spartacist Revolt also raises important challenges to Luxemburg's reversal of the relationship between leaders and masses. In tangible material terms the revolt failed. While achieving its initial aim of creating a constitutional form of government it was not able to achieve deeper structural changes. Some interpreters have even gone further in criticizing the revolt as nothing more than an abortive attempt by a group of malcontent dissidents. Even

more disturbing to some interpreters, Luxemburg and her comrade Karl Liebnicht were murdered as a direct response to the Spartacist movement of which they were important founders and spokespersons.

Yet despite Luxemburg own recognition of the problems and shortcomings inherent in the movement Luxemburg insists until her death that its significance lay in precisely its origins as a genuine expression of the masses' own recognition of their historical conditions of oppression. She continues to assert the importance of leaders affirming and working within the context of a living changing dynamic mass movement. It is these activities from below, rather than the policy changes being considered at the top that carry within them the genuine seeds of revolutionary potential.

Luxemburg's interpretation of this revolt is consistent with her overall theory of social change which I have elaborated. Leaders must consistently and continuously define their own actions in relationship to the struggles and reflections of the masses themselves.

Luxemburg's belief in the unpredictable, uneven nature of the historical process is rewarded at the immediate close of the war. Out of what appears to be nowhere the masses act upon the grievous hardships that they suffered during the war. After a series of large demonstrations which then lead to economic strikes the Kaiser abdicates and the parliamentary wing of the SPD is thrust

into power. As this movement unfolds the masses create workers and soldiers councils modeled after the Russian soviets of 1917. These councils claim the right to be part of a process of creating a new democratic German constitution.[19]

During the final period of her life, Luxemburg expresses even more strongly and clearly her commitment to the empowerment of the masses as the primary agents of change. To start with, she asserts that:

> In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry out its interests, the interests of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interest of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by a great majority of the working people themselves.[20]

Luxemburg distinguishes between what she sees as the differences between a socialist revolution and all other types of revolution. In all other types of revolution the masses are simply used by the leadership, they are "an instrument" to carry out its aims. In a socialist revolution the masses consciously define their own aims and purposes. Only they can achieve the kind of transformation that is in their interests. Here we see a distinction between her perspective and that of the other major leaders during her period. Though they define themselves as socialists, she still implies that they too see the masses as "merely instruments," as vehicles for achieving state power. In their view the party or the leadership represents

the "interests of the masses." Luxemburg makes clear that the party is no substitute for the masses. The masses must conduct this struggle themselves with leadership in a subordinate position.

Luxemburg explicitly makes this point against the assumptions of the majority SPD leadership. She also makes much the same point in her criticisms of the Bolsheviks in 1917. Socialism is not simply the use of the state apparatus in the interests of the workers. It is the fundamental transformation of all the basic social, political, economic, and cultural relations of capitalism. It is the creation of new institutions and relationships. This process can only, Luxemburg repeats, be brought about through the actions of the masses in which each and every worker's participation in the struggle is critical.

> Socialism will and cannot be created by decrees, nor can it be established by any government, however socialistic. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every proletarian. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created.[21]

This weighty statement resonates as both affirmation and warning to those engaged in the struggle for socialism down through the ages. Here once again, as she did in the Mass Strike, Luxemburg invokes the metaphor of the "chains of capitalism." These chains refer to the objective material conditions that workers experience in their own lives, the state, the employers which are organized as a system of institutions and social relations. In the Mass

Strike, the "chains" also however suggested the subjective dimension of the workers' existence, their passivity, fatal acceptance, of these relationships, their belief in the inevitability of this form of social organization.[22]

By insisting that socialism cannot be created from above by a political leadership that sits at the helm of the state, no matter how conscious or committed that leadership is, Luxemburg is arguing that neither these institutions nor the consciousness of the masses can be genuinely transformed without the very active participation of the masses in this process. Every proletarian must become engaged. This is demanded from the point of view of the sheer material forces and power at the disposal of the bourgeoisie, but it is also demanded from the point of view of liberating each and every proletarian to become conscious creative revolutionaries. Thus no leadership, no matter how good willed, can achieve this aim. The power and participation of the masses is a necessity.

Luxemburg continues to make this point very clearly even in the sphere that both parliamentary leaders and Lenin considers most lends itself to state action, the passage of laws to provide for the socialization of the economy.

> The economic overturn, likewise, can be accomplished only if the process is carried out by proletarian mass action. The naked decrees of socialization on by the highest revolutionary authorities are by themselves empty phrases. Only the working through of its own activity can make the word flesh.[23]

The phrase "the working through of its own activity," reiterates a struggle against objective and

subjective conditions. "The word becomes flesh," becomes real, tangible, and palpable when the masses at the grass roots create new institutions and social relations to replace the old ones. "The working through" also suggests a reflective process of developing consciousness and awareness. As workers struggle to create these new institutions they become more conscious and aware of the nature of the system that they are replacing. They come to understand in a more direct way what is capitalism. They also begin to see themselves differently in light of this struggle. These dynamics occur simultaneously through their own activity.

In the latter part of the passage, Luxemburg emphasizes the objective nature of capitalism which requires the struggle to be conducted by the masses on the grass roots local level.

> The workers can achieve control over production, and ultimately real power, by means of tenacious struggle with capital, hand to hand, in every shop with direct mass pressure, with strikes and with the creation of its own permanent representative organs.[24]

Only by seizing the means of production wherever capital manifests itself, in every local shop, is the power of capital laid to rest. Only when workers have installed their own representatives to direct the operation of these productive units do you have the beginnings of socialism. Socialism is a new form of society in which the workers are empowered to run the economic machinery and in the process transform it.

However, Luxemburg reiterates that the process of political struggle with capital at the grassroots is not divorced from the subjective transformation that is required. In order to effectively run a socialist economy the workers must achieve a new level of political and social awareness.

> They have to develop industriousness without the capitalist ethic, the highest productivity without slave drivers, discipline without the yoke of authority and the strictest self discipline, the truest public spirit of the masses are the moral foundations of socialist society, just as stupidity, egotism, and corruption are the moral foundations of a capitalist society.[25]

Simply winning power is not enough, though necessary. What is necessary is that those who now have the power act according to different principles and values than the bourgeoisie who came before. They must become people who came before. They must become people who act out of social commitment and a spirit of cooperation.

This however can take place only, Luxemburg argues, out of the experience of the struggle itself. No leadership can implant these values. The true recognition of what a socialist ethic or morality is comes through the course of struggle itself.

> All these socialist civic virtues, together with the knowledge and skills necessary to direct socialist enterprises, can be won by the mass of workers only through their own activity, their own experience.[26]

In this model of political leadership, therefore, a leader must recognize both the objective constraints and subjective possibilities in achieving these aims. In turn,

this reconstitution makes an alternative leader a midwife through a revolutionary process. This concept of midwife, or guide through the process, assumes a level of knowledge that the masses may not yet have acquired. But it also affirms that the leader is serving the masses' own primacy and struggle. To help is to nurture, foster, bring out a potential that already exists.

As midwife, Luxemburg's strong emphasis on the subjective as well as the objective dimension of the revolutionary process is evident in her responses to the first demonstrations organized by the workers and soldiers in November of 1918. The masses have acted in response to the brutal and miserable conditions of the war. Action is however only a first step. Still committed to a dialectical view of the struggle, equally important is that the masses confront their own mistakes and errors from the past. They must engage in self-criticism and reflection as a means of recognizing and rectifying their own mistakes.

> The revolution has begun. What is called for is not jubilation at what has been accomplished, nor triumph over the beaten foe, but the strictest self-criticism and iron concentration of energy in order to continue the work that has been begun.[27]

Luxemburg remains true to her conception that objective historical conditions establish limits as well as possibilities. Class consciousness cannot be created overnight. The masses who were yesterday murderers do not suddenly change into revolutionaries. Only through con-

tinuous struggle and reflection on their own lived experience can the masses clarify their goals and objectives.

> The reactionary state of the civilized world will not become a revolutionary people's state within twenty-four hours. Soldiers who yesterday as gendarmes of the reaction, were murdering the revolutionary proletariat in Finland, Russia and the Ukraine, and workers who calmly allowed this to happen have not become in twenty four hours supporters of socialism and clearly aware of its goals.[28]

As a midwife to social change Luxemburg's own sense of historical possibilities is changed by the activity and struggles of the masses themselves. She notes with enthusiasm the quickness with which the masses have developed a new awareness of their conditions of oppression and the degree to which their own latent energies and powers have been liberated through the struggle.

> Anyone who witnessed yesterday's mass demonstrations in the Siegasealle, who felt the adamant revolutionary conviction, this magnificent mood, this energy that the masses exuded, must conclude that politically the proletariat have grown enormously through their experience of recent weeks in the latest events. They have become aware of their power, and all that remains is for them to avail themselves of this power.[29]

Luxemburg insists that leaders who support the masses and are engaged in the mass struggle must recognize and respect this developmental process. In her lecture to the founding members of the Spartacist League she provides important insights into the sensibilities required of a new type democratic-interactionist leader. She argues that would-be leaders must consistently relate their own ideas and actions to the level of the masses' own consciousness

and readiness to act. Leaders can be teachers, but a type of empowering teacher who consistently recognize the strengths of the masses themselves.

To illustrate this perspective Luxemburg speaks to the young organizers who are founding the KPD, the Communist Party of Germany. She cautions these would be leaders to respect the self-changing process through which the masses are developing. The masses have already shown the innate capacity to create the objective historical forms which represent the antithesis of capitalism, the workers and soldiers councils.

> ...that on November 9th the first cry of the revolution, as instinctive as the cry of the newborn child, found the watchwords which will lead us to socialism: workers and soldiers councils.[30]

In this analysis Luxemburg brings to bare her own theoretical and historical overview. These workers' institutions have historical analogues in the experience of other working class movements, Russia most recently. Moreover they structurally embody an alternative form of economic and political decision making. While thus recognizing their objective historical significance by virtue of her knowledge of Marxist theory and history, she also recognizes the significance of the reality that it was workers who created these institutions out of reflection on their own conditions of oppression. These institutions were "instinctual" responses of the workers to their own conditions of oppression.

Luxemburg reiterates that despite the revolutionary potential of these institutions they will not automatically become revolutionary institutions. Before they can become alternative forms of economic and political rule the workers themselves must recognize their objective potential. Luxemburg once again strongly emphasizes the necessity of leaders to see and work with these emerging historical possibilities.

> ...it was no more than the first childish faltering footsteps of the revolution which has many arduous tasks to perform and a long road to travel before realizing the promise of its first watchwords.[31]

Similarly, she warns the Spartacists organizers that they should not expect too much too soon. Leaders must have patience and recognize that the development of consciousness is an uneven process.

> It was the first stage of a revolutionary overthrow whose main tasks lie in the economic field:...Its steps were as naive and unconscious as those of a child groping its way, not knowing which way it is going; for at this stage, I repeat, the revolution had a purely political character.[32]

Here again Luxemburg applies her conception of change to the concrete historical moment. Her sense of the dynamics of a revolutionary situation leads her to assert strongly the likelihood that this political movement will increasingly take an economic turn. At the same time she insists that it is only the masses who can make this happen. Only they have the power and the capacity to create the new institutions of socialism. By implication leaders who

attempt to create these conditions from above will not create socialism.

> Only in the last two or three weeks have strikes broken out quite spontaneously. Let us be clear: it is the very essence of this revolution that strikes will become more and more extensive, that they must become more and more the central focus, the key aspect of the revolution...The struggle for socialism has to be fought out by the masses, by the masses alone, breast to breast against capitalism, in every factory, by every proletarian against his employer. Only then will it be a socialist revolution.[33]

Luxemburg is very clear about the significance of the German "soviets" as challenging in its very essence the economic and political relations of capitalism. They signify the potential abolition of the bourgeois state with its separation from society and its illusory independence from economic life. They reconstitute the unity between economic and political decision-making. They reintegrate the political functions of decision-making with those of administration.

> We have to seize power, and the problem of the seizure of power poses the question: what does each of the workers and soldiers councils in all Germany do, what can it do, what must it do? The power is there! We must undermine the bourgeois state by putting an end everywhere to the cleavage in public powers, to the cleavage between legislative and executive power. These powers must be in the hands of the workers and soldiers councils.[34]

At the same time that this long range view presses the leadership forward to act, to maximize this "soviet" possibility, she raises the question: what can be done? The leadership's action must take into account the level of readiness and awareness of the masses. Objectively the

"power is there," subjectively the workers might not experience themselves as ready to take power. It is in this gap between the objective possibilities of the revolutionary process and the subjective awareness of the workers that the leaders find their calling. And even within the Spartacist grouping there is not a clear understanding of this.

> But before these steps can be taken the members of our own party and the proletarians in general must be educated. Even where workers and soldiers councils exist there is a lack of consciousness of the purpose for which they exist.[35]

Luxemburg remains highly optimistic about the possibilities inherent within the process. Neither leadership nor masses are fixed static points. Both must learn. But the process of learning is inherent within the experience of struggle.

> The masses of the workers who are already organized in workers and soldiers councils are miles away from having adopted such an outlook and then only isolated proletarian minorities are clearly conscious of their tasks. But this is not a lack, but rather the normal state of affairs. The masses must learn how to use power by using power. There is no other way to teach them.[36]

The commitment to acting within an ongoing autonomous process of mass struggle from below is the main difference between Luxemburg's model of the Marxist leader and that of her counterparts. Leadership even when it "knows better" cannot and should not attempt to preempt the process. It is through the use of power, through its own trials and errors, that the masses learn what is necessary, "there is no other way to teach them." She explicitly acknowledges this difference. Revolution must come from

below, leaders must work with the masses as they create the new institutions and relationship of socialism out of their own struggles and reflections on those struggles.

> We must work from beneath, and this corresponds to the mass character of our revolution which aims at the foundation of the social constitution; it corresponds to the character of the present proletarian revolution that the conquest of political power must come not from above but from below.[37]

I have argued in the previous section on the leader as midwife that she takes the importance of the subjective dimension within the context of Marxist theory about as far as she can. She makes an absolute priority of the masses themselves developing class consciousness and a capacity for action from reflection on their own struggle. However, as a Marxist Luxemburg still places a good deal of emphasis on objective historical conditions. While the development of the class consciousness and capacity of the action is a priority, this process does not take place under chosen or optimal historical conditions. The class struggle inevitably unleashes yet new and more powerful attempts by the rulers to suppress it.

Under these kinds of crisis-like conditions there are moments when leaders must intervene more strongly. As during World War I, here too they must frequently become the chief initiators of action and struggle, they must draw the lessons for the masses out of their own historical and theoretical knowledge and based on their previous experience. As leaders their chief responsibility becomes one of protecting and safeguarding the revolution against

growing dangers. Under these conditions Luxemburg stretches the concept of midwife to its limits. The fierce love of the leaders for the embryonic revolution must move them to become watchdogs or guardians over the movement.

In revolution, then, to be an alternative kind of midwife or watchdog is far from simple. The revolution does not wait. The forces of reaction grow in response to the ever growing threat of the masses. Thus time and timing is a central issue. Leaders do not have all day to make decisions or contemplate alternatives. They must act strongly and clearly with a recognition that timing is often a life and death issue.

Luxemburg, as can be seen in the next few quotes, puts more pressure on leaders than on the masses. The masses need time for exploring, for discovering, and even for making mistakes. Leaders who have defined themselves as Marxists and socialists should already know, based on their theoretical and historical knowledge, and experience what is required of them. They are expected to be more attuned to the dangers of the moment. This is the meaning of making the claim to be leaders, having a greater consciousness, awareness, and sensitivity to the dynamic historical process of the class struggle. Yet clearly Luxemburg sees a wide range of the present leadership failing in these responsibilities. She says so, again and again.

For one, we should note that Luxemburg is as unsentimental as Lenin about the objective forces that

threaten the revolution. More than that, like Lenin she calls for a dictatorship of the proletariat, the arming of the working class, the challenging of the centralized power of the state. A new kind of leader must also act in ways that mobilize the masses, that energize them to assault the state.

> Sweeping measures must be undertaken immediately. Clear and speedy directives must be given to the masses, to the soldiers faithful to the revolution. Their energy, their bellicosity must be directed towards the right goals. The wavering elements of the troops can be won for the sacred cause of the people by means of resolute and clear actions taken by the revolutionary bodies.[38]

Leaders must act in ways that alert the masses to the dangers of the situation. They must lose no time in mobilizing the masses for the struggle ahead. Without clear decisive direction the masses lose confidence, they "waver" in their loyalties. Under these extreme circumstances the masses look to leaders for clarity, direction, and strong guidance.

Unlike Lenin, perhaps, Luxemburg's strategy for disarming the state is not exclusively or primarily military. The military struggle is one aspect of a process that involves strengthening those local organs of workers' power that have already emerged in the struggle, the workers and soldiers councils. Luxemburg calls upon the Social Democratic government to act clearly and swiftly to strengthen these institutions.

> Every step, every act by the government must, like a compass, point in the direction, re-election and improvement of the workers and soldiers councils so

> that the first chaotic and impulsive gestures of their formation are replaced by a conscious process of understanding the goals, the tasks and methods of the revolution.[39]

While not ignoring the state as an important resource of class struggle and transformation, she argues that the role of leaders is to use the state to strengthen the grassroots organs of revolution. Luxemburg argues that leadership must clearly and decisively use its power for this purpose. She calls upon the governing Social Democratic leadership to use its power to decentralize and democratize the state.

> ...regularly scheduled meetings of these representatives of the masses and the transfer of real political power from the small meeting of the Executive Council into the broader bases of the Workers and Soldiers Councils.[40]

Luxemburg challenges these Social Democratic leaders who define themselves as Marxists to act on the basis of these principles. They must prove their commitment to the mass struggle through each act on a day-to-day basis in facilitating the transfer of power to the masses themselves.

Luxemburg calls upon the leaders of the workers and soldiers councils and the parliamentary socialists in the government to act decisively to defend the revolution. Her tone as well as the substance of her remarks conveys the urgency with which she feels that the revolution is endangered by inaction. Leaders have a responsibility to foresee and act in ways that protect the revolution from these hostile external forces.

> Act! Act! Courageously, resolutely, constantly, that is the 'accursed' duty and obligation of revolutionary chairman and sincere socialist party leaders.[41]

Luxemburg is challenging, pushing the leaders to live up to their moral and political obligations to the masses. As leaders they have duties and obligations to do everything within their power to assure the survival of the revolution. They must act and not sit around and wait for things to take their course.

She calls upon these leaders to take clear concrete steps to empower the masses in ways that will help them defeat the growing forces of the counterrevolution.

> Disarm the counter-revolution, arm the masses, occupy all positions of power. Act quickly! The revolution obliges. Its hours count as months, its days as years in world history. Let the organs of the revolution be aware of their high obligations![42]

In contrast to this democratic-interactionist model of the Marxist leader that is suggested here, Luxemburg develops a scathing criticism of what she argues is the purely instrumental approach of the SPD leaders. During this period she sees them increasingly as a leadership whose single overriding concern is the reestablishment of their control over the masses. They attempt to use all of the resources at their disposal to discredit the mass movement and reaffirm the centrality of parliamentary means of social change.

Luxemburg points out the extent to which the SPD has become an instrument of repression rather than class struggle. These leaders vilify the masses as anarchists,

terrorists who care about nothing but violence. Luxemburg suggests that like the bourgeoisie these leaders bear the loss of the institutional and ideological underpinnings of their own power.

> Law! Order! Order! Law! This is the cry resounding from all sides, in all proclamations of the government; this is the joyous echo from all the bourgeois camps. A strident bourgeoisie is concerned for its fire proof safes, its property and its profits--the workers government is tolerating and participating in this....[43]

As the revolution unfolds the fear of the established leadership takes a very extreme form. Luxemburg makes clear that it sets about a deliberate campaign to defame and stir up the hatred of the masses against the Spartacist League and their leaders. Luxemburg sees this campaign as one more sign of the terror of the leaders of being displaced by a revolutionary process. She puts them in exactly the same camp as the most reactionary elements of the society.

> Crucify it shout the capitalists, trembling for their cash boxes.
>
> Crucify it! shout the petty bourgeois, the officers, the anti-semites, the press lackeys of the bourgeoisie, trembling for their fleshpots under the class rule of the bourgeoisie.
>
> Crucify it! shout the Scheidemanns, who like Judas Iscariot, have sold the workers to the bourgeoisie and tremble for their pieces of silver.[44]

Luxemburg's criticisms of the Independent Socialists during this period is equally as harsh against that of the governing Parliamentary Socialists. If Parliamentary Socialists of the SPD openly display their hostility to the

Spartacists and the mass struggle, the Independents express their fears of mass struggle by withdrawal and inaction. The more intellectual among them justify this withdrawal by hiding behind what Luxemburg sees as the fig leaf of their "scientific analysis." These differences suggest something about the way intellectuals as opposed to party bureaucrats may respond in crisis. The latter grasps the machinery of power to use for its purposes, the former tend to retreat behind words and theory. Neither group can sustain a commitment to the mass struggle.

Luxemburg highlights the tendency of the USPD intellectuals to use theory as a justification for retreat. She addresses their unwillingness to take a clear principled stand during the war and the period leading up to the Spartacist Revolt. Once again she implies that a scientistic reading of Marx is in a situation of crisis a conscious act of "bad faith."

> ...the sophistries and pseudoscience of those 'little revolutionaries' of the USPD who, in every fight, look only for pretexts of retreating.[45]

Luxemburg argues that a true Marxist leader combines within him or herself precisely this willingness to recognize the mutually transformed interaction between theoretical reflection with active participation within the mass movement. Luxemburg argues that Marx himself offered a model of this kind of democratic-interactionist leader.

> Just as in Marx himself the roles of the acute historical analyst and bold revolutionary, the man of ideas and the man of action were inseparably bound up, mutually supporting and complementing each

> other, so for the first time in the history of the labor movement the socialist teachings of Marxism united theoretical knowledge with revolutionary energy, the one illuminating and stimulating the other. Both are in equal measure part of the essence of Marxism, each separated from the other transforms Marxism into a sad caricature of itself.[46]

Luxemburg's reading of Marx's life support a concept of the intellectual as a whole human being who has the powers of action as well as thought, of a capacity for reflection as well as commitment. These capacities enrich and strengthen one another, "they are inseparably bound up," mutually supporting and complementing one another. Action generates experience upon which to reflect, reflection leads to further action. Luxemburg insists, of course, that movements for social change are also strengthened by this mutually reinforcing relationship between theory and action.

The above passage suggests that intellectuals who remain outside of the sphere of action are losing an important source for stimulating their energy and vitality, the source of their own commitment as intellectuals. Marxism becomes a "caricature" significantly diminished by this artificial separation.

Luxemburg shows her own strong distaste for these intellectuals who refuse to allow themselves to become engaged. Their isolation within the confines of parliamentary or mental routines has taken its toll on their elan, spirit, vitality, capacity for deep feeling and commitment.

> Know thy works, that thou are neither cold nor hot: I would thou were cold or hot.

> So then because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot
> I will spue thee out of my mouth.
> Revelation, iii, 15-16[47]

Luxemburg refuses to view the Spartacist revolt only as a "defeat." She returns to the broader framework of history to understand its significance. While recognizing the failures of the Spartacist revolt, its inner shortcomings as well as the limits imposed by historical conditions, Luxemburg insists that this effort like many of which have come before it, must be judged historically. Luxemburg accepts defeat as an inevitable part of a long historic struggle to achieve socialism.

> What does the whole history of modern revolutions and of socialism show us?...The path of socialism, as far as revolutionary struggle are considered, is paved with sheer defeat.[48]

She remains firmly wedded to her view that the struggle must be seen historically and developmentally. Each attempt realizes some essential goal which provides a new starting place for another generation.

> Where would we be today <u>without</u> these "defeats" from which we have drawn historical experience, knowledge, power, idealism.
>
> ...We are standing on precisely those defeats, <u>not a one</u> of which we could do without...[49]

Luxemburg emphasizes here more than the objective tangible material changes that emerge out of the struggle. She dwells on the importance of leaving behind a historical legacy of knowledge and experience of creating new ideals which become the seeds for the next struggle.

Though clearly recognizing the failures of leadership in this revolution, her primary emphasis remains on the role of the masses, their potential to recreate the struggle. Luxemburg expresses her faith that the masses will rise again and create a new leadership. What is important is the struggle of the masses.

> The leadership failed. But the leadership can and must be created anew by the masses out of the masses. The masses are the crucial factor; they are the rock on which the ultimately victory of the revolution will be built.[50]

She affirms this simply until the end of her last great struggle, a few days before she is murdered. Her closing remarks at the end of the revolution silhouette the living voice of the revolution against the forces of repression and counterrevolution.

> I was, I am, I shall be.[51]

The revolution lives even when it is not visible, open, active. The revolution lives as the ongoing potential for the masses to struggle against their oppressive conditions. It lives on through the consciousness of history that can be passed on from generation to generation. Luxemburg holds consistently to her democratic-interactionist model of leadership and revolution. Leadership must recognize and affirm the primacy of the masses.

In this interpretation of Luxemburg's model of the democratic Marxist leader during a time of revolution I have emphasized the importance of a type of leadership that commits him or herself to a process of mass empowerment. I

have called this model of the leader a midwife, a person with useful knowledge who can empower others to take steps towards their own liberation. Such a person does not assume control of the process of social change but works in a dynamic mutually transforming relationship with the oppressed themselves. The goal of the leader is to strengthen the powers and capacities of the masses to achieve consciousness and a capacity for action.

What the leader has to offer is a theoretical and historical overview which understands the dynamics of the class struggle, the process through which the masses become agents on the one hand, and the dynamics of growth of counterrevolution on the other. This knowledge obliges leaders at times to intervene and act more strongly. Though not assuming control, they push as hard as they can to realize the potentialities inherent in the moment. This side of the leader I call a watchdog or guardian of the revolution.

Whether as midwives or watchdogs I see this democratic-interactionist model of the Marxist leader in stark contrast to the dominant type, a type of leader which sees socialism implemented by leaders by a hierarchical, bureaucratic centralized state. Such a model of social change necessarily involves claims of leaders to dominate and control the masses and their struggles.

Luxemburg remains committed until her last breath to the primacy of the masses themselves. Leaders can and must

play a role in the struggle. At moments that role becomes extremely important, but they must be clear about their priorities and goals. That goal must be to bring about socialism in a way that recognizes the relationships between ends and means. Socialism must be built out of the struggles of the masses themselves and their reflections on those struggles. Truly Marxist leaders must also be democratic, they must commit themselves to this historical possibility.

Leaders During a Transition to Socialism

In Luxemburg's famous pamphlet on the Russian Revolution of 1917, Luxemburg engages in a sympathetic but highly critical dialogue with the Bolsheviks on the problem of transition to socialism. While acknowledging the strengths of the Bolshevik party in its ability to carry forward the revolutionary process, she also sees significant and potentially fatal weaknesses in their policies after taking state power. Her dialogue with them continues to clarify and sharpen the differences between her concept of revolution and the role of leaders, and the concept of these most important and well known Marxist leaders of her time.

Luxemburg's criticism of the Bolshevik style of leadership is all important in light of the current criticism of Cultural-Marxist-Feminists, and others who are part of the broadly heterogenous cultural Marxist grouping. Lenin is perhaps the single most important figure whose conception and style of leadership has served as the

paradigm for a concept of Marxist leadership in our own historical period.[52]

These writings on the Russian Revolution, as I interpret them here, I see as the culmination of the glimpse that she gives us of an democratical cultural Marxist theory of social change. Here she argues for the reversal of masses and leaders even under the most difficult and challenging conditions such as the Russian Revolution. Thus she remains true to her singularly important contribution: without deep changes in the consciousness and the growing capacity of the masses for self-rule, the creation of liberating institutions and social relationships is impossible. For Luxemburg the process of building socialism, she argues once more, is as much the liberation of the subjective powers and potentials of the masses as it is the creation of new material forms; the two are inextricably linked together.

In Luxemburg's opening remarks in her pamphlet written from prison in 1918, she assesses the overall significance of the Russian Revolution to the socialist parties and working class movements all over the world. She provides an overall framework for applying her democratic Marxist model of social change to the actual process of seizing state power through a political revolution.

While sympathetic to the gigantic problems faced by the Russian experiment, she argues that uncritical praise alone cannot help the revolution. While critics must be

supportive, they must also be clear about the problems which are facing the leadership and the revolution. Once again Luxemburg implicitly attacks a scientistic view of leaders and revolution. The revolution cannot be perfect; it is an experience which has implied within it the potential for mistakes and errors.

> Clearly, not uncritical apologetics, but penetrating and thoughtful criticism is alone capable of bring out the treasures of experiences and teachings.[53]

Revolution is not finished product, but an ongoing developmental process. Those who criticize and evaluate it must sympathetically look at the experience, but also honestly reflect on its shortcomings. Here too she appeals to those who judge the revolution, including the Bolshevik leaders themselves, to recognize the main dialectic at work, the dialectic between objective factors--the limits and possibilities that come out of the historical situation--and the subjective factors, the choices that leaders have within this context for fostering the process of social change.

> Dealing as we are with the very first experiment in proletarian dictatorship in world history (and one taking place at that under the hardest conceivable conditions, in the midst of the world-wide conflagration and chaos of imperialist mass slaughter, caught in the coils of the most reactionary military power in Europe, and accompanied by the most complete failure of the working class), it would be a crazy idea to think that every last thing done or left undone in an experiment with the dictatorship of the proletariat under such abnormal conditions represented the very pinnacle of perfection.[54]

In arguing implicitly that leaders do not have absolute control over the conditions of creating socialism, she is suggesting that only a leadership that is open--

capable of reflection, cognizant of its powers and simultaneous limits can lead the masses through such a process.

In looking at the actual policies and practices of the Bolsheviks, however, Luxemburg insists that the Bolshevik leadership is the antithesis of an open, thoughtful, self-reflective leadership. True to her earlier criticisms of them in 1903, she sees a leadership that is wedded to a view of its own perfection and absolute knowledge. Such a leadership, she argues, is creating the conditions for dictatorship and not the transition to genuine liberating socialism.

Luxemburg's implied model of the Marxist leader during a time of socialist transition is one that comes very close to facilitating a radically democratic state; a state which fully empowers the masses to take command of the overall process of socialist transformation.

> Lenin says: the bourgeois state is an instrument of oppression of the working class: the socialist state, of the bourgeoisie. To a certain extent, he says, it is only the capitalist state turned on its head.[55]

In other words there is no transformation of the state itself. In the bourgeois state, the masses are not developed beyond the point required by the ruling class in order to preserve their own domination. In the socialist state, on the contrary, the fullest development of the masses' capacity for political self-rule is its very essence, and reason for existence.

> This simplified view misses the most essential thing: bourgeois class rule has no need of the

> political training and education of the entire mass of people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not able to exist.[56]

For this reason, she is highly critical of Lenin's view that the changes in objective material conditions, the economy is the sole or at least the decisive precondition for the extension of democratic rights. Such a view of the relationship between leaders and masses is no less than a justification for dictatorship, the rule of the leaders over the masses.

> But socialist democracy is not something which begins with the promised land after the foundation of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the working people who, in the interim, have loyally supported a handful of socialist dictators.[57]

Lenin's view of social change as she articulates it here is from her perspective the equivalent of a dictatorship, a group of leaders who arrogate to themselves the power to create new economic relationships. Democracy is not a present to be awarded from above for good behavior, for tacit support and passive acceptance of the politics of socialist leaders.

Here Luxemburg reiterates her earlier formulation of the relationship between leaders and masses. Leaders, she implies do not come from nowhere; the party taking power comes into existence with the struggle of the masses against the conditions of capitalism. Socialist democracy and the seizure of power are the same phenomenon, simply one more step in the process of empowerment of the masses themselves.

> Socialist democracy begins simultaneously with the beginnings of the destruction of class rule and the construction of socialism. It begins at the very moment of the seizure of power by the socialist party. It is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat.[58]

Consistent with Luxemburg's earlier criticisms of the Bolsheviks' belief that the party with its knowledge and expertise can substitute for the direct experience of the masses, she deplores their cancellation of the 1918 constituent assembly and hence of the first election that formed the constituent assembly. Having initially recognized the process through which the masses manifested their capacity for self-rule in these elections, they then argue that the party can more adequately represent the masses than such "cumbersome institutions." Quoting Trotsky, Luxemburg disagrees strongly.

> 'Thanks to the open and direct struggle for governmental power,' he writes, 'the laboring masses acquire in the shortest time an accumulation of political experience, and they climb rapidly from step to step in their political development. The bigger the country and the more rudimentary its technical apparatus, the less is the cumbersome mechanism of democratic institutions able to keep pace with the development.'[59]

More specifically, she notes that Trotsky, a leading Bolshevik theoretician after 1917 holds that elected leaders as opposed to party leaders lose contact with the rapidly developing consciousness of the masses.

> According to Trotsky's theory, every elected assembly reflects once and for all only the mental composition, political maturity and mood of its electorate just at the moment when the latter goes to the polling place.[60]

The Bolshevik leaders' image of elections reflect their view that power always and inadvertently becomes concentrated in leaders. She ironically suggests that this frozen image of the relationship between leaders and masses does not capture what is in reality a dynamic, living, changing relationship.

> According to that, a democratic body is the reflection of the masses at the end of the electoral period, much as the heavens of Herschel always show us the heavenly bodies not as they were at the moment they sent out their light-messages to the earth from the measureless distances of space. Any living mental connection between the representatives, once they have been elected, and the electorate, any permanent interaction between one and another, is hereby denied.[61]

Using scientific images from the physical sciences to convey the opposing type of thinking as well as the substance, Luxemburg makes her point. The relationship between leaders and masses is represented by the Bolsheviks as a determinate constant like a still life photograph looking at the heavenly bodies. This static picture is held up as a picture of a present as if all of the dynamic factors, i.e., "the living mental connection," which shape the present do not exist.

Luxemburg rejects this lifeless model of the view of relationship between elected leaders and the masses. She insists that history reveals the opposite. Both leaders and masses are in continuous dynamic flux during periods of social revolution. These institutions become expressions of popular mood and opinion.

> Yet how all historical experience contradicts this! Experience demonstrates quite the contrary: namely, that the living fluid of the popular mood continuously flows around the representative bodies, penetrates them, guides them.[62]

Elected representatives, even those who are normally conservative, are brought to life in a moment of revolution. The power, strength of the masses becomes felt instantly on this level of society. Leaders do not remain untouched by the masses on the contrary they become open to ideas that under normal circumstances they would have shunned.

> How else would it be possible to witness, as we do at times in every bourgeois parliament, the amusing capers of the 'people's representatives,' who are suddenly inspired by a new 'spirit' and give forth quite unexpected sounds; or to find the most dried-out mummies at times comporting themselves like youngsters and the most diverse little Scheide-maennchen suddenly finding revolutionary tones in their breasts--whenever there is rumbling in factories and workshops and on the streets?[63]

Cognizant of the Bolshevik's suspicions of such an undirected uncontrollable relationship, Luxemburg raises the question whether it is better to substitute for this direct immediate relationship between masses and leaders representation through narrower, more ideological parties and sects.

> And is this ever-living influence of the mood and degree of political ripeness of the masses upon elected bodies to be renounced in favor of a rigid scheme of party emblems and tickets in the very midst of revolution.[64]

Luxemburg argues for the importance of the spontaneous living quality of a peoples' movement as the best means through which the internal logic of the revolution unfolds. It is precisely because the masses are so vibrant,

alive, passionate about the struggle that the representatives change so dramatically.

> On the contrary! It is precisely the revolution which creates by its glowing heat that delicate, vibrant, sensitive political atmosphere in which the waves of popular feeling, the pulse of popular life, work for the moment on the representative bodies in most wonderful fashion.[65]

She dramatically describes these changes:

> It is on this very fact, to be sure, that the well-known moving scenes depend which invariably present themselves in the first stages of every revolution, scenes in which old reactionaries or extreme moderates, who have issued out of parliamentary election by limited suffrage under the old regime, suddenly become the heroic and stormy spokesmen of the uprising.[66]

Luxemburg's continued commitment to the reversal of the relationship between masses and leaders in a period of revolutionary transition remains clear in her criticism of Trotsky. Parliament is the means through which the masses find and express their own voice, the process through which they develop the capacity for self-government. Thus she argues these institutions are not encumbrances; they are the means through which the masses express their strength and power. This strength bursts through the narrow straitjacket of sects, parties and so on.

> All this shows that the 'cumbersome mechanisms of democratic institutions' possesses a powerful corrective--namely, the living movement of the masses, their unending pressure. And the more democratic the institution, the livelier and stronger the pulse-beat of the political life of the masses, the more direct and complete is their influence--despite rigid party banners, outgrown tickets (electoral lists), etc.[67]

The masses do not disappear after the election, contrary to the image of Trotsky and friends. They remain as a living force which consistently shapes the representatives within these institutions. The more open and democratic the institutions the more responsive they are to the ideas and energies of the masses.

Implicit in this view of the relationship between masses and leaders is a strong proviso: this dynamic democratic relationship can only survive on the condition that the masses are encouraged to stay healthy, strong, vibrant. The transition to socialism depends upon an increasingly empowered mass.

Luxemburg sees the Bolsheviks' attempts to create total one party control not only in its cancellation of constituent assembly elections, but in its attempts to turn the soviet into the sole legitimate representative body.

> When all this is eliminated, [civil liberties and rights, elections etc.] what really remains? In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the true representation of the laboring masses.[68]

Similarly, she argues that the attempt to deny the broad middle classes from affecting political power by being given the right to vote will have dire consequences for the regime. By creating arbitrary unjust rules which do not take into account the actual conditions facing the masses, the regime is losing credibility with the masses.

> But when it comes to a suffrage law which provides for the general disenfranchisement of broad sections of society and, at the same time, is not in a

> position to make any place for them even economically within that framework, when it involves a deprivation of rights not as a concrete measure for a concrete purpose but as a general rule of long-standing effect, then it is not a necessity of dictatorship but a makeshift, incapable of being carried out in life. This applies alike to the soviets as the foundation, and to the Constituent Assembly and the general suffrage law.[69]

Not the privileged expressions of the party in power but the open democratic discussion of ideas from critics as well as supporters is the life giving element necessary for making the transition.

> Freedom for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party--however numerous they may be--is not freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.[70]

When fear and conformity become enforced by the party no institution remains untouched. Democratic freedoms cannot be maintained for the soviets and denied to all other sectors.

> But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled.[71]

As against the Bolsheviks' emphasis on the expertise of the party as science-guided practitioners she insists that socialism must be brought about through the expansion of legally enforced democratic rights. Civil liberties and civil rights are a condition of mass empowerment. They do not necessarily eliminate all of the problems connected to empowerment, i.e., eliminating the problem of internalized

domination, but they are the fundamentals which are the minimal conditions necessary for the masses to remain active in the process.

> We did not consider the destruction of the most important guarantees of a healthy public life and of the political activity of the laboring masses: freedom of the press, the rights of association and assembly, which have been outlawed for all opponents of the Soviet regime. For these attacks (on democratic right), the arguments of Trotsky cited above, on the cumbersome nature of democratic electoral bodies, are far from satisfactory. On the other hand, it is well known and indisputable fact that without a free untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of people is entirely unthinkable.[72]

Taking this one step further, Luxemburg sounds very much like James Madison in Federalist Paper 10, when she acknowledges that popular self-rule is imperfect. The masses are human. They may make errors and mistakes. Yet repression is much worse. She puts her faith in the creative process through which the masses act and reflect upon their experience, rather than the expertise of the non-elected leaders.

> To be sure, every democratic institution has its limits and shortcomings, things which it doubtless share with all other human institutions. But the remedy which Trotsky and Lenin have found, the elimination of democracy as such, is worse than the disease it is supposed to cure; for it stops up the very living source from which alone can come the correction of all the innate shortcomings of social institutions. That source is the active, untrammelled, energetic life of the broadest masses of the people.[73]

Similarly, she argues that dictatorships are oppressive not only because of the impoverished material conditions but because they destroy the conditions which

liberate the spiritual resources of the people, their ideas, passions, commitments. These, not the brilliant policies of the few are what she sees as the way in which underdeveloped countries lift themselves out of their misery.

> The public life of countries with limited freedom is so poverty-stricken, so miserable, so rigid, so unfruitful, precisely because, through the exclusion of democracy it cuts off the living sources of all spiritual riches and progress.[74]

Once again, Luxemburg strongly suggests, here that changes in material conditions cannot be separated from changes in consciousness. A leadership which empowers the masses liberates the suppressed potential of millions who can contribute to the building of a new social order.

The end result of repression is the spiritual death of the masses. What remains is an elite which has the only real power in the society.

> Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which the only bureaucracy remains as the active element.[75]

In clear terms Luxemburg depicts the resulting corruption of socialism. Instead of the active, empowered mass that she describes in her graphic picture of the relationship between leaders and masses during a period of revolution, what remains is "a mere semblance of life." Having anticipated the robotization of the masses in 1903 by a party bent on domination, she now sees this same process at work during the revolutionary transition. The party empowers a small elite of the working class to rubber stamp

its policies. The masses become acquiescent and quiet. Only leaders remain alert and active.

> Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously--at bottom a clique affair--a dictatorship, to be sure, Jacobin.[76]

The subjective transformation, the development of new values and new consciousness of empowerment cannot be separated from the objective transformation. This is Luxemburg's continuous message to the Bolshevik leaders.

> Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois class rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering etc. etc.[77]

While she asserts that Lenin knows this and repeats it to others, his actual practices achieve the opposite effect the demoralization of the masses. Authoritarian means produce a mass that becomes more alienated. Force alone will not work, only the broadest freedom can achieve this goal of moral and spiritual transformation.

> No one knows this better, describes it more penetratingly repeats it more stubbornly than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force, of the factory overseer, draconic penalties, rule by terror--all these things are but palliatives. The only way to rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralizes.[78]

Luxemburg comes close in this conception to modern day anarchism. Authoritarian leaders cannot achieve their

aims by force. They cannot force people who have for generations been socially and morally degraded to change through coercion. Only by giving them freedom to speak to participate to learn through the experience of self-government will the masses develop a new social consciousness and socialist culture.

Luxemburg's vision of the importance of democracy, freedom, participation as the means through which the masses become capable of becoming self-governing extends even to the most despised elements within society, the underclass or lumpenproletariat. Consistent with her earlier criticisms, she argues that the use of terror and force cannot solve the problems of lawlessness and anti-social behavior. Only through its opposite, the inclusion of these elements in the political process, can these elements change.

Just as life nurtures and creates life, terror and force degrade and dehumanize those who have become the lowliest victims of oppression.

> And yet, in this connection, too, terror is a dull, nay a two-edged sword. The harshest measures of martial law are impotent against outbreaks of the lumpenproletarian sickness. Indeed, every persistent regime of martial law leads inevitably to arbitrariness, and every form of arbitrariness tends to deprave society.[79]

The violence and lawlessness of leaders, their arbitrary use of power in the name of a higher rationality creates a climate and culture of lawlessness and violence. when there are no consistent rules for the exercise of power, the cynicism and depravity of the lumpenproletariat

increases. Luxemburg implies that socialist leaders, like bourgeois leaders, must respect the rule of law.

In perhaps her most radically democratic statement in her writings on the Bolshevik Revolution, Luxemburg envisions a self-healing and self-regulating metabolic process in which leaders virtually disappear. This vision sees a complete correspondence between means and ends, the liberation of the masses and the creation of new institutions and social relationships. Revolution becomes a process that is self-generating, ongoing, and creative.

> As in the free action of the sun's rays is the most effective purifying and healing remedy against infections and disease germs, so the only healing and purifying sun is the revolution itself and its renovating preamble, the spiritual life, activity and initiative of the masses which is called into being by it and which takes the form of the broadest political freedom.[80]

Reminiscent of her writings at the early period at the turn of the twentieth century, this use of organic imagery suggests the capacity of the body politic for healing itself. All that it requires is freedom. If leaders do not stand in the way of the dynamic process through which the masses become empowered, the body can cure itself of its illnesses. If they intervene in ways that cut off these inner resources, they will destroy the revolution from within.

Luxemburg clearly builds upon a model of a democratic-interactionist Marxist leader that she had developed in her early writings. During a period of revolution what is therefore important is openness and recognition of the

difficult process of creating never existing institutions and social relationships. Such an experiment requires a leadership that is open to reflection on the experience, rather than one which attempts to achieve predictability, calculability and control.

> The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is unfortunately--or perhaps fortunately--not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and juridical system is something which lays completely hidden in the mists of the future.[81]

Contrary to Lenin and Trotsky's unexamined presupposition, there are no ready made answers or formulas for social change that leaders can follow. What exists are a framework for seeing the general direction that change must take. Luxemburg goes even further. Marxism is more of a critique than a blueprint for change.

> What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signpost which indicate the general direction in which to look for the necessary measures, and the indications are mainly negative in character at that.[82]

The building of socialism, Luxemburg implies, is fundamentally a creative process which requires liberating the powers of intellect and creativity of all of the members of society. No leadership can claim by virtue of its mastery of books the kind of knowledge that is required to produce this new model of society.

> But when it comes to the nature of the thousand concrete, practical measures, large and small, necessary to introduce socialist principles into economy, law, and all social relationships there is no key in any socialist party program or textbook.[83]

Luxemburg envisions a type of leadership that is capable of accepting and fostering a creative process which does not guarantee perfection. What is important is the process itself: Liberating the powers and potentials of society to develop through the reflection on its own experience.

> Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts.[84]

Only life itself creates life. Hence a leadership that can nurture and foster this experiment will simultaneously open up the process through which mistakes can be corrected. What is important is that the leadership not destroy those very qualities in people which are necessary for this grand transformation.

In these writings on the Russian Revolution I interpret Luxemburg as having taken the furthest her view that social change must come out of the activities and reflections of the masses themselves. Leaders must use their power to continue and strengthen the process through which the masses themselves participate in the creation of new social institutions and social relationships. Luxemburg places her faith in the healing and redemptive possibilities of human liberation and freedom.

From this perspective she is extremely critical of the Bolshevik leaders. While fully recognizing and acknowledging the problems that they face, she still asserts more strongly than ever that force, coercion, terror will not consolidate the revolution. The use of such means for achieving control will subvert the revolution from within. Only by broadening the base of support through the expansion of democracy will the revolution survive its opposition.

Luxemburg brings to a strong climax her faith in the potentiality of human beings to change, grow, learn from their own experience. Socialism cannot be brought about by blueprint. It is fundamentally not a product of scientific planning with its attendant bureaucratic machinery. It is a democratic and creative process in which each and every person has the potential to make an important contribution.

Luxemburg's critique of leadership during a period of transition brilliantly anticipates many of the contemporary critics of existing socialist states. Her alternative provides a framework for seeing that another kind of Marxism is possible. This alternative does not subordinate democracy to the building of socialist institutions. Rather it sees democratization and socialism as very much the same process.

ENDNOTES

[1] Rosa Luxemburg, The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in German Social Democracy, reprinted in Rosa Luxemburg Speaks, Mary-Alice Waters, ed., pp. 257-332.

[2] See Stephen E. Bronner, ed., The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg (Boulder: Westview, 1978), pp. 160-256.

[3] Luxemburg, Junius Pamphlet, p. 314.

[4] Ibid., p. 297.

[5] Ibid., p. 295.

[6] Ibid., p. 300.

[7] Ibid., p. 299.

[8] Ibid., p. 262.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., p. 264.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 316.

[13] Ibid., p. 304.

[14] Ibid., p. 317.

[15] Ibid., p. 316.

[16] Ibid., p. 317.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., p. 318.

[19] The pamphlets which will be cited in the section on the Spartacist Revolution of 1918 come from two sources. The first is a collection of Luxemburg's writings edited by Dick Howard. The second is another selection of writings edited by Robert Looker. After giving the initial complete citation of these works I will not repeat the title of these collections. They will be referred to by the last name of the editors.

[20] Rosa Luxemburg, What Does the Spartacist League Want?, reprinted in Selected Political Writings, ed. Dick Howard (New York: Monthly Review, 1971), p. 368.

[21] Rosa Luxemburg, Our Program and the Political Situation, reprinted in Howard, p. 397.

[22] See Chapter Four.

[23] Luxemburg, What Does the Spartacist League Want?, in Howard, p. 369.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Rosa Luxemburg, In the Beginning, reprinted in Selected Political Writings: Rosa Luxemburg, ed. Robert Looker (New York: Grove, 1974), p. 253.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Rosa Luxemburg, What are the Leaders Doing?, reprinted in Looker, p. 292.

[30] Luxemburg, Our Program and the Political Situation, in Howard, p. 390.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 396.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., p. 405.

[35] Ibid., p. 406.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 407.

[38] Luxemburg, What are the Leaders Doing?, in Looker, p. 293.

[39] Luxemburg, In the Beginning, in Looker, p. 254.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Luxemburg, What are the Leaders Doing?, in Looker, p. 293.

[42] Ibid., pp. 293, 294.

[43] Luxemburg, In the Beginning, in Looker, p. 255.

[44] Luxemburg, What Does the Spartacist League Want?, in Howard, p. 375.

[45] Rosa Luxemburg, Rebuilding the International, reprinted in Looker, p. 269.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Rosa Luxemburg, Either/Or, reprinted in Howard, p. 336.

[48] Rosa Luxemburg, Order Reigns in Berlin, reprinted in Howard, p. 413.

[49] Ibid., pp. 413, 414.

[50] Ibid., p. 415.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Rosa Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, reprinted in The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism? with a foreword by Bertram Wolfe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1961), p. 28.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., p. 68.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid., p. 77.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., p. 60.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., pp. 60, 61.

[64] Ibid., p. 61.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., p. 62.

[68] Ibid., p. 71.

[69] Ibid., p. 66.

[70] Ibid., p. 69.

[71] Ibid., p. 71.

[72] Ibid., p. 67.

[73] Ibid., p. 62.

[74] Ibid., p. 71.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., p. 72.

[77] Ibid., p. 77.

[78] Ibid., p. 78.

[79] Ibid., p. 74.

[80] Ibid., pp. 74, 74.

[81] Ibid., p. 69.

[82] Ibid., pp. 69, 70.

[83] Ibid., p. 70.

[84] Ibid., p. 69.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LUXEMBURG'S DEMOCRATIC CONTRIBUTION TO A CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL MARXIST THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE: THE PRIMACY OF THE MASSES OVER LEADERS

In this dissertation I have constructed a new reading of the political writings of the European Marxist intellectual and political leader Rosa Luxemburg. I have singled out a dimension of her theorizing that has not been developed in other interpretations: the consistently strong clear emphasis throughout her life and work on the primacy of the masses as the decisive central agents of social change. This lifelong emphasis involves a radical transformation of what was assumed to be the correct relationship between masses and leaders within the dominant Marxist tradition of her own time. That tradition which is still dominant today she criticized as much too instrumental and scientistic. This tradition put leaders and centralized organizations first. It reduced the masses to science-guided instruments of leaders, as little more than necessary conditions for the rise of leaders, parties, and intellectuals to positions of political power.

In this dissertation, more specifically, Luxemburg's reversal led me to spell out an alternative theory of social

change that she implies throughout her theorizing. This alternative theory--elaborated here--goes very far in overcoming what Luxemburg viewed as the bureaucratic and elitist tendencies of the dominant model. Seen whole, her political writings offer a still unmatched conception of an alternative theory that emphasizes the capacity of the broad mass of people to become the primary agents of social change.

In shifting primacy to the masses Luxemburg brings to the fore a strong subjective dimension to Marxism. Social change cannot be predicted and controlled by parties and leaders. Social change becomes possible only when the masses themselves have developed a consciousness and awareness of their own conditions of oppression. Her theorizing on social change, which I have elaborated, revolves in my view around a dialectic between objective and subjective dimensions. This theory puts in first place the way in which social change develops out of the continuous mutual interaction between the objective historical conditions, the dynamics between the changing relationships of capitalist exploitation and domination and the masses' own experience of and reflection on these conditions of oppression. She sees historical development, the changes in the social relationships and institutions of capitalism as emerging out of the struggles of the masses to change their own immediately lived personally felt conditions of oppression, and their own reflections on those struggles.

This theory as I have extrapolated it is simultaneously historical and developmental. It is oriented as much to emphasizing the importance of the historical process as toward achieving tangible material goals.

As opposed to a scientistic theory of social change that she argues is shared by all of the major male leaders of her time, she emphasizes the importance of the masses' reflections on their own personally lived experience. it is this dynamic between action and reflection, not the expertise of leaders, that opens up the masses' capacity for becoming conscious of their collective oppression, and their capacity for creating organization and engaging in collective action. This dialectic between the objective historical conditions and the masses' subjective reflection on these underlies the reversal that I argue is Luxemburg's great contribution to a democratic cultural Marxist theory of social change.

Luxemburg, however, I argue breaks new theoretical ground not only in her unique conception of the masses. She also creates a new democratic-interactionist model of the Marxist leader. In her reversal leaders and centralized organizations continue to play a role. Under different historical conditions the role may be greater or lesser, but it is a role that is always shaped and governed by the ever changing and developing consciousness and awareness of the masses themselves. The democratic alternative theory Luxemburg implied refocuses the emphasis of Marxist theor-

ists away from parties, leaders, and the state to the struggles that emerge out of the masses' responses to their own conditions of oppression. She shifts from an instrumental view of leaders which justifies the use of the masses to achieve desired aims, to an interactionist model. Leaders foster the strengths and potential of the masses. The masses in turn learn from and develop their own capacities through good leadership. Luxemburg also sees the possibilities and limits of this mutually transforming relationship within a historical and developmental context.

Luxemburg's emphasis on the potential of the masses to become the critical decisive agents of social change links her work, as I have interpreted it here, to a continuing alternative tradition within Marxism, which has been called Cultural Marxism. This loose but important alternative tradition has also stressed the importance of consciousness and culture in theorizing about the dynamics of social change. Constituting this tradition is a loosely defined group of theorists, who, each in their own way, have historically challenged what they interpreted as an instrumental, scientistic Marxism. This group ranges from such thinkers as Lukacs, to Gramsci, Sartre and the Frankfurt school to more contemporary figures such as E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. To this tradition I have added here the less known Cultural-Marxist-Feminists of the last decade or so, notably Shiela Rowbatham, Nancy Hartsock, Dorothy Smith, Rosalyn Bologh and several others. Like the

other theorists in this alternative tradition, this small cluster of Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have been concerned with the incorporation of subjectivity, or critical and oppositional consciousness into a Marxist theory and practice of social change.

The theoretical issues and concerns that have been discussed and analyzed in the writings of these Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have strongly influenced and shaped my reading of Luxemburg's political writings. Like Luxemburg herself this group begins from the criticism of hierarchial bureaucratic conceptions of social change which place the preponderance of power and control in the hands of male leaders. This group of theorists perhaps is the closest modern day counterpart in our time to Luxemburg's implied project, as I have interpreted it: creating a conception of a democratic Marxist theory and practice.

The theoretical insights and categories that have emerged out of the writings of this group have been central to my reading of Luxemburg's writings. They have provided me with a language to develop Luxemburg's conception of the subjective dimension of social change. For Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have consistently emphasized the necessity of creating a much more dialectical Marxism, a Marxism that does not only focus on the objective conditions of oppression but how these conditions are lived and reflected upon in experience.

This group of women has attempted to create theoretical tools and language to show how it becomes possible for "ordinary women," women who have not defined themselves or engaged in political movements to become agents of social change, the makers of history. They have created a new language to see dimensions of oppression that have heretofore been missed or seriously devalued within the dominant tradition, forms of cultural and political subordination and powerlessness that have been internalized and reproduced in everyday life. They have looked at oppression not simply as an abstract theoretical concept, but how that oppression is lived and experienced by the oppressed in their everyday life and social relations. Most importantly of all this group of women theorists has emphasized the potential of ordinary women to achieve a consciousness of their objective conditions of oppression through reflection on their own lived experience. They have seen the possibility of achieving consciousness as a dialectical rather than a linear process that exists as a potential within the oppressed themselves. They view subjectivity in terms of the personal and collective reflection on lived experience as a source for the understanding of the larger objectified social and political context.

The insights and language of Cultural-Marxist-Feminists have shaped my reading of Luxemburg. In turn I believe this work could be a contribution to the ongoing theorizing of this group of women Marxists. This reading

shows that it is possible to theorize a different model of social change than that which is subscribed to by the male left as the only meaningful Marxist theory, an economistic, scientistic view of social change which emphasizes leaders, parties and organizations. This reading of Luxemburg's writings shows how it becomes possible to conceive of social change as coming out of the grassroots struggles and reflections of the oppressed themselves. It takes important steps towards conceptualizing how socialist institutions and practices must be rooted in a dialectical process of ongoing action and reflection. It offers a conception of the role of leaders, organization and parties that is non-hierchical, elitist, and bureaucratic. In these respects it incorporates and in some respects goes beyond the issues raised by Cultural-Marxist-Feminists.

I specify by means of three "building blocks" the way that I reconstruct Luxemburg's great reversal as an alternative theory of social change. In brief, a first building block deals with the masses' consciousness. A second building block takes up mass empowerment--a third and last building block turns to leadership. The three building blocks bring out just how Luxemburg provides a strong theoretical foundation for conceptualizing a Marxism that begins with and emphasizes the primacy of the masses, the oppressed themselves.

As I have argued in Chapters Two and Five, Luxemburg's view of mass consciousness and class struggle is a

decisive departure from the assumptions and practices of the Marxist leaders of her own time. Unlike these leaders she begins from the experience of the masses in the struggle itself. She strongly implies that the experience of the struggle opens up new and vital insights into the nature of the system of oppression. Class struggle is important not only because it produces tangible material gains, such as increased wages, better working conditions, increased democratic rights. These gains she asserts are important but they do not alone determine whether the struggle has validity. Her emphasis on the masses becoming the primary agents of social change opens up a new way of seeing struggle, its impact on the subjective transformation of the masses themselves, their development of a broad class consciousness and awareness.

As I have shown in Chapters Three and Four, Luxemburg strongly implies the dialectic central to her reversal: a dialectical interaction between the objective historical conditions that shape the masses' experience of capitalism on a day to day level, and their consciousness of those conditions. Through struggle and action new levels of consciousness develop which then becomes a preconditions of yet intensified struggle and deeper levels of reflection.

The experiential developmental process Luxemburg sees as uneven, sporadic, and as visible only over a long period of change. The objective conditions, the level of capitalist exploitation and state repression structure their

experience of oppression. But the sources of this consciousness, its roots, lay in the masses' own active responses to their own conditions of oppression.

In Chapter Three I have analyzed the presuppositions of Luxemburg's descriptions of what she calls the "early struggles." Those small reformist struggles which had taken place in Russia from 1892 to 1896, are what we would today call case studies for seeing the development of class consciousness. They are primarily empirical and descriptive but are organized and developed in such a way as to illustrate the dynamics between the objective historical conditions, capital and the state, and subjectivity, the consciousness and awareness of the masses.

Hence, in seeing class consciousness as a developmental process that arises in the course of the experience of the struggle itself, I have interpreted Luxemburg as placing great significance on small grassroots reformist struggles they are completely denigrated by the German male leaders. For a leadership for whom material gains are all important, small struggles are "fruitless," meaningless wasteful gestures against the authorities whose gains appear to be insignificant.

Luxemburg's criticism of this type of economism and scientism extends to Lenin for his overall hostility to struggles which are decentralized and particularistic in Russia in 1903. In contrast, for Luxemburg these kinds of struggles are gigantic leaps forward for the development of

mass consciousness. They are the potential beginning of a process through which the masses increasingly become clearer about the sources of their collective oppression and the larger purposes for which they must become prepared.

Luxemburg, I have argued, provides extremely rich and suggestive material for analyzing the development of mass consciousness. First and foremost she sees it as an uneven dynamic process that emerges out of a back and forth relationship between reflection and struggle. Luxemburg's descriptions and analysis of these early struggles suggest that under ordinary circumstances mass consciousness remains on what she calls the level of "appearance." This level of consciousness sees the sources of power in narrow, local, particularistic terms. Thus she notes that in each of the Russian cities in the 1890's in which these struggles begin they are aimed at achieving modest economic reforms, better wages and working conditions.

The struggle however provokes a breakdown of the day-to-day routine of the ongoing social relationships. Through the struggle these relationships which have not been a subject of reflection and theorizing by the masses get called into question. Each moment in the struggle produces new surprises for the masses. With each step they take they are forced to confront the larger more powerful forces that lay behind their day to day experience. They directly experience the state as an instrument of repression. The brutality they experience from both the state and capital

rapidly moves these workers form a view of their struggle as limited and reformist to one which becomes revolutionary.

We saw an important example of this process in Luxemburg's descriptions of the struggles in St. Petersburg which she treats as a model for displaying the growing subjective awareness of the workers of their identity as part of a larger oppressed group. In acting to achieve their modest demands they become enmeshed in a life and death struggle far beyond anything that they anticipated. Forced to confront the repressive power of the Czarist government and their employers these workers are forced to reflect upon their previous assumptions about the sources of their oppression. Their assumptions become too limited and narrow to account for their experience. They increasingly develop a broader analysis.

With each step these workers take they are compelled to reflect on their conditions of oppression. In sporadic and uneven ways these workers display through their action growing recognition that they are part of a larger oppressed group. Luxemburg does not speak of class consciousness in these early struggles. What has been generated is a strong sense of resistance to authority and a beginning level of awareness of the nature of the system that is responsible for their oppression.

This process, which Luxemburg sees repeated throughout Russia, she regards as critical. To her the process is central to seeing how revolution becomes possible. These

small grassroots struggles she sees as laying the foundation for larger social movements. They are in her words, "the germ" which becomes planted waiting to be fertilized by the development of new objective forces that set in motion the renewal of the class struggle.

Thus we see Luxemburg's strong criticism of the Marxist leaders of her own time. The development of struggles is not predictable and calculable. It ebbs and flows, takes more and less visible forms under varying social and historical conditions. In order to recognize it she argues that leaders must have a perspective which sees the dynamic interplay between the masses' struggles and their changing level of consciousness and awareness. They must have a perspective which is historical and developmental.

Through these descriptions Luxemburg has displayed mass consciousness as an experiential and developmental process of class struggle. Struggles which begin with the masses' reflection on their own immediate lived conditions, their perceptions of these conditions as local and particularistic are transformed through the dynamics of the struggle itself. As the struggle unfolds through its own inner logic of resistance and repression these workers become compelled to broaden their analysis, they are forced to critically reexamine their prior assumptions. The struggle provides them with a broader vision and analysis.

The theory which I have adumbrated from my reading of these early struggles I have argued is more explicitly developed analytically in her writings on the later mass strikes. Here she shows how millions of workers from many different strata, occupations, and regions become catalyzed by the later mass strikes. Unlike the Marxist leaders of her time who see these workers return to a more local level of struggle as a politically retrograde step, she sees it as a big advance. By struggling around their particular conditions of oppression, those working and laboring conditions that they face in their own daily life, these workers are making new conscious links between their own particular experiences and the larger institutional and structural framework of capitalism. They are seeing their particular oppression in much more general terms and relating their own experience, individually and collectively, to a broader understanding of class oppression.

What is implied in her strong conception of an alternative theory in the early period is a much more decentralized view of social change. While not negating the role of leaders, they occupy a much less significant place in creating or furthering the conditions of social change. This decentralized emphasis becomes more explicit during Luxemburg's analysis of the struggles of the later period. Luxemburg argues clearly against the bureaucratic and authoritarian leaders of the SPD during the Spartacist revolt. It is precisely on the local level in which workers

are confronted with the day to day exploitation by capital that they must conduct their struggle. Objectively this is required by the nature of capitalism. But subjectively it is required because it is at this level that workers must come to recognize their own oppression and exploitation as a member of an oppressed group. It is through this struggle "in each factory" and "from breast to breast," that workers come to know in a real way and "work through," in her language the significance and meaning of capitalist exploitation. Local struggles open up the bigger picture. They are the level in which sees the masses came to terms with the broader economic and political conditions of their own oppression.

I argue that Luxemburg's conception of mass consciousness as emerging out of the reflection of the masses on their own personally lived experience is a significant contribution to an democratic Cultural Marxist theory. Luxemburg's analysis opens up the possibility of seeing class as more than an abstract analytic theoretical category. It points to a conception of class oppression as mediated by the particular experiences of those who are oppressed.

In recognizing that the subjective reflections of the oppressed are a starting point for seeing the development of mass consciousness Luxemburg does not romanticize the masses. Luxemburg's analysis sees the development of this consciousness as always complex contingent on many

factors. What is crucial always is the interaction between the subjective and objective forces. Important from the point of view of an alternative Marxism is that she sees the subjective reflection of the oppressed on their own lived experience as having the potential to open up a more general theoretical understanding of the relationships of capitalist exploitation and domination. It is her insistence on the explosive revolutionary potential of this dynamic between subjective and objective factors that is an important perspective through which to view the possibilities and limits of struggle in our own time.

Building Block II Mass Empowerment

In building block I I have shown how Luxemburg's shift to the masses opens up a new way of seeing the process through which the masses develop a consciousness of their objective historical conditions of oppression. In this building block I develop a synthesis of Luxemburg's conception of the process through which the masses develop a new awareness of their collective powers and strengths to change these conditions. Through Luxemburg's analysis of collective action and struggle I see her pointing to the significance of another level of consciousness which opens up through the struggle. This level is a sense of empowerment: the growth of the masses' own sense of themselves as capable of creating an alternative social order.

Luxemburg's strong emphasis on the importance of collective action and struggle points to what she sees as

another level of oppression: the extent to which the forces of capital and the state have become internalized and reproduced as a sense of passivity, fatalism, fear, and a sense of powerlessness. As a condition of class struggle Luxemburg strongly implies, as I have shown in Chapters Three and Four, that the masses must overcome this diminished sense of themselves as not capable of action. They must come to recognize that, as a group, they have vast untapped resources and energies that have been unrecognized and suppressed within the existing social relationships of exploitation and domination.

Luxemburg's discussion of this process by which the masses discover their own capacity for collective action and powers is scattered throughout the texts. It is however the other side of her discussion of class consciousness. I have argued and shown in my reading of the texts that she gives many important indications that the development of the masses' recognition of their collective strengths is as important as their development of their awareness of the sources of their external conditions of oppression. Both levels of consciousness are necessary for workers to struggle. They must understand the nature and sources of their objective conditions but this knowledge is not sufficient. They must also be able to act, in order to act however they must develop a different sense of themselves as capable of opposing authority. Without this new found sense

of self they are destined to remain subordinates and powerless.

Luxemburg's enthusiasm and excitement for the early struggles both in Russia and Germany comes through in her vivid and dramatic descriptions. This is one of the most important clues that she gives as to how these struggles ignite within the masses a new sense of their power and capacity to struggle and to create a new social order.

Luxemburg, however, in addition to recognizing and showing the importance of the social relationships of capitalism as creating a sense of powerlessness and passivity implies another source of oppression in her analysis: the role of centralized hierarchial and bureaucratic parties in reproducing exactly this same kind of internalized oppression. In Chapter Five I elaborate Luxemburg's scathing criticisms of both German leaders and the allegedly more revolutionary Lenin for applauding the process of bourgeois socialization. Both of these leadership groups, the reformists and the revolutionaries, interpret docility and submission to leaders as signs of a higher level of working class consciousness. In contrast, throughout her life and work Luxemburg emphasizes the importance of the vitality of the masses, the strength of their own life force to challenge existing relationships, be critical and active. It is precisely these signs of life that are one of the main factors that indicate to her revolutionary potential.

Again, Luxemburg emphasizes the process of reflection on the insights that emerge out of collective action and struggle as the source of this new sense of empowerment. Though Luxemburg strongly emphasizes this sense as a collective experience growing out of collective action and struggle. She also implies, as I have shown in Chapter Four, that individuals also experience a sense of their own personal empowerment through taking action. The two experiences that of the individual and the collective are not separate but strongly interconnected. The sense of strength that the oppressed derive from the participation in the struggle Luxemburg implies has long lasting implications which contribute to the willingness of the masses as individuals and members of a collectivity to continue and initiate new struggles in the face of extreme oppression.

During Luxemburg's discussion of these same early struggles, the smaller economistic struggles from 1892 to 1896 in Russia Luxemburg illuminates the process of collective empowerment in two of her case studies. The first is in St. Petersburg in which she pointedly makes reference to the generations of workers who had "patiently endured" their conditions of oppression. She implies that they had simply accepted as an unquestionable assumption that life was fate to be lived out without hope or too many expectations. Finally, however, when pushed beyond their forbearance these workers act for the first time. They take steps to demonstrate, organize, engage other workers. For the first time

they experience their own group strength and the sense of collective power that emerges out of the broader support of their fellow workers.

With each further act of repression by the state, they are compelled to display a stronger and greater will to resist oppression. They are eventually defeated outwardly, but inwardly Luxemburg strongly implies they have changed inalterably. They now realize that they can struggle to change their conditions of oppression. They do not have to passively accept their fate. This new discovery pushes these workers in a later moment to struggle again. Their courageous acts inspire other groups of workers to resist. Despite the reinstitution of the external control of the state and employers these workers no longer obey because of a feeling that this kind of domination is right or inevitable.

Her appreciation of just this level of meaning of these small seemingly unimportant struggles is another reason that she treats these reformist struggles as "revolutionary." They break through decades and generations of patterns of subordination to the existing authorities. For this reason she sees as highly significant the small struggles that come out of daily life and conditions. They are empowering. They provide an arena for the masses to experience their own power to resist.

Luxemburg's second strong example of collective empowerment is her moving description of the railroad

workers in Kiev. Her description of the events of this struggle strongly imply that the strong feelings of community and solidarity that have been generated through the struggle have transcended the fear of death itself. These workers experience deep feelings of hope and commitment which propel them to resist even in the face of the most brutally repressive measures. Families lay down their lives in support of their fellow workers. When these workers and their families are murdered they do not retreat. They turn their deaths into symbols of struggle. They refuse to return to their formerly acquiescent and servile conditions. Luxemburg implies that when people have changed this much, those in power have an almost impossible task to reimpose the previous means of control. The newly found sense of inner spiritual freedom propels these workers to take step after step in their struggle to achieve total liberation.

Similarly Luxemburg treats the process of collective empowerment as a cumulative experience that happens over time. She is constantly emphasizing beginnings--first time experiences, first time for resisting, first time for being in a huge crowd of demonstrators, first time for creating organizations, and first time for conducting meetings. Each of these experiences contributes to a sense of individual and collective power of the participants.

Like Luxemburg's analysis of mass consciousness, as I have interpreted it here, Luxemburg recognizes that this heightened intensity does not last forever. Social condi-

tions change. Movements dissipate. What her analysis suggests, however, is that this new consciousness of collective power and strength takes other forms. Most significantly the workers use these experiences to begin to organize themselves into trade unions which carry on the struggle. They join explicitly socialist organizations. They continue to educate themselves and strengthen this new found awareness of their own capacity to resist. The struggle ebbs and flows but this new consciousness she implies does not completely disappear. Mass consciousness sows seeds for the future.

In Chapter Four I have discussed one of the most highly suggestive passages in all of Luxemburg's writing on her conception of the process through which individuals and groups experience their own empowerment. Here she suggests a strong link between collective action and the individual and collective unconscious. Action seems to bring to the surface of consciousness the memory and recognition of individual and collective oppression. These highly suggestive passages suggest the power of the struggle to break through these repressed levels of consciousness which deny the masses the full appreciation of their power to resist.

This passage, perhaps more than any other, brings Luxemburg the closest to the ethos of contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminism. It suggests a non-linear spiritual journey in which personal change is dynamically related to collective action. Though Luxemburg concentrates on

collectivities, her strong suggestions of this inner journey imply an understanding of this process as it is experienced by the individual in his or her own consciousness. It suggests how it becomes possible for oppressed individuals and groups to experience a sense of rebirth, renewal, a reclamation of a self, that was lost or denied.

For a second building block for an alternative Marxist theory, then, Luxemburg contributes an emphasis on empowerment, on collective action and struggle as opening up the masses' own sense of their power and capacities to create a new social order. She creates a strong glimpse of the process of how it becomes possible for the masses to overcome their internalized oppression, their fear, hopelessness, and passivity. In raising this issue she goes beyond the traditional discussion of subjectivity within Marxism which is limited to the concept of class consciousness. She sees another level of consciousness that emerges out of the struggle: a new sense of collective power and strength. This level of consciousness she strongly implies is a condition of the possibility of socialist transformation.

Building Block III Leadership for Mass Consciousness and Empowerment

Finally to a contemporary democratic cultural Marxism I argue that Luxemburg contributes a strong glimpse of a new type of Marxist leader. I call this new type a democratic-interactionist model of the leader as opposed to

the decisively elitist hierarchical model that has characterized the dominant Marxist tradition. This new type of leader is suggested by Luxemburg's powerful consistent criticism throughout her life and work of the major Marxist leaders of her time. Through her criticism she uncovers a deeper level of unity than is implied by the classifications that have usually been used to distinguish one from another, reformist and revolutionary. This underlying unity, she implies is these leaders' tendency to see the masses as little more than instruments for the accession of leaders, parties, intellectuals to state power. Implied in their vision of socialism she argues is the centrality of the state as the primary means for social transformation.

Luxemburg's new type of leader emerges out of her conception that the primary process of revolutionary social transformation is the development of the consciousness and empowerment of the masses themselves. Luxemburg argues that leaders have a potentially important role to play in this process. It is one of facilitating and fostering the developmental process through which the masses themselves achieve political power.

Luxemburg's conception of the role of leadership in the struggle and her vision of socialism are markedly different than this model. The transformation of capitalism cannot be accomplished without the transformation of the masses themselves. Socialism is more than changing institutions. It is a dialectical relationship between the trans-

formation of institutions and the consciousness of masses who create and reproduce the day-to-day relationships and institutions of capitalism. Without changing consciousness, capitalism is not changed. It takes new and different forms that may be equally as oppressive. Leaders must work with rather than attempt to control the forces in history that unleash the dynamic struggles of the masses to become the agents of social change. Luxemburg's conception of the role of leaders emerges directly out of the theoretical analysis of this dialectic between objective and subjective forces. Leaders must work within a complex developmental process in which the masses struggle simultaneously to gain control and transform the institutions of society and liberate themselves from the forces of repression and internalized domination. This process demands a type of leadership committed to empowerment.

Luxemburg's conception of objective historical conditions reproduced through the activity and consciousness of the masses creates a completely transformed conception of the primary aims of the struggle. She implies strongly, as she did in the Spartacist Revolt and the Russian Revolution, that socialism means changing capitalism at the grass roots, at the level of day-to-day experience, at its base in each factory, "breast to breast." The struggle for socialism involves many levels, one is at the level of the state, but the other is at the local level. This conception of social change also crates a different model of the political

leader. It is one that can work with, foster and learn from particularistic local struggles. Once again this image of the struggle and leadership link Luxemburg closely with contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists, Marxist social historians, and others in the cultural Marxist tradition.

Luxemburg conceives of this relationship between leaders and masses as mutually transforming and dynamic. In certain historical moments leaders see possibilities that are not recognized by the masses, they act in ways that make this vision accessible to the masses. At other moments, the masses may be far ahead of leaders, their actions inspire and open up leaders to become more committed and engaged in the struggle. Whatever the historical conditions Luxemburg argues that leaders must maintain a theoretical and historical vision which puts the role of the masses in the first place. They must act on this vision even when the masses themselves have retreated from the recognition of their own oppression and collective power. This means a type of leadership which constantly reflects upon its own leadership role in relationship to the ongoing developmental process of the masses themselves, a leadership that is a partner rather than the responsible authority for overseeing the masses.

As I have argued Luxemburg provides the strongest glimpse of this democratic Marxist model of leadership during the later historical period in response to the several major historical events in her own time, World War I, the Spartacist Revolt in Germany in 1918, and the Russian

Revolution in 1917. Each of these events requires Luxemburg to rethink the conception of social change which I have elucidated characterizes the early period. In each case I argue that Luxemburg retains her view of the primacy of the masses. If anything this view becomes more explicit rather than less. At the same time under these varying historical conditions she creates a clearer picture of how leaders can facilitate the masses' own struggle and their development of their own consciousness and capacity for action.

Central to Luxemburg's democratic concept of the leader is the importance of a theoretical perspective which sees change not in linear but in dialectical terms. History is not a straightforward process, but one filled with continuous turns, ebbs and flows. Under varying historical conditions Luxemburg elucidates this democratic-interactional model of the relationship between leaders and masses.

In non-revolutionary periods such as the early beginning struggles of the Spartacist revolt in Germany in 1918, leaders she argues must be open to seeing the glimpses of alternative possibilities that have not yet crystallized. In these early days the goals of the movement were not clear. On the surface these workers and soldiers were calling for political democracy not socialist revolution. Leaders must remain open to the significance of these struggles though they are not organized by leaders and to not express explicitly socialist ideas.

Just as in the early period when she saw economistic struggles as the germs, her alternative model of social change in the later period also allows her to see what is denigrated and despised by her fellow male leaders in the SPD, the significance of the struggles and reflections of the masses themselves. This burst of energy coming out of the extremely reactionary period of the war she sees as signifying precisely her sense of the dialectical process which she alone anticipated, the masses finally coming to terms and acting on their conditions of oppression.

Though open to this historic possibility Luxemburg does not romanticize the masses. These masses which were actively supporting the war do not suddenly become revolutionaries. The development of class consciousness and a capacity for action is a potential but not an automatic predictable occurrence. What is different about Luxemburg then the Marxist leaders of her time is that she maintains hope even under reactionary conditions.

During a period of reaction Marxist leaders have a considerably different role to play than when revolutionary possibilities have emerged. Unlike these moments in which the masses are clearly moving and leaders are subordinate, in periods of reaction leaders play a much stronger role. Though affirming the primacy of the masses leaders become the ones who through the strong affirmation of their principles and action attempt to keep alive the possibilities of collective action and reflection.

While Luxemburg remains hopeful, she does not romanticize the difficulty of such historical moments. Yet she continues to affirm in no uncertain terms that leaders cannot themselves create the conditions of social change. Her conception of history as non-linear and not subject to prediction and calculation becomes an important theoretical resources during this period. Under conditions which cannot be foreseen the masses may yet recognize and act upon their own oppression.

Still arguing strongly against a type of Marxist leadership which sees itself in control of the masses, Luxemburg displays her democratic-interactionist model most explicitly during periods of revolution. In the Spartacist Revolution of 1918 Luxemburg becomes a prototype of this new kind of leader. Where the other SPD leaders uphold the state as the main vehicle for achieving change, she insists that the real institutions of revolution are those created by the masses themselves, the workers and soldiers councils. These decentralized democratic institutions are what create the practical experience of self-rule. They embody new proto-socialist forms of economic and political decision making. They provide a setting which allows for the development of new forms of socialist consciousness and culture. Moreover they are the arena in which leaders from the working class can emerge and develop their abilities. While recognizing the imperfections of these institutions,

she strongly argues that these institutions are the main primary instrument of revolutionary transformation.

In discussing the potential of these institutions Luxemburg brings together once again a conception of leadership that is capable of learning from and working with particularistic struggles, with a conception of the leader who has a universalist orientation and understanding of the overall struggle. This universalism can be important to a development movement if leaders know how to work in ways that foster and facilitate the potential of the oppressed to make the links between their own particular oppression and a more general analysis. This type of leader Luxemburg implies must be able to work with the masses, rather than be coercive. Once again Luxemburg suggests the process and ends are inextricably linked together.

One of Luxemburg's gifts to this generation of Marxist thinkers is to show that questions of domination and control in terms of the relationship between parties, leaders and masses are critical questions for the creation of an alternative Marxist theory and practice. Without examining these issues leaders can easily become instruments of counterrevolution, and the reproduction of internalized domination. Their actions continue rather than break through the patterns of subordination that characterize daily life under capitalism. In this sense Luxemburg anticipates implicitly the next step that contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminist theorists have taken to incor-

porate within Marxism an analysis of the relationships of patriarchy, race, sexual orientation, etc. These forms of oppression must be understood if leaders are to act as forces for liberation and not repression.

In Luxemburg's writings on the Russian Revolution she goes the furthest in creating this new model of the democratic-interactionist Marxist leader. Such a leader has incorporated within his or her conscious understanding the recognition that a relationship based on domination, terror and force reproduces alienation and passivity. Leaders who use such methods create not socialism but new forms of bureaucratic domination.

Such a leadership though facing dangerous problems and threats does not retreat to the use of the instrumentalities of violence. Rather he or she stresses the importance of the dialectical process which can open up the creative possibilities of the masses themselves. Leaders must take every step to broaden the participation of the masses into the governing process. They must assure the masses of their right to speak, organize, associate. Socialism Luxemburg argues requires a vital healthy public life. Without this life it dies, becomes moribund--immobilized.

In these writings Luxemburg has come closest to an anarchist theory of change. Terror, force, violence do not encourage the masses to overcome centuries of degradation. Only by expanding liberty and democracy will the masses

become a vital creative force. Leaders must trust the process of collective activity, participation as opening up within the masses their potential to become active committed citizens of a socialist state. Only as the masses gain experience in self rule will they be able to correct their own errors. Luxemburg asserts the experiences that the masses gain by exercising power is infinitely more important than the most perfect attempts by revolutionary leaders. Echoing her earlier criticism in 1905 Luxemburg remains committed to a theory of leadership as mass empowerment.

In these writings on the Russian Revolution both in the early and later periods Luxemburg comes closest to touching on the question of the subjectivity of leaders themselves. The model of the leader as scientist elevated the leader to an expert who simply applies theory and methodology to arrive at correct answers. It turns the leader himself into a lifeless, unfeeling machine. Luxemburg's appeals to the Bolsheviks to recognizing their own limitations and imperfections is an important step towards humanizing leaders. She pulls them out of the semi-god persona to more fully recognize that they too invariably make mistakes, misjudge events, can suffer from over-grandiosity and other delusions.

Thus while implying that leaders must be self reflective about their use of power, more importantly from the standpoint of her great reversal is that leaders must be accountable to the masses themselves. By widening the

decision making process beyond party leaders and bureaucrats society, the masses are more likely to recognize problems and attempt to correct them. Thus, as I have indicated, Luxemburg does not attempt to analyze the sources of this type of male domination but rather treats the problem with structural solutions. Here again, she favors a grassroots democratic approach.

Even under the difficult conditions of war, revolution, and the transition to socialism Luxemburg remains true to her overall reversal of the relationship between masses and leaders. She does not hand the power over to leaders to solve the problems by purely technical and bureaucratic means. She continues to insist that the creation of the new social and economic relationships of capitalism must be based on the development of the capacity of the masses to become agents of change. This view of social change continues to affirm her earlier conception that revolution is not a theatrical coup, a one night stand, but a long developmental process in which the development of mass consciousness and empowerment is central and decisive.

I see Luxemburg's continuing and unalterable faith in the primacy of the masses as her most important contribution towards the development of a contemporary cultural and democratic Marxism. While others in the ongoing alternative tradition that I have described in Chapter One and in the beginning of this conclusion have added important pieces to this contemporary Marxism--the critique of positivism,

economism, and hierarchy--Luxemburg goes the furthest in envisioning a truly democratic model of socialist revolution. This revolution comes out of the grassroots struggles of the masses and their reflections on those experiences. It is fundamentally a decentralist vision, but unlike the anarchists, feminists and others who identify with the New Left it does not reject parties, leaders and centralized organization. Rather it sees these traditional institutional forms, as they are conceptualized within the dominant prevailing Marxism, as fundamentally transformed by the emphasis on the masses below. They no longer exist as the isolated but decisive factor. They exist in a mutually transforming and mainly subordinate relationship to the masses themselves.

Luxemburg's emphasis on the mass movement below strongly moves socialist theory from an emphasis on false consciousness, ideology, cultural hegemony, domination to an emphasis on the living creative quality of mass movements. She breathes life into current Marxist discussions by opening up the possibility of the oppressed to change, develop, grow achieve consciousness through reflection on their own lived experience. In this way Luxemburg's theorizes on the possibility of grassroots politics is matched in our time most closely by the theorizing of contemporary Cultural-Marxist-Feminists on the possibilities of oppressed women becoming agents of change.

Luxemburg's conception of this dialectic I have argued is narrowly restricted to her analysis of class struggle and working class movements. She does not see these same possibilities among oppressed nationalities, or women for example. In her conception of these groups she tends to focus mostly on their position in the political economy as defining their collective potentiality to become agents of change. I see however a much broader potential for Luxemburg's conception of the dynamic process through which the oppressed become conscious and empowered than she herself recognized. Her conception of the significance of struggles around daily life and conditions, of consciousness beginning with reflection on the immediately personally lived experiences of the oppressed goes beyond class. Other groups clearly can and have developed consciousness and a capacity for action in precisely the ways that she has analyzed. Her strong glimpse of this process which I have theorized in this dissertation should be able to provide some important markers for recognizing and understanding this dynamic process.

Beyond this Luxemburg's reformulation of the relationship between objective and subjective factors in the struggles links her as well to those who define themselves as radicals but not Marxists. Her strong emphasis on the subjective dimension of social change speaks to the concerns of such radicals on the tendency of a scientistic Marxism to reproduce relationships of hierarchy, domination and

bureaucracy--its insensitivity to issues of personal liberty and democracy. At the same time Luxemburg's emphasis on the importance of history and objective historical conditions provides a new way of seeing the historically defined limits as well as the possibilities of consciousness, action, and choice. Her analysis as I have developed it here can be a bridge between the Marxist and radical traditions.

In conclusion, Luxemburg provides a clear alternative to the dominant scientistic Marxist tradition, a tradition which prevails in our own time. Her great reversal between masses and leaders creates the possibility and envisions a genuinely democratic and liberatory alternative Marxist theory.

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