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Rosa Luxemburg in Action

For Revolution and Democracy

Rosemary H. T. O'Kane

ROUTLEDGE

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Neither a work concerned only with her Marxist writings nor a personal biography concerned with her private life, this book examines Rosa Luxemburg's ideas on revolution and democracy and how the two are bound together by her views on the importance of political action. Stretching, historically, from 1863 to the present, this book covers in great detail the history and developments within the German Social Democratic Party during her time, the 1905 and 1917 Russian Revolutions, the German Revolution, the outbreak of the First World War and the imperialism that fuelled it. It then moves on to consider political and historical developments after her death and examines her arguments on revolution and democracy in the light of the post-revolutionary government in Nicaragua: the one violent revolution that sought to establish social democracy (but failed). Also covered are aspects of Rosa Luxemburg's life; her important writings and actions; and the relevant Marxist debates in which she was involved, including, for example, Eduard Bernstein's arguments on social democracy through reform and, with Lenin, on revolutionary organization.

This welcome and timely collection presents an important examination of the political and social context in which Luxemburg developed her activities and views, as well as a complete understanding of the history of social democracy, the revolutionary times of a century ago and the relevance of their events and ideas for more recent revolutions for democracy in the twenty-first century.

Rosemary H. T. O'Kane is Emeritus Professor of Comparative Political Theory at Keele University. Her book *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change* (1991) won the CHOICE Outstanding Academic Book for 1993.

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To
Harriet

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Preface

> With a will, determination, selflessness and devotion for which words are too weak, she consecrated her whole life and her whole being to Socialism. She gave herself completely to the cause of Socialism, not only in her tragic death, but throughout her whole life, daily and hourly, through the struggles of many years.
>
> (Obituary of Rosa Luxemburg)

These are the words of Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg's close friend.[1] Rosa Luxemburg was an activist and theorist who was killed, in January 1919, in the German Revolution as one of its leaders. For most of her adult life, Rosa Luxemburg was a member of the German Social Democratic Party, SPD, a Marxist party, and she also co-founded other Marxist parties and groups. In 1893, when a university student just twenty-two years old, Rosa, together with three friends, founded the Polish Social Democratic Party (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland, SDKP, which expanded to become the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL). In 1917, in opposition to the SPD's patriotic support for the war and retaining her commitment to international socialism, Rosa Luxemburg left the SPD to join the newly founded Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD, along with the other members of the radical wing of the SPD, the International Group (the Spartacus Group), which she, with others, had founded in 1916. After the end of the First World War the International Group changed its name to the Spartacus League and then, at the very end of 1918, formed itself into the German Communist Party, KPD.

Within the SPD, which she joined in 1898, Rosa Luxemburg gained a high profile through her dynamic public speeches, her strong commitment to party work and her publications on Marxism, impressive both for the high intellectual quality of her input and the quantity of her output. She gained positions on the editorial boards of Marxist publications, was a delegate at international party congresses and became a valued member of the Second International. Although young, she held her ground with the German Marxists of the older generation, such as August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and

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Karl Kautsky. She also played a part in the 1905 Russian Revolution and developed a strong, intellectual relationship with Lenin. For her political beliefs and actions, she, too, spent time in prison.

Retaining throughout a conviction in the method of historical materialism and in the benefits of socialism for the working class, some of Rosa's writings developed and extended Marx's theory, and some went so far as to challenge it. In her major work, *The Accumulation of Capital,* which challenged an important part of Marx's theory, she developed her ideas on imperialism. In other works she also developed ideas on action, the mass strike, revolutionary leadership and socialist democracy. These ideas, although not always intentionally so, burst out through the boundaries of Marxist thought. Through them she engaged with questions of freedom and democracy and the role of action: mass action from the bottom up, that is, as an essential part of socialist democracy.

This book is neither a work concerned only with Rosa Luxemburg's Marxist writings nor a personal biography concerned with her private life. It is a book on politics and history refracted through the prism of her remarkable life to focus on revolution and democracy: two of the major themes not only of her life and work but also of politics through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. With revolution and democracy the main themes, the objectives of the book are to achieve understanding of Rosa Luxemburg's ideas on democracy and revolution through putting them back into the wider political and historical contexts in which they took form through her lifetime and to examine her legacy in light of events since her time in order to gain a better understanding of politics today.

To these ends, the book is structured sequentially (as opposed to thematically) so to show how the conditions and events through which Rosa Luxemburg lived affected both her ideas and her actions. The contents of this book stretch, historically, from 1863 to the present, and it covers, in some detail, the history and developments within the German SPD during her time, the 1905 and 1917 Russian Revolutions, the German Revolution, the outbreak of the First World War and the imperialism that fuelled it. It then moves on to consider political and historical developments after her death and examines her arguments on revolution and democracy in the light of the post-revolutionary government in Nicaragua: the one violent revolution that sought to establish social democracy (but failed). Also covered are aspects of Rosa Luxemburg's life; her important writings and actions; and the relevant Marxist debates in which she was involved, including, for example, the 'Polish Question', Eduard Bernstein's arguments on social democracy through reform and, with Lenin, on revolutionary organization.

Existing books on Rosa Luxemburg are biographies, collections of her letters, collections of her writings or normative political theory as a Marxist thinker. These works provide valuable translations of her work, and these existing translations are the ones used in this book. Its aim, as explained, is

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not to provide new insights through new translations of her written work but to gain new understanding through reading them in light of the contexts in which they were written. None of these existing works provides historical explanations of the contexts of Rosa Luxemburg's actions and writings beyond the immediate ways in which they touched her political life, and none brings consideration of her legacy up to the present.

There is a tendency in works on women, more so than for those on men, to emphasize the personal and emotional aspects of their lives, and this tendency is evident in the biographies of Rosa Luxemburg. In those biographies, the things in Rosa Luxemburg's personal life that are always given particular emphasis are that she was born into a Jewish family in Russian-occupied Poland and that she had a long and close relationship with Leo Jogiches that was, in essence, a marriage. Given that her family, although very supportive of her, were not themselves involved in politics and that Rosa, having left Poland at the age of eighteen, did not herself practice the religion into which she was born and later refused to join the Bund (General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), it is doubtful that these particular aspects of her early life deserve very much emphasis, and it could be seen as a legacy of her vilification as a 'Bolshevik-Jew'. The historical background of Poland did, though, mean that Rosa Luxemburg was fluent in Polish, Russian and German and, with such language skills, later also fluent in French and pretty good in English and Italian, and this surely did prove relevant to her capacity to move within the networks of international socialism.

As for Leo Jogiches, the letters that she wrote to him (the letters that he wrote to her having not survived) do provide insight, as do so many of the large number of letters that she also wrote to others, into Rosa Luxemburg as a person aside from her politics. That she wrote so many letters, and that the recipients kept them, clearly offers proof of how important relationships with people were to her and how much she meant to them. The letters bear clear testimony to her concern for people, and this was intrinsic to her commitment to socialism. As Peter Nettl explains: 'Society for Rosa Luxemburg always consisted of people first and foremost. . . . Rosa Luxemburg's whole notion of revolution can only be understood in this light—one that was steeped in humanitarianism.'[2] As her letters to Jogiches, who was also one of the founders of the SDKP and the Spartacus Group, show, Rosa Luxemburg's letters are not just personal but also full of discussions of active politics and interpretations of Marx.

Proof of the importance to Rosa Luxemburg of the events through which she lived—such as revolutions, elections, party congresses, public speeches, debates, discussions and exchanges in print with international socialists, spells in prison and war—is everywhere to be found in her writings and actions. And, as this book aims to show, her writings and actions remain highly valuable for our understanding of revolution and democracy today.

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NOTES

1. P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, pp. 219–20.
2. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 173.

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My thanks go first to Brian Doherty for suggesting to me that I should write a book on Rosa Luxemburg. Without him it would never have been written. As my close colleague at Keele University he knew that of all the revolutionaries in my course on revolutions that I taught for so many years Rosa Luxemburg was the one I most admired. My reason then as now was that along with her bravery in both thought and action she never lost sight of the essential connection between socialism and democracy. For her, democracy could only be kept alive by the active participation of people in a society that empowered all through a fair distribution of economic wealth and a high standard of universal education. My thanks go also to Natalja Mortensen at Routledge for giving me this opportunity and to the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. Last, but most importantly of all, my thanks go to my family, Les Rosenthal and Harriet.

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1 Setting the Stage
Electoral Democracy, Imperial Germany and the SPD

Rosa Luxemburg gave her life to revolution. On 15 January 1919 she was arrested in a flat in Mannheimer Strasse, Berlin, where she was in hiding. From there the Volunteer Corp (Freikorps) soldiers, who had arrested her, took her to the Hotel Eden, the temporary headquarters of the Division of Cavalry and Riflemen.[1] After a brief identification she was then escorted back through the hotel on her way to the car ostensibly waiting to take her to Moabit prison. Passing through the crowd that had gathered in the hotel lobby she was struck on the head, twice, by a soldier, later identified as Private Runge, using the butt of his rifle. The first blow knocked her to the floor, and the second struck as she lay there. Carried to the car and driven just a short distance away Rosa Luxemburg was then summarily executed: shot through the temple by one of the soldiers escorting her. The most probable executioner was Lieutenant Vogel, the man instructed with taking her to the car. Driving on, with the car stopping near to the river Spree, the soldiers then carried Rosa Luxemburg to the Landwehr Canal, where they threw her lifeless body into the water.[2]

The revolution that ended Rosa Luxemburg's life had begun on 28 October 1918 with sailors mutinying in the port of Kiel. Germany's defeat in the First World War by then a foregone conclusion, the sailors had refused to go to sea. Sparked by the mutiny, revolts then began to spread to other ports and cities from 3 November, reaching the streets of Berlin on 9 November. That was the same day on which the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II was announced; it was also the day on which the Imperial Chancellor handed power to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the largest party in the Reichstag, the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), the SPD.[3] The revolution ended, at least the uprising in which Rosa Luxemburg played an active part, on 12 January 1919. Defeated by the combined forces of the army and the Freikorps, the battle was finally over when the police headquarters, occupied by the revolutionaries as their last holdout, was taken.

The German SPD was the party that Rosa Luxemburg had first joined in 1898 and had remained in until 1917.[4] The year 1898 was an election year in Germany, and it was also the year in which she first entered the country.

Polish by birth, she had acquired the necessary travel certificate by gaining German citizenship through a marriage of convenience to a son of a friend. The German SPD was not the first social democratic party in which she had been involved: she had had prior experience in the Polish social democratic party, the SDKP (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland), which she together with three friends had founded in 1893 when she was living, as a student, in Switzerland. There, in Zurich, she had become acquainted with German social democrats. Rosa Luxemburg joined the German SPD on 25 May, just ten days after arriving in Berlin.[5]

In June 1898, with hardly time to settle into her lodgings, a room near the Tiergarten in Berlin, Rosa Luxemburg was sent off to Upper Silesia to rally electoral support for the party. Upper Silesia was the part of Poland that had been annexed by Prussia in the eighteenth century and so found itself part of the German Reich (German Empire) in 1871. The workers in Upper Silesia, the group targeted for votes by the SPD, retained their Polish language in spite of its being outlawed. Polish was a language in which Rosa, having been born and brought up in Poland, was fluent, and it was the language she used in her speeches to them about exploitation and injustice and in her exhortations to them to support the SPD in the election.

Writing to her partner, Leo Jogiches, who remained in Zurich when Rosa Luxemburg left Switzerland for Germany, she described her experiences on the Silesian tour. Her speeches had received cheers and applause and she had been given bouquets of flowers, but she well knew that the business in which she was engaged, an election campaign that included distributing voting papers and leaflets and working in the polling office in Królewska Huta, was not something with which Jogiches would be impressed. It 'is in your eyes . . . degrading', she wrote to him, but countered: 'for me it is an honour'.[6]

Four days after Rosa Luxemburg's body had been thrown into the Landwehr Canal, elections were held, on 19 January 1919, for the Constitutional Assembly to frame a new constitution. Those elections, free and fair, were held on the basis of genuine universal suffrage. Unlike the previous elections for which she had campaigned, there were no tax qualifications, and everyone over the age of twenty was entitled to vote: not just men, that is, but also women. In that January 1919 election, furthermore, the SPD received the largest share of the poll; they gained 37.9 per cent of the votes.[7]

In 1917, however, Rosa Luxemburg, along with all of the Spartacus Group, had withdrawn her support for the SPD and become a member of the Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), the USPD, founded in April of that year by the Centre group (Arbeitsgemeinschaft) members of the SPD. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had formed, within the SPD, the radical Marxist Spartacus Group (Spartakus Gruppe), known publicly as the International Group (Gruppe Internationale), in 1916.[8] In the Council of People's Representatives, the provisional government that formed after Friedrich Ebert was handed power by the Kaiser on his abdication on 9 November 1918, the SPD shared power

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with the USPD. At the point of the formation of the provisional government, under Ebert, the Spartacus Group dropped the name International Group to become officially, on 11 November, the Spartacus League (Spartakusbund). On 30 December, the Spartacus League became a new party: the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), the KPD.[9] In the January 1919 elections, in which the KPD chose not to participate, the SPD gained 37.9 per cent of the votes, the USPD 7.6 per cent.[10]

Piecing together the journey that Rosa Luxemburg made through the passage of time—from fighting the elections in support of the German Social Democratic Party, under an electoral and parliamentary system that was far from the democratic ideal, to being killed in a revolution as a member of the newly formed German Communist Party, which rejected participation in the January 1919 election contested under the rules demanded by the SPD in their party programme—is a way towards understanding not simply her life but her legacy for both revolution and democracy.

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ELECTIONS IN IMPERIAL GERMANY

Back in 1898, when for Rosa Luxemburg campaigning for the SPD in the election had been 'an honour', the elections were conducted under the rules of the Imperial Constitution of 1871. In 1898, therefore, women neither had the vote nor were allowed to stand for election. Genuine universal suffrage, for both women and men, was one of the policies advocated by the Social Democrats: hence its introduction in the January 1919 elections. Male suffrage had, though, been greatly expanded under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's Imperial Constitution of 1871, which had followed the unification of Germany. Importantly for the SPD, a workers' party, with the introduction of near universal male suffrage for all those over the age of twenty-five, workingmen were given the vote.[11] In general elections, voters were also not restricted by tax qualifications, and votes for representatives were direct and made through secret ballot.

The rules governing elections to the state assemblies, however, were far further from a democratic ideal than were those for the general elections, and, the 1871 constitution having resolved the unification of Germany through a federal system, the states had considerable political weight. In contrast to the general elections, which were direct, in most of the states the elections were indirect. In these states the electorate were divided into three tiers according to tax payment, and the voting was two-stage with those elected from each tax class (with each class returning the same number of members) then selecting the deputies. This was the three-class voting system, to which social democrats were especially opposed. Although eventually dropped by most states, the three-class system was retained in Prussia right through to 1918. As an example of its effects, in the Prussian parliamentary elections in 1908, the numbers in each class were as follows: first class, 293,402;

second class, 1,065,240; third class, 6,324,079. In the election the Conservatives, with 418,000 votes, won 212 seats, and the Social Democrats, with 598,000, votes won only 7 seats.[12]

In most states, furthermore, again unlike in general elections, votes were not by secret ballot: they were oral, a public declaration, and therefore open to abuse through intimidation and bribery.[13] With most working-class voters in the third (the lowest) electoral tax class and then permitted to elect only one third of the representatives, the odds were stacked against the Socialist Workers' Party (as the SPD was then called), and the party decided, therefore, to contest elections neither to the state assemblies nor to the local government assemblies and did not change its position until the election of 1890.[14]

The elections to the state assemblies were of considerable importance because the system of federalism established by the 1871 constitution was based on a weak central government and strong states. The upper house, the Federal Council (Bundesrat), consisted of delegates from the states, and it had the power of veto over the legislation of the lower house—the Reichstag. In addition, one state—Prussia—was dominant over all others: it was by far the largest state, and the members of the Bundesrat were in proportion to the size of each state.[15] Prussia's dominance was also ensured in the new constitution through the king of Prussia, the Kaiser, becoming the emperor of all Germany and being given rights to appoint and to dismiss the chancellor and to veto legislation, without recourse to the Reichstag. The dominance of Prussia was further compounded by its being customary for the prime minister of Prussia to be the imperial chancellor. Thus, Bismarck became the first Chancellor of the German Empire. In addition to all this, the Prussian army formed the vast bulk of the German forces.[16]

There was a further important aspect of the 1871 constitution. Bismarck was opposed to political parties, and, in consequence, the constitution made no mention of parties: according to Article 29 each deputy was a representative of 'the whole people'.[17] Germany had political parties, nevertheless. The establishment constituted the conservatives, and along with the conservatives three competing organized political parties came to predominate over the years from 1871 to 1918: the National Liberal Party, the (Catholic) Centre Party (Zentrum) and the Social Democratic Party. Not only did Bismarck have a distaste for political parties; he also had an intense dislike of socialists, and it had a severe impact on the Social Democratic Party.

THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

The German Social Democratic Party took the name Social Democratic Party, SPD, in 1891, only seven years before Rosa Luxemburg first helped in the election campaign. When founded, in May 1875 at the congress held in Gotha, the name taken by the party was the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands), SAPD, more commonly

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simply SAP. It was formed at Gotha by the unification of two socialist parties, previously rivals. One was the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei), and the other was the General German Workers' Union (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein), ADAV.[18]

The ADAV had been founded, in 1863, by Ferdinand Lassalle. The principal aims of the ADAV were universal suffrage and the state financing of cooperative factories in order that the workers would become, as they expressed it at the time, 'their own employers'.[19] What led to the setting up of the rival socialist party was the ADAV's alignment, for tactical reasons, with Bismarck against the Liberal Progressive Party, who they viewed as the real enemy: the bourgeoisie. The argument made by the ADAV for this tactic was the belief that Bismarck's government would concede some, at least, of the socialists' demands, which included freedom of association and of the press, some finances for cooperative factories and, most importantly, manhood suffrage.[20]

The Social Democratic Workers' Party had been formally formed in August 1869 at a congress in Eisenach, which led to it also being referred to as the Eisenach Party. The leaders of the party were Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel. The party emanated from a federation of workers' clubs (Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine), formed six years earlier. In sharp contrast to the ADAV, it was a broad movement of both socialist and non-socialist democrats, including liberals, and was primarily opposed to Prussian dominance. At the point of setting up the party at Eisenach the Social Democratic Workers' Party also differed from the ADAV in that it became, at least in name, 'a branch of the International Working Men's Association'.[21]

Liebknecht and Bebel had persuaded the majority of the clubs in the Verband to accept the programme of the International Working Men's Association in the summer of 1868.[22] The International Working Men's Association had been founded in London in September 1864, its Inaugural Address written by Karl Marx. In favour of the rights to form trade unions and to strike, the eight-hour working day and public education, the programme of the International initially supported cooperatives, but it then adopted the idea of nationalization of production. The International moved to the policy of nationalization of land but after the founding of the party at Eisenach. Liebknecht voted for it at the International's congress in Basle the following month, September 1869, but only after doing everything he could to prevent the resolution for land nationalization from being put to the vote. The policy was voted in by a large majority.[23]

The coming together of the ADAV and the Social Democratic Workers' Party, and their then uniting to form the SAP in 1875, had much to do with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. The conduct of the war, the establishment of the German Reich, the viciousness of the attack on the Paris Commune and the severity of the punishments meted out afterwards revealed Bismarck in his true colours. After the peace treaty had been agreed, Bismarck had handed over 10,000 French prisoners of war to the French troops to be used in the suppression of the Commune. In the eight days it took, an estimated

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14,000 defenders of the Commune were killed, and a further 10,137 taken prisoner.[24] Bismarck did not simply disappoint the ADAV's original faith in him nor even just confirm the rival socialist party's antipathetic view of Bismarck: he persecuted socialists of both parties. Following the elections in early 1874, in which the ADAV received 180,319 votes and the Social Democratic Workers' Party 171,351, harassment of both parties increased dramatically, and in Prussia the ADAV was ordered to disband entirely.[25]

Back in 1867, under the Prussian Constitution, both Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel had been elected to the Reichstag of the North German Confederation. Not seduced by the trappings of parliament, they had used it as a platform to reach out to, as Liebknecht put it, 'the masses outside'.[26] During the Franco-Prussian War Liebknecht and Bebel's opposition in the Reichstag was at its strongest and most significant, and following Bismarck's instruction, the Military Governor issued a statement banning 'all meetings of the socialists whether these call themselves by the name of social-democrats or People's Party'.[27] Liebknecht and Bebel spoke out bravely in opposition to the German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine from France and opposed finances for the continuation of the war. As a consequence, in November 1870, they were arrested and charged with high treason. They were released, still awaiting trial, in March 1871: only after, that is, the peace treaty had been signed with France and, furthermore, too late for them to campaign actively in the general election.

The outcome of the election, in March 1871, left Bebel, although at that point still in prison, the only socialist representative in the Reichstag. Once released from prison, he used his position in the Reichstag to argue compassionately and persistently in defence of the Paris Commune, which had been proclaimed on 18 March 1871. Following the defeat of the Paris Commune in May 1871, and the increase in state repression that followed, the International began to fall apart; its disintegration was essentially complete by 1873. Liebknecht and Bebel's trial for high treason began in 1872; sentenced to two years' imprisonment, they went back to prison.[28]

In the next general election, held in January 1874, the percentage of the votes received by the Social Democratic Workers' Party increased from 3.2 to 6.8 per cent, and the number of Social Democrat deputies in the Reichstag also increased to six, although this figure included the imprisoned Bebel and Liebknecht.[29] In that election, three ADAV deputies were also elected, and it was within the Reichstag that the representatives of the two socialist parties began, tentatively at first, to cooperate. So it was that, at the Gotha Congress of 22–27 May 1875, the two parties came together to achieve unification as the SAP.

THE GOTHA PROGRAMME AND MARX'S CRITIQUE

Being worked out by two parties coming together, the Gotha Programme of 1875 made concessions to each party, and Karl Marx wrote highly critical notes on the draft, which he sent to Wilhelm Bracke, one of the

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founding members of the Social Democratic Workers' Party. Along with the draft written all over with critical notes Marx also enclosed a letter in which he asked Bracke to read the draft with his critical comments and then send it to other members of the party committee: by name, August Geib and Ignaz Auer and, naturally, the party's leaders, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht.[30] The programme began by setting out an agreed statement of 'basic principles', then its purpose ('the German Workers' party strives by all legal means for the free state and socialist society') and then its demands. The demands included 'the establishment of producers' co-operatives societies'; 'universal, equal and direct suffrage' (for both women and men, that is, not just male suffrage); the secret ballot; 'direct legislation by the people'; 'the abolition of all laws of exception, especially all laws restricting the freedom of the press, of association and assembly'; a people's militia to replace the standing army; free universal education by the state; the shortening of work hours; and a series of reforms relating to workers' health and safety.[31]

The political demands made by the newly founded SAP were in line with those of the 1848 German Revolution, in which August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht had played an active part.[32] Although he drew attention to the lack of precision in some of the demands, Marx found much that was 'good'[33] in the programme, and he recognized the advantage for workers of a unified party. Marx's main objections concerned the whole idea of drawing up a compromised statement of principles agreed on with the Lassallean ADAV, and so he focussed on the statements where concessions had been given to Lassallean ideas. In broad terms his objections were that the statements on labour did not fit with those of the International, and he laid out the correct Marxist analysis; his strongest criticisms were directed at the notion of 'a free state' and the lumping together of all classes other than the working class as 'only one reactionary mass'.[34]

In respect of the 'one reactionary mass' claim, Marx argued that it completely contradicted the argument of *The Communist Manifesto* that identified different revolutionary classes in each mode of production and failed to take on board the dynamics of class analysis. Quoting from the *Manifesto,* Marx pointed out that attention is drawn to the 'lower middle class' becoming revolutionary 'in view of [its] impending transfer into the proletariat'. He then asked, rhetorically: 'Has one proclaimed to the artisans, small manufacturers, etc., and *peasants* during the elections: Relatively to us you, together with the bourgeoisie and feudal lords, form only one reactionary mass?'[35]

In respect of a 'free state', Marx asked:

> Free state—what is this?
>
> It is by no means the aim of the workers, who have got rid of the narrow mentality of humble subjects, to set the state free. In the German Empire the 'state' is almost as 'free' as in Russia. Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it, and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the 'freedom of the state'.

> The German workers' party—at least if it adopts the programme—shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; in that instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing state (or of the future state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own *intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases*.
>
> (Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', pp. 326–7)

The draft programme was adopted at the Gotha Congress with only very minor corrections[36] and without heed to Marx's questions concerning the role of the party in attracting the votes of the peasants and the middle class and the independence of the state.

THE SAP UNDER THE ANTI-SOCIALIST LAWS

The increase in support for the Social Democrats in the 1874 election and the consequent rise in the number of the party's deputies in the Reichstag, followed then by the organization of the SAP, led to a ratcheting up of repression against social democrats and their associations. This repression culminated in the introduction, in October 1878, of the Exceptional Law against, to use its own wording, the 'universally dangerous endeavours of Social Democracy'.[37] Although entirely anti-socialist in its design it became known as the 'Socialist Law'. Under the law, the SAP and its connected associations, including trade unions, were outlawed. Only moderate unions, liberal and not socialist, remained legal. Renewed every two years, the law remained in place through to September 1890. That year, Bismarck, dismissed by the new emperor, ceased to be chancellor, and the Socialist Law was no longer renewed.

The aim of the Socialist Law was the destruction of the Social Democrats. In its first decade, 1878 to 1888, the use of the law led to the closure of a total of 95 local central trade-union organizations, 23 local and central workers' insurance societies, and 214 political and social organizations. It also led to the SAP's cash assets being confiscated, with further contributions prohibited, and to meetings and the distribution of materials being targeted by forbidding pub owners and booksellers to allow the party to make use of their properties. Over that decade, the law also resulted in around 900 people being sent into domestic exile, 293 of those expulsions being members of the Berlin party, which was especially hard hit.[38]

In spite of the anti-socialist legislation and the repression suffered by the SAP supporters and sympathisers, socialists continued to be represented in parliament, and, furthermore, from 1884 their support strengthened. In the 1887 election the votes for the party rose to 10.1 per cent, and in 1890 they almost doubled, reaching 19.7 per cent, which translated into a not insignificant 8.8 per cent of the deputies in the Reichstag.[39] Also of significance,

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in 1889, the year before the SAP's impressive electoral performance, the Second International was founded in Paris. Moves to found a new International had begun at a conference in Chur, Switzerland, in October 1881; Liebknecht had attended the conference as the SAP's delegate. Unlike the First International, which had been based on workers' organizations of all kinds, this Second International was based on political parties.

Commenting favourably on the SAP's performance in the election of 1890, Friedrich Engels wrote:

> Today the party has 35 deputies and one and a half million voters, more voters than any other party could boast in the '90 election. Eleven years' Imperial proscription and state of siege have strengthened it fourfold, and made it the strongest party in Germany . . . This party stands today at the point where one can ascertain, with virtually mathematical precision, the time at which it will achieve dominance.
>
> (Engels, 'Der Sozialismus in Deutschland')[40]

Such, indeed, was the party, campaigning for which Rosa Luxemburg, in her letter to Leo Jogiches, was to declare 'an honour'. And Engels was clearly right, for the percentage of votes received by the SAP in 1890 beat those received by each of the other two main parties: the Centre Party gained 18.6 per cent of the votes, and the Conservatives gained 12.4 per cent of the votes. The electoral system did not, however, translate these results into seats in proportion to the votes: the Centre Party had 26.7 per cent of the deputies in the Reichstag, and, even more disproportionately, the Conservatives had 18.4 per cent of the deputies.[41] But even under such conditions there was no doubt that the trend justified optimism.

TACTICAL INNOVATION AND EXPLOITATION OF LOOPHOLES

How this increasing support for the SAP through to 1890 was achieved was partly down to the party increasing the number of seats that they contested. In the four elections held from 1877 to 1884 the seats contested never rose above half of those in the Reichstag, but by 1890 the Social Democrats had come close to fighting every seat, and in all subsequent elections they did fight every seat, even those where their chances of gaining votes were minimal.[42] But faced with the anti-socialist legislation, honing the party organization and expanding the number of seats fought clearly could not, of themselves, explain all of the increase in votes. The complete explanation included a mixture of tactical innovation and exploitation of loopholes found in the 1871 constitution and in an amendment to the Electoral Law.

The most notable tactical innovation took place in Berlin at the railway station. When the victims of the legislation were being dispatched into exile

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their comrades gathered en masse at the Berlin railway station to show their support and to bid them farewell. Ordered out from the waiting room by police, the supporters queued in an orderly fashion to buy tickets for the departing train. With the extra surge in passengers in the hundreds, the railway had to attach additional carriages, which caused long delays in the exiles' departure. The delays not only ensured a big and prolonged send-off but also brought more publicity. Rule-following also brought the social democrats further success.[43]

The loopholes that were exploited in the constitution related to Article 29. As mentioned above, in Article 29, because Bismarck deliberately avoided reference to political parties and made reference only to deputies and voters, each deputy represented 'the whole people'. As 'party' had no bearing, any voter could therefore stand for election: even a socialist. Once elected, the deputy also then benefited from parliamentary immunity. As deputies of 'the whole people' given free range on the floor of the Reichstag, with debates officially recorded, the words of socialist deputies, taken from the printed recordings, could then be quoted, legitimately, in newspapers and read by anyone.[44]

The Electoral Law also provided a very useful loophole. In an amendment that had been passed in 1869, the right had been given to anyone standing for election to form 'election committees' and 'election clubs': the freedom, that is, to campaign and form associations. All that needed to be done to overcome the Socialist Law during election time was to drop 'socialist' and to change 'Socialist Worker Committee' to 'Worker Election Committee' and so on. During the designated 'election time', leaflets so adapted could not then be legally confiscated. Election time lasted for around a month, and there were also run-offs, which added around two weeks; and there were many by-elections, which added further 'election times'.[45] In such circumstances the experience of fighting an election could feel somewhat like a proxy for fighting a revolution.

The votes for the SAP having very nearly doubled (from 10.1 to 19.7 percent) between the elections of 1887 and 1890, it was in the following year, 1891, that, at the party conference held in Erfurt, the SAP changed its name to the German Social Democratic Party, SPD.

THE ERFURT PROGRAMME, 1891

The Erfurt Congress, held after the end of the anti-socialist laws, was noteworthy not simply for the change to the party's name. It was also significant for the adoption of a new party programme to replace the Gotha Programme of 1875, which had been adopted when the SAP formed from the unification of the two socialist parties. Since the time of the Gotha Programme, significant changes had been taking place in Germany. After 1871 rapid industrial expansion had occurred.[46] This rapid industrial expansion meant, therefore,

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that the size of the industrial working class had grown; furthermore, the working class had not faced a smooth improvement in their conditions. There had been economic depressions in the late 1870s and early 1880s with real wages declining.[47] Recognizing these changes, prior to the Erfurt Congress a committee had been set up for the purpose of revising the party programme. It had three members: August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht and the party's chief organizer, Ignaz Auer.

In an editorial in *Neue Zeit* (New Times), the party's publication that specialized in theoretical issues, concentrating mainly on economic questions, Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein had published their analysis of the implications for the party programme of the economic changes that had been taking place; and their contribution had then been published more widely. Their analysis so influenced the revision process that the 'principles' section of the Erfurt Programme, which preceded its list of demands, was essentially drafted from these publications. Kautsky and Bernstein's argument was drawn principally from chapter 32 in Marx's *Capital* (Volume I, published in 1867): the chapter titled 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation'.[48] In that chapter, Marx stated that 'capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation'.[49] As the Erfurt Programme had it, 'the economic development of bourgeois society leads by a law of nature to the demise of the small enterprise'.[50]

In 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', Marx argued that the concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands, both nationally and internationally, together with the growth of the working class would inevitably bring about class conflict between the owners of capital—the bourgeoisie—and those who had only their labour to sell, for wages—the proletariat. He drew a sharp contrast between the artisan-type workers in earlier capitalist society and the later factory-type workers: 'Self-earned private property, that is based, so to say, on the fusing together of the isolated, independent labouring individual with the conditions of his labour, is supplanted by capitalistic private property, which rests on exploitation of the nominally free labour of others, *i.e.,* on wages labour'.[51] With small businesses being taken over by 'colossal large enterprises', workers would become entirely dependent on wages, which would lead, Marx argued, not simply to the growth of the proletariat but also to their increased exploitation, misery, oppression and degradation, with the class struggle becoming 'bitter'.

The Erfurt Programme signified a shift in emphasis from the demands for piecemeal improvements to the political, economic and social systems as the means to achieve a socialist society, which had been central to the Gotha Programme, to an emphasis on economic forces. In line with Marx's chapter 32 in *Capital,* Volume I, the principles section of the Erfurt Programme concludes: 'The German Social Democratic Party therefore does not fight for new class privileges and class rights, but for the abolition of class rule and of classes themselves'.[52] It went on to state that the party now fought 'for

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equal rights and equal obligations for all, without distinction of sex or birth' and continued: 'Starting from these views, it fights not only the exploitation and oppression of wage earners in society today, but every manner of exploitation and oppression, whether directed against a class, party, sex, or race.'[53] In this vein, the 'demands' that followed the 'principles' were laid out in two groups: one general, relevant to attracting supporters; the other, specifically relating to 'the protection of the working classes'.

The first in the list of the total of nine general demands, those not relating specifically to the protection of the working class, was for universal suffrage, 'without distinction of sex', for everyone over the age of twenty in free and fair elections under proportional representation, which social democrats viewed as more truly representative of voters' wishes and therefore more democratic.[54] The second demand also sought greater democracy through referendums. The third demand, in line with the party's internationalist position, laid out its pacifism: a militia was to be set in place of the standing army, and the elected parliament ('popular assembly') was to make decisions on war and peace, with all 'international disputes' to be dealt with through arbitration. The fourth demand reflected the party's commitment to equality between the sexes: 'Abolition of all laws that place women at a disadvantage compared with men in matters of public or private law'. The fifth demanded abolition of all laws that prevented full freedoms of expression, opinion, association, assembly and religion and made clear that religion was a private matter and that religious institutions should not, therefore, be publicly funded. The sixth demanded secular schools and free education, including free meals, for all boys and girls. The seventh demand concerned the law and included 'free administration of justice and free legal assistance' and also the abolition of capital punishment. The eighth demand was for free medical care and free burial. The ninth demand concerned tax changes to prevent the benefits from going to the 'privileged few'.

The first of the second category of demands, those relating specifically to the protection of the working class, were for laws on worker protection: a maximum eight-hour normal working day; the minimum working age to be fourteen; prohibition of night work other than in exceptional industries; a minimum of thirty-six consecutive hours rest from work each week; the prohibition of the truck system (which forced workers to spend their wages exclusively at the employer's shop). The second demand concerned the proper supervision and inspection of working conditions at all levels. The third demanded the legal equality of agricultural labourers and domestic servants with industrial workers. The fourth demand, 'safeguarding of the freedom of association', was for the rights of trade unions. The fifth demand concerned pensions, unemployment and sick pay under a state system of workers' insurance, with the workers to be crucially involved in its administration.

The Erfurt Programme had gone a long way towards responding to Marx's critique of the Gotha Programme, which the newly unified party had failed to do back in 1875. Although the new programme focussed both

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more clearly and more directly on economic forces and the abolition of class rule, Marx's issues of the state, the critique of its independence in the current capitalist society and its abolition in the one-class society, and of the party's relationship with, and so policies for, the other working classes in capitalist society—the middle class and the peasants—were not responded to by the Erfurt Programme. Not mentioning the abolition of the state at the time, given that it would have led to accusations of anarchism and so could have led to the loss of potential votes, may have been politic; the opportunity to attract votes through policies for the middle class and the peasants may, though, have been lost. In either case, with the Socialist Law not renewed after 1890, the Erfurt Programme brought dividends.

Following the introduction of the Erfurt Programme, votes for the SPD continued to rise. From the 19.7 per cent of votes gained in the 1890 election, which had so impressed Engels, the figure rose to 23.2 per cent in the 1893 election and to 27.2 per cent in the election held in 1898.[55] Furthermore, during the 1890s the membership of the SPD rose to around 250,000, and the party was the strongest in the International.[56]

This was the party—the largest and best organized socialist party in Europe, with its Erfurt Programme underpinned by Marx's analysis, with its leading figures having been participants in the 1848 German Revolution, its history of imprisonments of party supporters, its successes against the odds under the anti-socialist laws and its continuing growth in spite of the uphill struggle under the Imperial Constitution—that Rosa Luxemburg had come to Germany to join in 1898 and had felt it such 'an honour' to be campaigning for in the election of that year.

NOTES

1. The Freikorps troops, right-wing paramilitary forces, formed out of the units of regular soldiers disbanded at the end of the First World War, in accordance with the Allies' requirements. See M. Balfour, *Germany,* London: Routledge, 1992, p. 39.
2. For the above paragraph see E. Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life,* London: Harrap, 1987, pp. 244–6; and P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 486–9.
3. B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, pp. 291–2.
4. Prior to the Law of Association of 1908, women could not legally join political organizations in Germany. R.J. Evans, *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War,* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, p. 102. However, the law prior to 1908 did not explicitly make electioneering illegal, and pushing the boundaries of the law constraining women's political activity was part of the SPD's strategy. M.J. Maynes, '"*Genossen and Genossinnen*": Depictions of Gender, Militancy, and Organizing in the German Socialist Press, 1890–1914' in D.E. Barclay and E.D. Weitz (eds) *German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990,* New York: Berghahn Books, 1998, p. 153.

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5. Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 86.
6. Róża Luksenburg, *Listy do Leona Jogichesa-Tyszki,* ed. Feliks Tych, 3 vols, Warsaw: Książka I Wiedza, 1968–71, p. 194, quoted in Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 78. This is not the translation found in G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds), *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, where the letters are translated into English from the German translation of the original Polish. For the reference to the polling station see postcard 10 in E. Ettinger, *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches,* London: Pluto Press, 1979, p. 42.
7. See F. Arends and G. Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', in D. Berg-Schlosser and J. Mitchell (eds) *Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919–39: Systematic Case Studies,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, pp. 200–5.
8. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 404–6.
9. Strictly the KPD was proclaimed, retroactively, on 1 January 1919. See E.D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 92–3.
10. For full details of the results see Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', pp. 202–3. The turnout was 83 per cent, and out of the 423 seats, the SPD gained 165, the USPD, 22.
11. Those dependent on charity were not given the vote, and convicted criminals, bankrupts, active soldiers and sailors, and wards of the court were also denied the vote. For this, and also for what follows on election laws, see M.L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 7.
12. J. Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914* (Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell), London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966, p. 267, fn 3.
13. For examples, see Anderson, *Practicing Democracy,* pp. 45–62.
14. W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 276 and 323, fn 8.
15. There were 58 members of the Bundesrat: Prussia had 17 members; the next largest were Bavaria, with 6 members, and then Saxony and Württemberg, each with 4 members. See Balfour, *Germany: The Tides of Power,* p. 13.
16. For the above paragraph see S. Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 345–6.
17. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy,* p. 287.
18. For the above see R.P. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International 1864–1872,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 1–33.
19. Quoted in ibid., p. 6.
20. Ibid., p. 9. Lassalle was killed in a duel on 31 August 1864, shortly before the foundation of the International. That Lassalle had had secret meetings with Bismarck became known only after Lassalle's death, and his successor as leader, J.B. von Schweitzer, actually advocated, in his journal *Der Sozial-Demokrat,* an alliance between workers and the landed aristocracy. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 99.
21. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International,* p. 181.
22. This was helped by the publication of Marx's *Capital* (Volume I) in the previous year, 1867: see ibid., pp. 128–35.
23. Ibid., pp. 192–3.
24. Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 153 and 156.
25. R.H. Dominick III, *Wilhelm Liebknecht and the Founding of the German Social Democratic Party,* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 226.

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26. Quoted in Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International,* p. 118.
27. Ibid., p. 213. 'People's Party' was a left-liberal party, founded in 1865, with which Bebel and Liebknecht worked closely between 1865 and 1869. See Dominick, *Wilhelm Liebknecht and the Founding of the German Social Democratic Party,* pp. 123–31.
28. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International,* p. 219.
29. See Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 80, Table 3.1. From a near negligible 0.5 per cent the increase was to a more noticeable 2.3 per cent of the total deputies.
30. See K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, pp. 311–31. Marx's critical comments on the draft were published, in *Neue Zeit* (the party's publication that specialized in theoretical issues) in January 1891, by Engels, as 'Critique of the Gotha Programme': it included a foreword written by Engels and also the letter that Marx had sent to W. Bracke from London on 5 May 1875. Engels decision to publish in 1891 was because the proposed new party programme was about to be discussed at the Unity Congress in Erfurt. See ibid., p. 725, fn 247.
31. See Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme': 'Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party', pp. 315–31; and for the full text of the 'Gotha Programme' see https://archive.org/details/GothaProgramme.
32. For details of the Frankfurt Constitution, drawn up in April 1848, and the circumstances around it see H. J. Hahn, *The 1948 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe,* Harlow: Longman, 2001, pp. 143–4.
33. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme': 'Letter to Bracke', p. 314.
34. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme': 'Marginal Notes to the Programme of the German Workers' Party', pp. 321–2.
35. Ibid., p. 322.
36. Ibid., (Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*), p. 725, fn 248.
37. See M. Levin, 'Marx, Engels and the Parliamentary Path', in M. Cowling and L. Wilde (eds) *Approaches to Marx,* Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989, p. 157.
38. For the above, see Anderson, *Practicing Democracy,* p. 286.
39. For the above figures see Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* pp. 80–1, Tables 3.1 and 3.2. And this increase in votes was in spite of the legislation that Bismarck had introduced to weaken working-class support for socialist organizations: the sickness insurance law of 1883, the accident insurance acts of 1884 and 1885 and the old age insurance act of 1889. See P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* New York: Collier Books, 1952, pp. 52–3.
40. Quoted in Levin, 'Marx, Engels and the Parliamentary Path', p. 157.
41. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 80, Table 3.1.
42. Ibid., p. 80.
43. For the above, see Anderson, *Practicing Democracy,* p. 287.
44. Ibid.
45. For the above paragraph see ibid., pp. 289–91. A run-off election between the two candidates receiving the highest numbers of votes was held in a district where no candidate gained the necessary minimum number of votes in the first ballot.
46. For example, steel production was thirteen times greater in 1890 than in 1870 and for further examples see R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968, pp. 36–7.
47. See Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 71; Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* p. 185, Table 4, where the

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dominant view is that real wages declined between 1871 and 1880. Moore also recounts the demoralizing effects on workers of the uncertainty of wages from week to week because of the system of piece rates and complex deductions (pp. 185–91).

48. For the above see Hahn, *The 1948 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe,* pp. 71–2. For the text see K. Marx, 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, pp. 232–4.
49. Marx, 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', p. 234.
50. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 102.
51. Ibid., p. 233.
52. 'The Erfurt Program', 1891, http://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm, p. 3, and for further quotes from the programme below.
53. Ibid.
54. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy,* p. 342.
55. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 23, Table 1.1.
56. Ibid., p. 164, fn 1; and Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 200. By 1909/10, the SPD had 720,000 members and 74 newspapers and its annual finances were RM 1,110,000 (Guttsman, p. 131, Table 4.1.), and by 1914 its membership had reached over a million (1,085,905) (Braunthal, p. 351).

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2 Preparing the Actor
For International Socialism

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Rosa Luxemburg's life for socialism had begun in Poland, but it had been in Switzerland that, in 1893, she together with Leo Jogiches, Julian Marchlewski and Adolf Warszawski (Warski), had founded a party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego), the SDKP. Rosa Luxemburg was twenty-two years old and a student at the University of Zurich. Jogiches and Marchlewski were also students at the university, and the four were similar in age. The party had around two hundred members. At the Third Congress of the Second International, held in Zurich in August of that year, standing on a chair so as better to be seen and heard, Rosa Luxemburg made the case for the party's recognition. It was her first public speech, and she succeeded in swaying the audience, with a majority of the delegates at the congress voting for the party to be recognized. Her success, however, was short-lived; the result was quickly reversed through the Polish delegation's demand for the vote to be taken, formally, by national delegations.[1] The demand heeded, the vote was lost: 7 for and 9 against, and the SDKP had to wait until the next congress, which was not to be held for another three years.[2] In 1896, at that Fourth Congress of the Second International, which was held in London, the party succeeded in gaining recognition.

The reason why the SDKP's case for party recognition had been rejected at the Congress of the Second International in 1893 was because another Polish party, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), had been founded the year before. The PPS sought not only socialism for Poles but also national independence for Poland. The formation of the SDKP was in rejection of the appeal of nationalism; Rosa Luxemburg's party was internationalist. Her choice of position followed the one she had taken back in Warsaw, Poland, when, as a teenager, she became a member of the illegal Polish Social Revolutionary Party, the Second 'Proletariat'. Back then, as in 1893, there was an alternative choice: an existing socialist group that advocated independence for Poland, the 'Polish People', which had been organized in 1881 by Boleslaw Limanowski. Limanowski's view was that socialism could not be achieved while one nation, Russia, oppressed another, Poland, and he was sceptical of the potential for Russian revolutionaries to gain the necessary

mass support for revolution in Russia. Furthermore, he believed not only that socialism was compatible with a desire for a Polish Poland but also, in consequence, that the revolutionary class was constituted not exclusively of workers: peasants were included and also intellectuals and young intellectuals, students, especially.[3]

'PROLETARIAT'

Rosa Luxemburg had joined the Second 'Proletariat' in 1887, very soon after leaving high school (gymnasium).[4] The Second 'Proletariat' was part of the remnants, those, that is, who still remained undetected by the police, of the first 'Proletariat', founded in Warsaw by Ludwik Waryński in 1882.[5] In 1883 the 'Proletariat' party organized a mass strike near Warsaw and a series of further strikes elsewhere in Poland. In response, the state became more repressive, and, in January 1886, four of the party's leaders were hanged. Waryński himself had been arrested back in 1883 and was sentenced, in 1886, to sixteen years' hard labour: he died in 1889 at thirty-three years of age.[6] While Waryński was under arrest the second in command had signed an alliance with Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), the Russian anarchist group set up in 1879. The People's Will was the first modern terrorist organization and, most famously, had succeeded in assassinating Tsar Alexander II in 1881.[7]

As envisaged by Waryński, the party, true to its name, viewed the proletariat as the revolutionary class. Aiming for mass support, 'Proletariat' focussed on the practical economic problems that workers faced in respect of their rights and conditions. Waryński was not impressed by Polish nationalism, and, therefore, neither was the party. He had travelled widely in both Russian-ruled and Austrian-ruled Poland and, before his return to Warsaw, had spent time in Switzerland. Waryński developed the view that the Polish workers were as much, if not more, exploited by Polish capitalists than by the 'Russian autocracy' and that the workers, therefore, would be relatively uninterested in the issue of Polish independence as compared with the economic problems which they had to face every day of their lives.[8]

Later, in 1897, the year before Rosa Luxemburg went to Berlin and became a member of the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, she criticized 'Proletariat' for its alliance with the People's Will because of its policy and practice of terrorism, and she also criticized 'Proletariat' for being too centralized in its organization.[9] What she did not criticize was the party's internationalist stance.

THE WORKERS' CAUSE AND THE SDKPiL

In July 1893, the month before Rosa Luxemburg made the case for the SDKP at the Congress of the Second International in Zurich, the first edition

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appeared of a newspaper, *Sprawa Robotnicza* (The Workers' Cause), published in Paris. Conceived by a small group of Poles abroad, most of them students, the new newspaper was funded by Leo Jogiches and, contrasting with the PPS line, made no mention of Polish independence. Rather, it promoted the line of Polish workers' cooperation with Russian workers. As one of the ways to be allowed to send delegates of a group to the congress was for it to produce a newspaper, it was the publication and distribution of *Sprawa Robotnicza* that enabled Rosa Luxemburg's presence at the Zurich Congress of the Second International in 1893. By January 1894, issue no. 7, Rosa Luxemburg, using the nom de plume R. Kruszyńska, had become its editor.

In March 1894 the SDKP held its first congress. The next SDKP congress, which was not held until 1900, was called to make the changes to the party's constitution made necessary by the Lithuanian group's joining with the party in December 1899 and the consequent name change to the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL. Meantime, in July 1896, Rosa Luxemburg went to Paris to ensure the completion of the next two issues of *Sprawa Robotnicza*. While there, she also lobbied for the SDKP resolution for party recognition, which was to be put for the second time; July was the month in which that crucial Congress of the Second International was to be held, in London. At that congress, after the resolution's initial failure three years earlier, the party gained recognition. The two issues of *Sprawa Robotnicz* prepared that month were the last.[10]

Rosa Luxemburg had not simply become the editor of *Sprawa Robotnicz;* she was also its main contributor, and she had also written other articles in which she argued the SDKP's internationalist line, and these had been published in the SPD's *Neue Zeit*. These articles proved so controversial that Georgy Plekhanov, the most revered of all the Russian Marxists at the time, wrote an article in reply in defence of the PPS position, and Karl Kautsky, the editor of *Neue Zeit,* who had accepted the articles because of their high quality, also engaged in the debate by writing a closely argued response, at length. Drawing on Marx and Engels's writings on the Polish Question, Plekhanov disagreed with Luxemburg's conclusion and argued for the importance of the reunification of Poland as an independent nation. In the preface to the Polish edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1892, Engels had written: 'And the restoration of an independent strong Poland is a matter which concerns not only the Poles but all of us. A sincere international collaboration of the European nations is possible only if each of these nations is fully autonomous in its own house.'[11]

Rosa Luxemburg was not daunted.[12] Writing later, in the 1905 anthology of works on the Polish Question, in which Kautsky also contributed and to whose contribution she refers, Rosa Luxemburg comments: 'In preparing this defence, Kautsky found himself faced with the necessity of having to develop entirely from his own resources a wholly original theory in support of the restoration of Poland, inasmuch as among the actual advocates of this programme not a trace of a well-grounded argument could be discerned.'[13]

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Kautsky was generally recognized as the leading Marxist theoretician of the Second International. And, undaunted indeed, she continued: 'Lacking any knowledge whatsoever of social life in Poland, he (Kautsky) was forced to deduce the interests of the different Polish social classes from the nature of things—by mere abstract reasoning'.[14]

It was Kautsky's position and not that of the SDKP, however, which stayed closer to Marx.

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MARX AND 'THE POLISH QUESTION'

In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848, Marx and Engels had specifically drawn attention to the party's support for the 'party in Poland' 'that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow, in 1846'.[15] One of that 'party of Poland', Joachim Lelewel, who had been involved in the 1830 Polish revolution, had, while in exile in Brussels, also worked closely with Marx and Engels, and the 'party' of Poles had made public their support for the Communist Manifesto in 1848. The issue of Poland also played a part in bringing the International Working Men's Association (First International) into existence.[16]

In January 1863, a further revolution against Russian domination had begun in Poland, and it had succeeded in setting up a provisional government. After a year of fighting, the revolution had finally been crushed by a powerful military force sent in by the Tsar's government:[17] a reminder of the strength of Russian military forces used in the crushing of the 1848 European revolutions. Mass meetings in support of the Polish revolution, particularly in France and England, played an important part in bringing workers' organizations together for the founding meeting of the International in September 1864.[18] Polish representatives of workers' organizations were elected as members of the provisional central committee at that meeting along with British, French, Italian, Swiss and German representatives.[19]

Marx had summarized his view on the 'Polish Question' in a short written instruction to the delegates of the Provisional General Council of the First Congress of the (First) International in Geneva in 1866.[20] He justified his position in both realistic and strategic terms. First, in answer to his own question 'Why do the workmen of Europe take up this question?' Marx argued that it is because 'the middle-class writers and agitators conspire to suppress it' and, stressing the injustice that the Polish workmen will see in this, he comments that those self same middle-class writers and agitators 'patronize all sorts of nationalities, on the Continent, even Ireland'. The reason for this 'reticence' on Polish nationalism, Marx argued, was because of Russia ('Asiatic Power'):[21] 'Aristocrats and bourgeois' alike, he argued, 'look upon the dark Asiatic Power in the background as a last resource against the advancing tide of working class ascendancy'. He crucially added: 'That power can only be effectually put down by the restoration of Poland upon a democratic basis.'[22]

Marx's second point expanded on the strategic value of a democratic Poland for Germany. In short, he argued that the existence of a democratic Poland would ensure that Germany would cooperate not with the 'Holy Alliance' (Russia, Prussia and Austria)[23] but with France—'republican France'—and that it would benefit the working-class movement, which, he explained, would otherwise 'continuously be interrupted, checked, and retarded, until the great European question be set to rest'. Marx's third argument concerned 'the duty of the working class', which, he reasoned, was not simply to support the Polish workers' struggle for an independent Poland but 'to take the initiative in this matter, because Germany is one of the partitioners of Poland.'[24]

Poland had ceased to be a single independent entity in the eighteenth century. Between 1772 and 1795 it had been divided into three parts: the largest part, the east plus a passage of land between the other two parts, ruled by Russia; the north west ruled by Prussia; the south west ruled by Austria. The independent Poland that Marx had in mind was the one that had existed before 1772 and, as such, did not map onto a nation of exclusively Polish people.[25] In 1815 the Russian-ruled part was created into the Kingdom of Poland, with the Tsar of Russia taking on the additional title of King of Poland. Warsaw, situated within the passage between the Prussian-ruled and Austrian-ruled parts, became the capital of the Kingdom of Poland.

The Polish Question Re-visited

Early in 1882, the year in which Ludwik Waryński set up 'Proletariat' in Warsaw and the year after Boleslaw Limanowski had set up the 'Polish People' party, Karl Kautsky had written to Friedrich Engels to ask him for his view on the Polish Question. Kautsky, at the time, was one of the regular contributors to *Sozialdemokrat,* the publication of the Socialist Workers' Party, produced in Zurich by the exiles; he needed to lay out a clear position as between the two rival views of internationalism versus nationalism. Both Waryński and Limanowski had been spending time in Switzerland, in Geneva. Engels's answer was far longer than the instruction to the first meeting of the (First) International that Marx had written on the Polish Question in 1866; Engels was at pains both to keep a historical perspective on the current thinking and to bring consideration of events up-to-date. Not least were his reflections on the consequences for socialism that had developed in Italy since its unification in 1860 and on the significance of the unification of Germany that had taken place under Bismarck a decade later. Crucially, having taken these events into account, Engels's view did not depart from that expressed by Marx sixteen years earlier. His letter[26] included the following statements:

> 'An international movement of the proletariat is possible only among independent nations' . . .

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> 'Polish socialists who do not place the liberation of their country at the head of their programme, appear to me, as would German socialists who do not demand first and foremost repeal of the socialist law, freedom of the press, association and assembly. In order to be able to fight one needs first a soil to stand on, air, light and space. Otherwise all is idle chatter.' . . .
>
> 'Thus I hold the view that there are *two* nations in Europe which do not only have the right but the duty to be nationalistic before they become internationalists: the Irish and the Poles.'
>
> (Engels, Letter to Karl Kautsky, 7 February 1982)

In the early part of the letter, Engels had made an important distinction between Ireland and Poland in respect of their strategic significance: 'We may leave Ireland out of consideration here, since it affects the situation on the European continent only very indirectly. But Poland is situated in the centre of the continent, and the maintenance of its partition is the very tie which binds the Holy Alliance together again and again.' In the closing paragraphs of the letter, Engels made a dismissive comment but one that, for its insight for Rosa Luxemburg's experience after leaving Poland, deserves highlighting. 'As concerns the differences between the Poles in Switzerland, those are quarrels between émigrés, which are rarely of importance . . . with the impulse of all émigrés to do, or at least to plan something new, one plan has followed another, one allegedly new theory has replaced another.'[27]

Rosa Luxemburg's belief, so clearly stated in her 'Foreword to the Anthology: *The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*' (1905), that she had a far deeper understanding than had Kautsky, with his 'mere abstract reasoning', was understandable and not simply because she herself was Polish and had lived in Poland from birth until the age of eighteen and, having left Poland for Switzerland in 1889, had also continued to maintain close communication both with Poles back home and with Poles in Switzerland. Rosa Luxemburg's belief in her understanding came also from the fact that, while in Switzerland, she had studied economic statistics on Poland as research for her doctorate.

Unlike Marx and Engels and, by abstraction, Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg was looking back not to 1772 and to the lessons of 1830, 1848 and 1863 and the history of the First International but seeking to apply Marx's analysis to the Poland of the day. Her position was that Poland was no longer the agrarian country that it had been fifty years before. In consequence of its industrialization, Poland now had a proletariat that could join with the Russian proletariat, and, as such, not only were the interests of Polish and Russian workers no longer in conflict, but Russia itself could no longer be that same Asiatic power capable of putting down revolutions in the West.

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POLAND TO SWITZERLAND

Warsaw, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland, was where Rosa had lived from 1874 to 1889. At the age of three, she had moved there with her family from Zamość, also in the Kingdom of Poland, where she had been born on 5 March 1871. Rozalia (Róża) Luksenburg, as she was called then, was the youngest of five children, her sister the eldest with three brothers in between. In 1889, at eighteen years old, she had left Warsaw for Switzerland intent on continuing her education at the University of Zurich.[28] In Poland, university education was not open to women. She registered in Switzerland as Rosa Luxemburg and maintained that spelling of her name from then on, indeed insisted on it.

In Switzerland, not only was university education open to women, but the country was also a refuge for revolutionary socialist exiles: her participation in the Second 'Proletariat' gave her an opening. During Rosa Luxemburg's years in Switzerland these exiles included Georgy Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich and Pavel Axelrod, from Russia, and Wilhelm Liebknecht, August Bebel, Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, from Germany. The German Social Democrat exiles were based in Zurich, and it was there that Rosa Luxemburg took lodgings, with the Lübeck family.

Friends in Warsaw had recommended the Lübecks to Rosa. Frau Olympia Lübeck had been born in Poland and had a reputation for taking care of Polish students; Herr Karl Lübeck, a German, had been an editor of the Social Democrat publication *Demokratische Zeitung* in Berlin and had sought refuge in Switzerland because of the anti-socialist laws. It was through helping Karl Lübeck that Rosa Luxemburg gained an understanding of the German Social Democrat press and took her first steps as a journalist. It was also one of the Lübeck's eight children, Gustav Lübeck, who later married Rosa Luxemburg in the arrangement that secured her the necessary German citizenship that enabled her to move to Berlin.[29]

Doctoral Thesis

Rosa Luxemburg's reasons for changing from the courses in mathematics and the natural sciences (principally botany and zoology) in which she had first enrolled at the University of Zurich in 1890 are not known, although, in view of her involvement in socialist politics and her interest in Marxist political economy, the decision seems easy to understand. In 1892 she changed from the faculty of philosophy, where mathematics and the natural sciences were grouped, to the faculty of law, which included not only law but also courses in political science and economics. She submitted her doctoral thesis on 12 March 1897, and although there is no record of the exact date of her oral examination, it is known that she was successful and had been awarded the title of Doctor of Public Law and Economic Affairs by the end of May.[30]

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Rosa Luxemburg's thesis, its title 'The Industrial Development of Poland', was a highly original economics thesis that analysed the industrial growth in Poland in the nineteenth century. Impressively, for it was not the usual case, the thesis was published as a book the following year.[31] Using the evidence of the industrial growth that had taken place in Russian Poland over the previous fifty years and demonstrating its dependence on the wider Russian market, she argued that the economy of Russian-ruled Poland could not, now, be separated from Russia. Her conclusion, demonstrated entirely through economic analysis, fitted with her political position. She concluded that re-joining the Russian-ruled, Prussian-ruled and Austrian-ruled Poland back together as a Polish national state would be a complete denial of all the economic development of the last fifty years.[32] She also concluded that the crucial development of the revolutionary class, the proletariat, had taken place in Poland and that an independent Poland would damage the social and economic interests of the working class. It was for both economic and political reasons, therefore, that Rosa Luxemburg took the view that socialism was incompatible with Polish nationalism.

The conclusion that followed from the doctoral thesis was clear: Marx's views on Poland were out-of-date: 'the obsolete views of Marx on the Polish question',[33] as she was to express it in her 'Foreword to the Anthology: *The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*' (1905). In that 'Foreword to the Anthology', however, she was careful to make her commitment to Marx's method of historical materialism equally clear:

> [T]he vital core, the quintessence, of the entire Marxist doctrine is the dialectical materialist method of social inquiry, a method for which no phenomenon, or principles, are fixed and unchanging, for which there is no dogma . . . and for which every historical 'truth' is subject to a perpetual and remorseless criticism by actual historical developments.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Foreword to the Anthology', pp. 12–13)

Rosa Luxemburg's commitment to 'the dialectical materialist method of social inquiry' ensured that she stayed focussed on analysis of the forces of production and the productive relations as they developed. Importantly, for action, what followed from her dialectical analysis of the industrial development in Russian-led Poland over half a century was that 'the Polish proletariat in the Kingdom of Poland was to join in common struggle with the Russian proletariat to bring about the downfall of absolutism, and institute democracy in political life'.[34] Internationalism, she believed, was the only approach.

With her doctorate awarded, in 1897, and the book of the thesis published, her proficiency already proven and tested in the pages of *Neue Zeit* and now well known in social democrat circles, having engaged in debate not only with Karl Kautsky, the editor of *Neue Zeit,* but also with Wilhelm

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Liebknecht, the leader of the SPD, Rosa Luxemburg set off to Berlin in May 1898. It was an auspicious year for her internationalist position on Poland for it was the year in which the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, RSDRP, was created. Her arrival in Berlin, however, brought her into another controversy, one far closer to the hearts of German social democrats.

THE PROBLEMS OF SOCIALISM

The Case for Social Reform

The question of tactics was a constant feature of discussion among the social democrats but towards the end of 1896 through into 1898, a series of articles by Eduard Bernstein were published in *Neue Zeit* under the general title of 'Problems of Socialism'. Bernstein then summarized his conclusions and proposals in *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie,* published in 1899; the English translation, of which Bernstein approved, was published as *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation.*[35] When writing the articles Bernstein, who faced immediate arrest if he were to re-enter Germany, was living in London and was to remain there until 1901.

Prior to his move to England, in 1888, Bernstein had been in Switzerland, where, seven years earlier, he had become the editor of *Sozialdemocrat.* Bernstein was highly regarded in Social Democrat circles, not least because of his sensitive editorship of the paper for nearly a decade and also because of his close friendship with Engels, for whom, in London, he had then been his secretary for a time.[36] Away from Germany and also away from his German social democrat friends, Kautsky having been a particularly close friend in Switzerland, Bernstein became attracted to the English way of things. The time away in England also afforded him the space in which to reflect on the changes that had taken place over the previous decade and to engage, critically, with Marxist theory and consider the likely impact of those changes, both theoretically and tactically, on the future direction for socialism.

The most controversial of Bernstein's contributions among his 'Problems of Socialism' was in respect of the case he made in reply to the British socialist Belfort-Bax in the article 'The Theory of Collapse and Colonial Policy', in which he stated: 'I confess openly, I have extraordinarily little interest or taste for what is generally called the "final goal of Socialism". This aim, whatever it be, is nothing to me, *the movement is everything.*'[37] He had continued, 'And by movement I understand not only the general movement of society, that is, social progress, but political and economic agitation and organization for effecting this progress.'[38] In *Evolutionary Socialism* the phrase, by then much used in discussions, had become 'the ultimate aim of socialism is nothing, but the movement is everything'.[39]

Bernstein considered that in England a 'peaceful development' to social democracy was possible and that that this had been shown by the way

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in which the English independent socialist movement had gone from 'the Utopian, revolutionary sect, as Engels repeatedly represented it to be, to the party of political reform which we now know'.[40] Bernstein added:

> No socialist capable of thinking dreams today in England of an imminent victory for socialism by means of a violent revolution—none dreams of a quick conquest of Parliament by a revolutionary proletariat.
>
> (Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 203)

Bernstein then went on to observe the work carried out in local governments ('municipalities') and other independent organizations ('self-governing bodies') and noted: 'The early contempt for the trade-union movement has been given up; a close sympathy has been won for it, and here and there also for the cooperative movement.'[41]

'Facts and experience',[42] not utopianism, were crucial to Bernstein. It led him to acknowledge the sometimes-helpful role of sympathetic middle-class parties. The examples of 'facts and experience' he gave in support of this view included the help brought to workers by the Factory Act of 1847, which had been commented on favourably by Marx in *Capital,* Volume 1 (1867).[43] Importantly, Bernstein also offered in evidence the continuation of the improvement in workers' conditions since. In his discussion, he drew attention to a 'dualism'[44] in that crucial chapter 32 in Marx's *Capital* (1867), 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', which had been so influential in the 'principles' section of the SPD's Erfurt Programme. It is a 'tendency', Bernstein emphasized, and so not inevitable, and he went on to argue that the evidence around showed that rather than being concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, as Marx had theorized, wealth was becoming more widely spread and the tax figures showed it.[45]

Bernstein explained that the evidence he offered was not to argue that Marx was wrong but, rather, to draw attention to Marx becoming 'uncertain and unreliable'[46] at the point of deciding, on the one hand, on the effects of workers who have succeeded over time in improving their conditions within the system, and, on the other hand, on the chances for the overthrow of that system in a (violent) proletarian revolution. Marx, Bernstein argued, resolves the problem of evidence not fitting scientific theory by being 'a slave to doctrine'. Furthermore, Bernstein assured his readers that 'Engels had never expressed himself against this interpretation of mine; neither verbally or in print, declared it to be wrong'.[47] This assurance from Engels's friend was especially poignant, for a few years earlier, in 1895, Engels had died and had made Bernstein, along with Bebel, his literary executor.[48] Bernstein then went on to make an impassioned plea for the importance of the movement that he had proclaimed as 'everything':

> The prospects of this struggle ['of the workers for democracy in politics' and 'their struggle for democracy in industry'] do not depend on the

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> theory of concentration of capital in the hands of a diminishing number of magnates, nor on the whole dialectical scaffolding of which this is a plank, but on the growth of social wealth and of the social productive forces, in conjunction with general social progress, and particularly in conjunction with the intellectual and moral advance of the working classes themselves.
>
> (Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* pp. 212–13)

Bernstein focussed on the changes experienced by the workers not only financially but also educationally and in respect of their attitudes and their conduct towards each other. He stressed the importance of a realistic approach:

> We have to take working men as they are. And they are neither so universally pauperized as was set out in the *Communist Manifesto,* nor so free from prejudices and weaknesses as their courtiers wish to make us believe. They have the virtues and failings of the economic and social conditions under which they live.
>
> (Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 219)

The advance of socialism, Bernstein argued, did not depend on the conditions of the working class declining but on improving their lot, and he extolled the virtues of strong workers' economic organizations as a means for workers to learn how to do things for themselves. He noted, for example, the many English labour leaders who were 'zealous adherents of the temperance movement'.[49] He reasoned, furthermore, that there were advantages to the slower legislative route to socialism over violent revolution: 'In legislation, intellect dominates over emotion in quiet times; during a revolution emotion dominates over intellect.'[50]

The Growth of Revisionism

Bernstein's ideas on 'the problems of socialism' were initially received by social democrats in Germany as interesting contributions within the tradition of critical theoretical analysis,[51] but support grew for them among those, such as South Germans and some trade unionists, who already had views that overlapped with some of his arguments.[52] From January to March 1898, Bernstein's ideas were put under the spotlight by Parvus (Alexander Helphand) in the social democrat publication for Saxony, *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung,* which he edited and where he launched a savage attack. Rosa Luxemburg, who had known Parvus in Poland, arrived in Berlin when the controversy was still being hotly contested. In September of that year, after Parvus had been expelled from Saxony, Rosa Luxemburg moved to Dresden to become the editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung*.[53]

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At the party congress, held in October 1898, Rosa Luxemburg joined forces with Parvus in arguing against Bernstein's position, which was beginning, by then, to be known as 'revisionist'.[54] Unlike Parvus's highly personal attack on Bernstein, exiled in London and therefore unable to be present to defend himself, Rosa Luxemburg's attack at the congress focussed on Wolfgang Heine, one of the more prominent supporters of Bernstein's publications in *Neue Zeit*. Heine had advocated that the SPD make its primary goal that of vote-getting.[55] Certainly Bernstein's position was at the centre of the revisionist controversy, but revisionism took on a form such that, without changing his own views, when eventually allowed back into Germany he voted in favour of the resolutions rejecting revisionism that were put before the party congresses of 1901, 1903 and 1904.[56]

Early in November 1898, having lost the support of crucial editorial colleagues in the heated controversy that she then continued in print against Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg resigned as editor of the *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung* and moved back to Berlin.

THE CASE FOR REVOLUTION

In answer to Bernstein, Rosa Luxemburg published two series of articles in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, the first in September 1898 in response to his *Neue Zeit* articles and the second in April 1899 in response to his 1899 book, *Evolutionary Socialism*. Her two sets of articles were published together in 1900 as *Reform or Revolution* (*Sozialreform oder Revolution*).[57] This 'pamphlet', as she referred to it, was the first of her works for which she is most well known. She argued for the importance of the social democratic movement as a means to achieve social reforms but rejected the view that reforms of workers' conditions within the existing system could constitute the 'final goal' (Bernstein's 'ultimate aim'), defined as 'the final goal—the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage-labour'.[58] She explained:

> Between social reforms and revolution there exists for social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means: the social revolution, its aim.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, p. 8)

Rosa Luxemburg took issue with each of Bernstein's arguments. She countered Bernstein's positive examples of improvements over time with examples of failures of reforms and of recent crises in capitalism, and she accused him of 'opportunism' and 'utopianism', and of having sympathies with the middle classes and holding pre-Marxian ideas of socialism. She also criticized what she saw as his less than flattering portrayal of the working

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class as compared with the party 'academicians' and tore into his arguments about trade unions. Bernstein, she argued, had misunderstood that trade unions work within the capitalist system and that, therefore, they are constrained in their negotiations for wage increases and improvements in workers' conditions by the level of wages capable of being produced by the capitalist market. But it was her economic analysis that set her so clearly above other critics of Bernstein's position.

Employing her expertise in economics, Rosa Luxemburg defended Marx's theory of the crisis of capitalism as inevitable and argued against the capacity of the capitalist system to adapt. In particular, she argued that the credit system, far from diminishing conflict, and so reducing the chances of revolution, accentuated it by speeding up the concentration of capital into fewer and fewer large enterprises.[59] She also considered world markets and, citing the example of the sugar industry in support, argued that cartels can have the effect of increasing the rate of profit in one part of industry only to reduce it in another.[60] Continuing with this international perspective, she also drew attention to the tariff wars between countries; these also accelerated the coming crisis in capitalism. 'Militarism'—wars—too, she argued, had become 'indispensable' to the capitalist class: as defence of 'national' interests, as 'a method of placement for financial and industrial capital' and as a means for class domination, which no reform of the state would be capable of changing.[61]

Crucially, Rosa Luxemburg argued that Bernstein's basic mistake was that rather than being concerned with the mode of production he was, instead, concerned with the 'mode of distribution'.[62] Redistribution as between classes, through which the working class would become richer, she argued, could never lead to social democracy because without overthrowing the bourgeois system and replacing it with the new socialist mode of production the existing system would continue to work in the interests of the existing ruling class: the bourgeoisie, the capitalists. Only by the replacing of the mode of production with a new one, a socialist one working in the interests of the working class, in which the proletariat controlled political power and in which wage labour ceased to exist, could workers' interests truly be served.

Added to all this, in line with her position on internationalism, Rosa Luxemburg also introduced the argument against Bernstein's 'social reformism' that the role of the mass movement is not only to improve conditions within any one society (such as within Germany) but also to improve conditions internationally: to change the world. As she put it:

> The union of the broad popular masses with an aim reaching beyond the existing social order, the union of the daily struggle with great world transformation, that is the task of the social democratic movement.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, pp. 60–1)

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REFORM AND REVOLUTION?

The controversy over reform versus revolution had settled to an 'inconclusive draw'[63] by 1899, but in that draw, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky were on the same side. The issue had remained inconclusive not just because the debate rested on interpretations of Marx, nor even because different interpretations could be supported through selection of both past and current evidence. The main problem was that the evidence really required remained in the future. Bernstein expected that the size of the bourgeoisie would not contract and that, in addition to the improvement in workers' conditions and the growing differentiation within the working class, which he also observed happening around him, the implication would be that the working class would not continue to expand to the size that logically led to proletarian revolution and the setting up of the one-class society. In contrast, for Luxemburg, the current growth of the working class, brought by industrialization, would continue to a size sufficient for the 'popular masses' not simply to improve their lot but to transform the world.

From the perspective of Bernstein's 'facts and experiences' the differences between Luxemburg's and Bernstein's views may, in part at least, have reflected that whereas Bernstein had been born in Germany and spent a long time in England gathering information on the workings of political and social organizations, Rosa Luxemburg had been born in Poland, studied statistics on Polish industrialization and had only recently arrived in Germany. As compared to England, industrialization had been late in starting in Germany and it had then been rapid, and in England socialism predated Marxism. As compared to Poland, Germany in 1898 was far more industrialized, and its proletariat was still growing and was far, far larger and more organized.

From Luxemburg's perspective of defending Marx, however, the importance of these differences can be seen from another perspective, one in which the debate settling to 'an inconclusive draw' seems right: for Bernstein may have been right on England but wrong on Germany, whereas Luxemburg may have been right on Germany but wrong on England, and, so, neither of them exactly in line with Marx.

MARX, ENGELS AND MILITARY DESPOTISM

In his famous speech made in Amsterdam on 8 September 1872 to the International Working Men's Association and published a week later in *La Liberté*,[64] Marx argued as follows:

> Someday the worker must seize political power in order to build up the new organization of labour . . .
>
> But we have not asserted that the ways to achieve that goal are everywhere the same.

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> You know that the institutions, mores, and traditions of various countries must be taken into consideration, and we do not deny that there are countries—such as America and England, and, if I were more familiar with your institutions, I would perhaps also add Holland—where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means.
>
> (Marx, 'La Liberté Speech', p. 2)

Writing on 8 December 1880 to Henry Mayer Hyndman,[65] who founded the first Marxist group in Britain—the Social Democratic Federation (SDF)[66]—in London in 1881, Marx made his reasons clear:

> . . . If you say that you do not share the views of my party for England I can only reply that the party considers an English revolution not *necessary,* but—according to historic precedents—*possible.* If the unavoidable evolution turn into a revolution, it would not only be the fault of the ruling classes, but also of the working class. Every pacific concession of the former has been wrung from them by 'pressure from without'. Their action kept pace with that pressure and if the latter has more and more weakened, it is only because the English working class know not how to wield their power and use their liberties, both of which they possess legally.
>
> In Germany the working class were fully aware from the beginning of their movement that you cannot get rid of a military despotism but by a Revolution. At the same time they understood that such a Revolution, even if at first successful, would finally turn against them without previous organization, acquirement of knowledge, propaganda and . . . [word illegible]. Hence they moved within strictly *legal* bounds.
>
> (Marx, Letter to Henry Mayer Hyndman, 1880)

As Engels explains in his preface to the first English translation of *Capital,* Volume I, after emphasizing that Marx's 'whole theory is the result of a life-long study of the economic history and condition of England', Marx's study of England led him to conclude:

> [A]t least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means. He certainly never forgot to add that he hardly expected the English ruling classes to submit, without a "pro-slavery rebellion", to this peaceful and legal revolution.
>
> (Engels, 'Preface to the First English Translation of *Capital* Volume I', 1886)[67]

The reference to the English ruling classes' 'pro-slavery rebellion' is to the American Civil War of 1861–5. Marx and Engels's point is that even the 'peaceful and legal' social revolution had to be fought for by the working

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class with strikes and demonstrations. The Civil War, between the pro-slavery Southern States and the anti-slavery Northern States, seriously affected the textile industry in Lancashire, an important part of the British economy, when the Northern States blockaded the export of raw cotton produced on the slave plantations of the Southern States. In response, the section of the British middle class most directly hit by the consequent economic downturn, together with the British landowning upper class, demanded that the British government undertake an armed intervention against the Northern States in order to end the blockade. In spite of the enormous hardships caused by the blockade—well over half of the looms in Lancashire were stopped, leading to tens of thousands of workers being made unemployed—when the possibility of the government threatening war on the slave-owners' side became known, the workers took the side of the slaves. Gathering pace after President Lincoln's Proclamation that emancipated slaves, mass meetings in Manchester and also London demonstrated against armed intervention and declared in sympathy with slave emancipation through addresses to Lincoln.[68] Taking heed of the workers, the British government did not declare war.

Contrasting with England, Marx's highlighting of 'military despotism' as a significant feature of the nature of the state in Germany was similarly confirmed by Engels in his criticism of the 1891 Erfurt Programme.[69] Focussing on the difference between Germany as compared with Britain, France and the United States with respect to the nature of their states, Engels argued that in the latter three cases '[o]ne can conceive that the old society may develop peacefully into the new in countries where the representatives of the people concentrate all power in their hands, where, if one has the support of the majority of the people, one can do as one sees fit in a constitutional way':

> But in Germany, where the government is almost omnipotent and the Reichstag and all other representative bodies have no real power, to advocate such a thing in Germany, when, moreover, there is no need to do so, means removing the fig-leaf from absolutism and becoming oneself a screen for its nakedness.[70]
>
> (Engels, 'A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891', pp. 5–6)

As explained in Chapter 1, in Germany from 1871, the Kaiser had a veto over parliament, Prussia with its militaristic Junker class was dominant, the lower house was subordinate to the upper house and, although universal male suffrage had been introduced in Germany in 1871 but not fully introduced in Britain until 1884, in Germany in state elections the vote counted for far less and in Prussia the three-class system remained until 1918.

In the circumstances of Germany at the time, it seems no wonder that Engels added, 'But the fact that in Germany it is not permitted to advance even a republican party programme openly, proves how totally mistaken is

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the belief that a republic, but also communist society, can be established in a cosy, peaceful way.'[71] As explained, however, in Rosa Luxemburg's view, as made clear in her analysis in *Reform or Revolution,* 'militarism' was a feature of not only Germany but of all capitalist states, which no state reform, no matter which the country be, would be capable of changing.

In September 1900, the year in which her *Reform or Revolution* was published, Rosa Luxemburg attended the International Congress in Paris, where she submitted a resolution on world peace and militarism, which was adopted unanimously without discussion. The resolution drew attention to the Boer War and the invasion of China by the European Great Powers and argued that militarism had now become a means for colonial expansion, which threatened world peace through producing 'a permanent state of war', and argued that 'the collapse of the Capitalist system would take place not through an economic but through a political crisis, resulting from developments in the sphere of world politics.' Calling on all workers' parties to oppose militarism and colonialism, the resolution also bound parliamentary socialist groups 'to vote unfailingly against all estimates for military and naval expenditure or for colonial aggression'.[72]

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NOTES

1. For the above see E. Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life,* London: Harrap, 1987, pp. 47–9.
2. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 48.
3. Ibid., p. 29.
4. Nettl's view (ibid., p. 36) is that Rosa had 'undoubtedly' been in contact with revolutionaries before then.
5. For expansion on both 'Proletariat' and Waryński see L. Blit, *The Origins of Polish Socialism: The History and Ideas of the First Polish Socialist Party 1878–1886,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 51–80 and 19–23, 141, respectively.
6. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 30.
7. See P. Pomper, 'Russian Revolutionary Terrorism', in M. Crenshaw (ed.) *Terrorism in Context,* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.
8. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 29.
9. Ibid., p. 36. Rosa Luxemburg published her criticisms in *Sozialistische Monatshefte,* 1897, Vol. 10, No. 10, pp. 547–56.
10. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 46–53 and 67.
11. Engels, 'Preface to the Polish Edition of 1892', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968, p. 24.
12. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 62.
13. R. Luxemburg, 'Foreword to the Anthology: *The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*' (1905), http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1905/misc/polish-question.htm, p. 18.
14. Ibid.
15. K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* in K. Marx and F. Engels *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, p. 62. In 1846 an insurrection for national liberation had been planned in the

Polish territories but came to fruition only in Cracow, where an uprising succeeded in setting up a national government on 22 February. The uprising was defeated in March and in November that year Cracow became part of the Austrian Empire. See pp. 701–2, fn 25.

16. For the above see Blit, *The Origins of Polish Socialism,* p. 42. Lelewel had died in 1861.
17. In 'Preface to the Polish Edition of 1892', p. 24, Engels refers to Poland succumbing in 1863 'to a tenfold greater Russian force' and also comments that Poland since 1792 'had done more for the Revolution' on its own than Italy, Germany and Hungary together.
18. For the above see J. Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914* (Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell), London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966, pp. 87–92.
19. Ibid., Appendix 4.
20. K. Marx, *The International Workingmen's Association, Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council* (1866), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/08/instructions.htm.
21. Because of the role played by Russia in the defeat of the 1848 revolutions, Marx and Engels saw the weakening of Russia as essential to future success in the West. P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 38.
22. Marx, *The International Workingmen's Association, Instructions,* and for the above quotes.
23. The Treaty between Austria, Prussia and Russia, instigated by Tsar Alexander I of Russia at the point of the second and final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte; signed on 26 September 1815 in Paris, and eventually signed by all the European sovereigns except the Prince Regent of Britain, the Pope and the Ottoman Sultan (Turkey). Liberals and nationalists alike viewed it as reactionary.
24. Marx, *The International Workingmen's Association, Instructions.*
25. The frontier also included millions of people with Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Belorussian backgrounds. See Blit, *The Origins of Polish Socialism,* p. 41.
26. F. Engels, 'Nationalism, Internationalism and the Polish Question' (Letter to Karl Kautsky, 7 February 1882), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1882/letters/82_02_07.htm, from which the quotes below are also taken.
27. Ibid., for the above quotes.
28. There is dispute over whether Rosa Luxemburg also left Poland because she was sought by police. Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg,* dismisses the story of her escaping hidden in a cart as claimed by Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* and Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg.*
29. For the above see Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 40–3 and Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 22–3.
30. See letter sent to the Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences in G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds), *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, p. 33.
31. The book version of the thesis was *The Industrial Development of Poland,* Leipzig: Duncker and Humblot, 1898. She quotes from it in her 'Foreword to the Anthology'. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 68.
32. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 68.
33. Luxemburg, 'Foreword to the Anthology', p. 8
34. Ibid., p. 14.
35. E. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism: A Criticism and Affirmation* (Translated by E. C. Harvey), London: Independent Labour Party, 1909. The quotations are taken from this edition. The *Neue Zeit articles* were later published as a book, *Zur Geschichte und Theorie des Sozialismus.*

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36. See P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* New York: Collier Books, 1952, pp. 46, 57 and 60; and Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 94–5. *Sozialdemokrat* was published in London from 1888 but returned to Germany after the anti-socialist law ended. Being banned from returning to Germany, Bernstein was then no longer able to be its editor.
37. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* p. 74.
38. Ibid.
39. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 202. Bernstein mentions that Georgy Plekhanov, the Russian Marxist, claimed to have discovered it as a quote from *To Social Peace* by Gerhard von Schulze-Gävernitz, which Bernstein denied.
40. Ibid., p. 203.
41. Ibid., pp. 203–4.
42. Ibid., p. 205.
43. Marx's reference is K. Marx, *Capital: Volume I, Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals* (Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul), London: Dent Everyman's Library, 1974, pp. 290–1. The Act shortened the working hours for thirteen to eighteen year olds and all females to eleven hours work a day and down to ten hours the following year. Marx then goes on to record how 'capital' then sought to circumvent the law but, in his wider discussion of British factory legislation, compliments the workers' fight for the Acts and their defence against capitalists' attacks on the legislation (pp. 289–311).
44. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 209.
45. Ibid., p. 212.
46. Ibid., p. 210 and for the phrase below.
47. Ibid., pp. 207–8.
48. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 261.
49. Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 221.
50. Ibid., p. 218.
51. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 94–5.
52. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* p. 62, credits Georg von Vollmar, a South German, with the 'first sign of Revisionism in German Social Democracy' back in 1891. South Germany did not have a three-class voting system. For expansion see pp. 258, fn 5.
53. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 57.
54. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 97.
55. Ibid., p. 98.
56. M.-A. Waters, 'Introduction', in R. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973, p. 7. The 1903 resolution opened with 'The party congress most decisively condemns the Revisionist endeavour to alter our time-tested and victorious tactics based on the class struggle.' See Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* p. 269, fn 40. For discussion of how revisionism changed to include 'pseudo Revisionists' after 1900 see Gay, p. 260. Unlike 'real Revisionists', who engaged intellectually with the revision of Marx's writings, the 'pseudo' ones narrowed their horizons to practical reforms to policies and practices (Gay, pp. 257–62). Also of note is that Bernstein was elected to the Reichstag in a by-election in March 1902 with an absolute majority and backing from Bebel.
57. R. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973.
58. Ibid., p. 8.
59. Ibid., p. 15. Bernstein's argument was that the 'elasticity of the modern credit system' together with the 'enormously increased wealth of the European states' and 'the rise of industrial Kartels' had reduced the chances of 'local or individual disturbances' such that 'general commercial crises' on the scale of earlier ones are now 'improbable'. See Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism,* p. 80.

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60. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* p. 16.
61. Ibid., pp. 26–7. These ideas are later developed in R. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (Translated by Agnes Schwarzchild), London: Routledge, 2003, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.
62. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* pp. 44 and 60.
63. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 107.
64. K. Marx, 'La Liberté Speech' (to the International Working Men's Association, 1872), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/09/08.htm.
65. K. Marx, Letter to Henry Mayer Hyndman in London (1880), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/letters/80_12_08.htm.
66. Two of the SDF members, William Morris and Eleanor Marx, left in 1884 to form the Socialist League. In February 1900 the SDF then joined with the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society and a number of trade union leaders to form the Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party, but the SDF disaffiliated in 1901.
67. Marx, *Capital,* Vol. I, p. lxxii.
68. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 86–7. Lincoln replied to every one of the addresses. To one from Manchester he wrote: 'I know and deeply regret the sufferings which the workers of Manchester are undergoing in this crisis . . . Under these circumstances their conduct is an exalted example of Christian heroism, which has not been surpassed in any country in any epoch.' As an example, Marx made reference to these events in the Inaugural Address that he wrote for the foundation of the International in September 1964, where he writes of the working classes' 'heroic resistance' against 'an infamous crusade for the perpetuation and propagation of slavery' (Braunthal, p. 87).
69. F. Engels, 'A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891', June 1891, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1891/06/29.htm.
70. The phrase 'fig-leaf of absolutism' had first been used by Wilhelm Liebknecht in one of his speeches in the North German Reichstag ('nothing but a fig-leaf of absolutism') after his election to it in 1867. He went on to use the phrase again, and it caught on. See R.P. Morgan, *The German Social Democrats and the First International 1864–1872,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 116–18.
71. Engels, 'A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891', p. 6.
72. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 310. The quotations are from the resolution.

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3 The Revolutionary Movement
Vote-Getting, Party Organization and the General Strike

On 17 June 1898, the very same month that Rosa Luxemburg, newly arrived in Germany, was sent off to Upper Silesia to rally electoral support for the Social Democratic Party, the SPD, a significant event occurred in France: Alexandre Millerand became the Minister of Commerce in the Government of Republican Defence formed by René Waldeck-Rousseau.[1] Millerand, leader with Jean Jaurès of the 'Independent Socialists', was the only socialist in the government and the first socialist to be appointed as a member of a government in France, or elsewhere, since Louis Blanc: a member of the short-lived revolutionary government of 1848.

Rosa Luxemburg was immediately opposed to Millerand's appointment, and she made her position known straightaway in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*.[2] What was at stake, she argued, was the class struggle. Her position was clear: within bourgeois society with its bourgeois state ruling in the interests of the bourgeois class, the role of an elected socialist party member of parliament is to oppose the government and not to become part of it. She allowed but one exception to this rule of not taking part in government, namely if, as she put it, 'they enter it with the intention of seizing the reins of government and turning the government into the organ of a victorious working class'.[3] She argued as follows:

> The character of Social Democracy in *bourgeois society* is essentially oppositional: it may come forward as a governmental party only on the ruins of the *bourgeois* State.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Leipziger Volkszeitung,* 1898)[4]

In France, the socialists divided over Millerand's acceptance of the post. He had done so without any consultation, and the Minister of War in Waldeck-Rousseau's new government was General Galliffet, who had been responsible for the ruthless killing of communards in 1871 and was known as the 'butcher of the Commune'.[5] Those opposed were led by Édouard Vaillant, who had been a member of the Paris Commune; those in support were led by Jean Jaurès, a prominent member of the Chamber of Deputies.[6] Revolution versus reform and the related issues of tactics and organization

had continually divided the French socialists into rival parties, groupings being a better description.[7] In 1896 Millerand had succeeded in getting the various socialist groups to agree to his Saint-Mandé Programme.

The Saint-Mandé Programme sought the abolition of capitalism through a gradual process of nationalization of monopolies and local control of large industry, the expansion of public organizations into economic and social spheres and continuous social reform. The means to achieve these ends were also agreed in the programme as the seeking of a majority of votes and, in the interim, joining with other progressive groups in society.[8] Before 1901, however, all associations of over twenty people remained under legal restrictions; such associations were not, for example, allowed to own property or receive donations. The Waldeck-Rousseau government, of which Millerand was a member, introduced the Law of Associations of 1901; it removed these restrictions, and from that point permanent nationally organized parties began to be set up.[9] In 1901–2 two rival socialist parties were formed: the Parti Socialiste de France, which declared itself as 'the party of revolution', led by Vaillant and Jules Guesde, and the Parti Socialiste Français, which was for 'social transformation and republican defence', led by Jaurès.[10] In the election held in 1902, it was the Parti Socialiste Français, the reformist party, and not the Parti Socialiste de France, 'the party of revolution', that performed well.

In the same year, 1902, Karl Kautsky published *The Social Revolution.* Although approaching the issue of revolution or reform from a more comparative historical perspective and employing a more circumspect style, in essence he was in support of Rosa Luxemburg's 'revolution', not Eduard Bernstein's 'reform' position. He argued as follows:

> I do not wish to be understood as holding democracy superfluous, or to take the position that cooperatives, unions, the entrance of social democracy into municipalities and parliaments, or the attainment of single reforms, are worthless. Nothing would be more incorrect. On the contrary, all these are of incalculable value to the proletariat. They are only insignificant as a means to avoid a revolution.
>
> This conquest of political power by the proletariat is of the highest value exactly because it makes possible a higher form of the revolutionary struggle. This struggle is no longer, as in 1789, a battle of unorganized mobs with no political form . . . It is a battle of organized intelligent masses, full of stability and prudence . . .
>
> (Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (1902), p. 171)[11]

In *Reform or Revolution,* Rosa Luxemburg had argued for democracy as 'necessary to the working class because it creates the political forms (autonomous administration, electoral rights, etc.) which will serve the proletariat as fulcrums in its task of transforming bourgeois society', and she had continued:

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> Democracy is indispensable to the working class, because only through the exercise of its democratic rights, in the struggle for democracy, can the proletariat become aware of its class interests and its historic task.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Reform and Revolution,* pp. 52–3)

In like vein, Kautsky had argued: 'Democracy is also indispensable as a means of ripening the proletariat for the social revolution. But it is not capable of preventing this revolution.'[12] More in line with Bernstein, however, Kautsky had also argued that elections could be a means for changing the minds of opposition:

> Elections are a means to count ourselves and the enemy, and they grant thereby a clear view of the relative strength of the classes and parties, their advance and their retreat. They prevent premature outbreaks and they guard against defeats. They also grant the possibility that the opponents will themselves recognize the untenability of many positions and freely surrender them when their maintenance is no life-and-death question for them.
>
> (Kautsky, *The Social Revolution,* p. 171)

VOTE-GETTING

Fighting elections had continued as a major role of the SPD organization. Back in December 1899, Rosa Luxemburg had again been canvassing for the SPD in Upper Silesia. The SPD was not the only socialist party canvassing there at the time. Having set up a branch in Germany as the Polish Socialist Party of Prussia, the PPS was also canvassing. Rosa Luxemburg was determined to bring the SPD to her internationalist position against Polish self-determination. She opened her strategy by working together with two other Polish supporters of this anti-nationalist view to create a trade-union organization that would be fully integrated into the SPD. The place she chose for this was Polish-speaking Posen (Poznań), where the industrial workers were unorganized and supported a bourgeois party, the Polish National Democrats.[13]

In the spring of 1900, Rosa Luxemburg's next step was to attend the Prussian PPS congress, where she argued strongly for the party to be dissolved and to be absorbed into the SPD. Of course she did not succeed, but she continued making her case against the PPS as a separate party: her main argument was that it received money from the SPD and yet put up candidates against it at elections. By October 1902 she had won the support of the SPD executive. The reality of politics was not, however, so easily solved for support for the PPS remained strong in Austria, and within a few years the party's nationalist position strengthened. Neither Rosa Luxemburg's approach to the PPS nor

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the passage of events had fitted Karl Kautsky's view, later expressed in *The Social Revolution,* that elections 'grant the possibility that the opponents will themselves recognize the untenability of many positions'.

Reichstag Elections, 1903

Reichstag elections were again held in June 1903, and in the run-up to the elections Rosa Luxemburg continued her canvassing in Posen and also in Chemnitz, where she set up the campaign headquarters for Saxony and fought a vigorous campaign for the candidate Max Schippel, who happened to be a prominent revisionist.[14] The SPD campaign brought dividends: the party significantly increased both its votes and its number of representatives. Up from 27.2 percent of the votes (on the first ballot) in 1898 to 31.7 percent in 1903 this increased the number of SPD deputies in the Reichstag from 56 to 81 (a fifth of the total number of deputies). In Saxony, where the percentage of workers in industry was higher than anywhere else in Germany, Chemnitz being in the centre of the textile area, the SPD won 58.5 percent of the vote. In Silesia the percentage of votes, at 24.6 percent, fell below the average but was not notably out-of-line given its lower than average percentage of the population employed in industry. Furthermore, the votes had trebled there between 1890 and 1903. In Posen, however, even taking the low level of industrial workers into account, votes for the SPD were very low. The party polled only 2.7 percent of the votes.[15]

For the purpose of vote-getting, the logic for the SPD would be to seek to attract not only the support of industrial workers but also that of rural workers. Both practical difficulties and theoretical objections, however, stood in the way. Rural workers were not simply wage earners who worked on the land; in many areas they were also peasants and small farmers. In the short term, policies shaped specifically to attract the vote of these non-wage-earning workers would be required, and these policies could not only be counter-productive in potentially losing industrial workers' votes but also contradict the principles of socialism. The issues of ownership of land and the benefits from increases in prices received for agricultural produce were at the heart of the issue. The interests of wage earners in the cities and towns as opposed to those producing food in the countryside were in direct conflict: the former benefited from falling prices, the latter from rising prices. Furthermore, desire for the private ownership of land cut directly across the socialist principles of cooperatives as opposed to private ownership.

The proposal to introduce a special rural programme at the 1894 party congress had led to the setting up of a commission with regional sub-committees, which reported back to the 1895 congress. The draft proposals that envisaged returning the land to those who worked on it, however, were rejected: objected to on the grounds that it favoured agriculture and went against the class struggle.[16] The incentive to develop an agrarian policy to attract votes was, in any case, not great for there was also a theoretical

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justification concerning the longer term for not introducing vote-getting policies in the shorter term. This had been made clear in the Erfurt Programme.

The Erfurt Programme, of 1891, envisaged that the laws of capitalist accumulation would apply not only to industrial enterprises but also to agricultural enterprises: competition would force small farms out of production and so lead to larger and larger farm units run on capitalist lines. As the Erfurt Programme put it, 'the economic development of bourgeois society leads by a law of nature to the demise of the small enterprise'.[17] It followed logically, therefore, that both peasants and small farmers would soon become the wage-earning agricultural workers of large farms run on capitalist lines. As wage earners their interests would become the same as those of the industrial proletariat, and there would be no need in the longer term, therefore, to introduce separate policies to attract rural workers' votes. Furthermore, the general view was that the longer term would, in fact, be arriving soon.

If, however, as Bernstein argued and the revisionists believed, the facts were that the proletariat was not inevitably to expand and the bourgeoisie not inevitably to diminish, then there were two possible ways to form a government that would be able to introduce policies to the benefit of the working class. Just as Millerand had done in the Waldeck-Rousseau government, one way would be to share government with other sympathetic political parties. The other way would be to seek to attract votes for the SPD from beyond the industrial working class in order to expand support. But the evidence of the 1903 election now seemed to point away from Bernstein's 'facts'.

The success of the 1903 election, which so impressively increased the SPD votes to 31.7 percent of the total on the first ballot and so significantly raised the number of SPD Reichstag deputies to 81, undermined claims for the seriousness of the revisionist position. The support for the SPD in that election had increased among the working class, a class that was itself expanding, and there were also notable successes in non-industrial areas.[18] In Württemberg, three constituencies, each at least half rural, were won by the SPD, and support was also strong in rural districts of Mecklenburg.[19]

POSITION AND PRESTIGE

The results of the 1903 election, with its over three million votes for the SPD, were viewed as evidence against the revisionists' position. At the party congress held in Dresden in August of that year a resolution was passed, by 288 votes to 11, that reaffirmed Kautsky's resolution, first passed at the Paris Congress of the International in 1900. The resolution stated that the party refused 'to participate in the government of a capitalist society', restated the party as 'revolutionary' and made clear that all methods to maintain the power of the ruling class were rejected.[20] The resolution was then put to the Amsterdam Congress of the International, in August 1904.

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This was what Nettl has called 'the high-water mark of Rosa's position and prestige'.[21] She went to the 1904 International Congress in Amsterdam as a truly international delegate, representing both Germany and Poland. For Germany, she was a delegate for the SPD, with her mandate from Bromberg; for Poland, she was a delegate mandated by the SDKPiL central committee in Poznań; and, unlike with her previous congress attendances, there were no challenges to the mandates. Not only that, Rosa Luxemburg was also on two committees: she was one of the two German members of a congress committee on trusts and unemployment and the sole Polish representative on the commission on international socialist tactics.

In her position on the commission on international socialist tactics, the more important of the two positions, Rosa Luxemburg was able to make her views felt on the issue of the day: the French socialist participation in bourgeois government. She argued her case against participation in government and for class struggle to be the basis of socialist tactics and did so sufficiently convincingly to achieve the amendment she brought to a resolution put forward by Enrico Ferri of the Italian Socialist Party. She also defended the right of small delegations to vote on the congress resolution concerned with socialist tactics: Poland was one of these small delegations, as was Russia as well. In addition, she took the opportunity to make a hard-hitting speech to the congress in which she brought together every one of the arguments that she had already made in print against revisionism.[22]

The mood of the congress went the way Luxemburg and Kautsky wanted: against revisionism. The debate over, what became known as the 'Dresden resolution' went on for four days; and it was carried by twenty-five votes to five.[23] The resolution opened with the words: 'The Congress repudiates to the fullest extent possible the efforts of the Revisionists, which have for their object the modification of our tried and tested policy based on the class war, and the substitution, for the conquest of political power by an unceasing attack on the bourgeoisie, of a policy of concession to the established order of society.' As explained, the resolution then went on to include the statement: 'The Social-Democracy can accept no participation in the Government under bourgeois society, this decision being in accordance with the Kautsky Resolution passed at the International Congress of Paris in 1900.'[24]

Even the French socialist Jean Jaurès, who had voted for the alternative compromise resolution, gave his assurance to abide by the Dresden resolution. But Jaurès had made a strong case at the congress for the importance of the differences between Republican France and Imperial Germany. 'Even if you had a majority in the Reichstag', he argued to the German delegates, 'your country would be the only one in which you—the Socialists—would not be masters despite that majority, because your parliament is only half a parliament. It does not control the executive and hence has no political power.'[25] Leaving aside the differences between Germany as opposed to Britain, France, the United States and, possibly, Holland that Marx had drawn attention to when in Amsterdam in 1875, Bernstein would surely

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have been struck by the differences between the countries where socialist parties were legal and the countries, such as Poland and Russia, where they were not. Although convinced by the generality of the economic law of capitalist accumulation, Rosa Luxemburg was also acutely concerned about the importance of the differences between countries in respect of the conditions in which social democratic parties existed, as she had made very clear in an article, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', which she had published a month before the Amsterdam International Congress.

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CHALLENGING LENIN

In 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy',[26] published in July 1904 simultaneously in German, in *Neue Zeit,* and in Russian, in *Iskra,* Rosa Luxemburg had taken issue with Lenin over party organization. Specifically, she had challenged the position he had taken in his *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward* (1904),[27] which he had written following the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party's split into two factions in 1903. This split between Lenin's faction, the Bolsheviks, and the other faction, the Mensheviks, occurred over party organization. At the 1903 RSDRP congress, the crucial disagreement began over the form of alternative definitions of party member for inclusion in the party statute.

Lenin, in line with his earlier reasoning in *What Is to be Done?* (1902), argued for the party to be tightly organized. According to his definition, which was one of the two alternatives put before the party congress for inclusion in the statute, '[a] member of the party is one who accepts its programme, and supports it both materially and by personal participation in one of the organizations'. The alternative, proposed by Julian Martov, differed in respect of the final part, concluding instead: 'and by regular cooperation under the leadership of one of its organizations'.[28] Martov's wording won the congress vote: 28 to 23. Lenin then set about trying to reduce the editorial board of the party weekly newspaper, *Iskra.* The fall out was that Lenin lost his position in the party machine, and over the following year his views were subjected to scathing criticisms in *Iskra.* These criticisms of Lenin included the accusation, made by Plekhanov, of Lenin's 'confusing the dictatorship of the proletariat with the dictatorship over the proletariat', and in his pamphlet *Our Political Tasks,* Trotsky likened Lenin's methods to Jacobinism under which the 'central committee' is 'finally' replaced 'by the dictator'.[29]

The difference between the two factions went far deeper than statute wording. The divide was between working towards the bourgeois-democratic revolution first and the proletarian revolution next (the Menshevik position) or aiming to leap to the social revolution on the back of the bourgeois revolution, avoiding the capitalist stage itself (the Bolshevik view). The conditions in Russia were markedly different from those in Germany. The Russian economy was predominantly agricultural, and the social structure, therefore,

largely made up of peasants, and the proletariat a small class. Under Tsar Alexander II (1855–81), serfdom had been ended, the courts had been reformed, and local government institutions, *zemstvos,* had been introduced; but, following his assassination in 1881, the state had returned to its earlier levels of repression. When set up, the RSDRP was, therefore, illegal. It was from recognition of these crucial differences between Russia and Germany that Rosa Luxemburg launched her attack on Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward* in her article 'Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy' in 1904.

The crucial difference between Russia and Germany, Rosa Luxemburg argued, was that Russia was an autocracy and had not yet progressed to the stage of having a bourgeois state. Employing the Communist Manifesto in support, she argued that the bourgeois state is the means through which the working class is instilled with, as she put it, 'the rudiments of political solidarity'.[30] In bourgeois-liberal democracy the socialist movement began with workers' organizations 'usually featured by disconnected local groups and clubs, with propaganda as a principal activity', and only then moved from this 'preparatory stage' to the 'unity of a large, national body, suitable for concerted political action'.[31] She stressed the uniqueness of the movement.

> The Social Democratic movement is the first in the history of class societies which reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organization and the direct, independent action of the masses.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 86)

Its mass nature, she argued, therefore made the Social Democratic movement completely different from Jacobinism and Blanquism.[32] Under Russian autocracy—the stage before bourgeois society, where, therefore, a workers' movement as the basis from which a social democratic party, a mass party, cannot grow—Rosa Luxemburg argued that Lenin's alternative of centralism—her distaste captured in her use of the term, '"Centralism!"', 'ultra-centralist', 'pitiless centralism'[33]—went against everything that was essential to the social revolution: the activity of class struggle. It is through this activity, she argued, that both the workers' class consciousness and the party organization grow:

> The activity of the party organisation, the growth of the proletarian's awareness of the objectives of the struggle and the struggle itself, are not different things separated chronologically and mechanically. They are only different aspects of the same struggle.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 87)

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Rosa Luxemburg then went on to point out the ridiculousness of the idea that a centralized party organization could direct a revolution: 'there do not exist for the Social Democracy detailed sets of tactics which a Central Committee can teach the party membership in the same way as troops are instructed in training camps.'[34] And with emphasis she explained: 'The fact is that the Social Democracy is not *joined* to the organization of the proletariat. It is itself the proletariat.'[35]

This unity of the party, Rosa Luxemburg argued, was possible only under the 'indispensable conditions', and they both hinged on active experience: '1. The existence of a large contingent of workers educated in the political struggle. 2. The possibility for the workers to develop their own political activity through direct influence on public life, in a party press, and public congresses etc.'[36] Crucially, she stressed, these are the things that could occur only within bourgeois society: not in autocratic Russia. The experiences of acting within a legal party were not simply important, they were essential: 'In general, the tactical policy of the Social Democracy is not something that may be "invented". It is the product of a series of great creative acts of the often spontaneous class struggle seeking its way forward.'[37]

The role of social democratic organization, especially in the early days of the formation of the mass party, Rosa Luxemburg emphasized, is 'not its rigid submission to a set of regulations' but, rather, 'the coordination and unification of the movement'.[38] So she expands on 'the living spirit carried into the organization by the membership' and 'the natural pulsation of a living organism'.[39] For her, this 'living organism' was human, and, like all humans, it made mistakes but also, crucially, learnt valuable lessons through the mistakes made. So, she concluded:

> The working class demands the right to make its 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.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 102)

TO PRISON

Rosa Luxemburg's triumph at the August 1904 Amsterdam Congress of the International was soon cut short. On her return to Germany she was sent straight to prison, to the Berlin-Zwickau prison. In July 1904, in her absence, she had been given a sentence of three months. It was her first time in prison, but it was not to be her last. Her speeches and pamphlets had brought her to the attention of the Public Prosecutor some years before, and, finally, a charge of sufficient seriousness had been brought. The charge

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was that she had insulted no lesser person than Emperor Wilhelm II. The 'insult', made in one of her speeches, was that she had said that 'any man who talks about the secure and good living of the German workers has no idea of the real facts'.[40]

In prison, the conditions not harsh, she was permitted to continue with her writing.[41] By a twist of fate, through an amnesty that followed the death of the King of Saxony, Rosa Luxemburg was released before the end of her sentence. As a republican she endeavoured to resist her early release by refusing to leave her cell, but, like it or not, she was out on 25 October 1904.[42]

In January 1905, less than three months after Rosa Luxemburg had left prison, a general strike broke out in Germany. In the same month, a general strike then broke out in Russia: that strike, unlike the one in Germany, turned into a revolution. Then, also in January, spurred on by the events in Russia, a general strike broke out, spontaneously, in Poland.

GERMANY, THE GENERAL STRIKE AND TRADE UNIONS

The strike in Germany took place in the Ruhr over changes in the miners' working conditions. Their demands for improvements to their conditions having been rejected by the employers, a strike was proclaimed on 16 January 1905, and within days more than three quarters of all the mining labour force in the region were on strike. The strike lasted for three weeks. It ended with not one of the demands being met by the employers, but it succeeded in raising public sympathy and, in July, the government introduced legislation that, against the employers' wishes, went some way towards meeting some of the miners' demands. The effect was to boost the membership of the trade unions.[43]

A debate over the role of a general strike and its likely advantages and disadvantages had been carried out at the Amsterdam Congress of the International in 1904[44] and also in *Neue Zeit* that year, but the real importance of mass strikes as a political weapon and the crucial importance of trade unions to the success of social democracy were spurred on by the dramatic events of 1905. The trade unions at their conference, held in Cologne in May 1905, took the view that a political mass strike, that is a general strike used for political ends such as demands for equal suffrage rather than being aimed solely at improvements to workers' conditions in industry, would not be sustainable and would divert from their important routine work of improving workers' conditions.[45] But at their conference held a few months later, the SPD took a different view.

At the SPD annual congress, held at Jena in September 1905, a resolution was passed stating that 'the trade unions had a crucial role in the elevation of the workers in the bourgeois society, that they were no less important than the party, and that they two should work together in the same spirit'.[46] In the conference debate the view taken of the mass strike was that it could be used in defence of workers' rights, if taken from them, and could also be

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used proactively as a means for achieving full political equality for workers including voting rights and freedom of association. Not least of their concerns was the continuation of the Prussian three-class voting system. Rosa Luxemburg's position was more radical. In a speech made at the conference, she declared that the time might be upon them 'when evolution would turn into revolution even in Germany', and she added: 'We have seen what took place in Russia and we would be asses if we were not to learn from it.'[47]

RUSSIA, POLAND AND GERMANY

Six days after the general strike had broken out in Germany a workers' demonstration in Russia, on 22 January (western calendar), led to the outbreak of the 1905 Russian Revolution. Before the month was out a general strike of industrial workers began in Poland. It lasted a month, and students and pupils joined in by refusing to attend their universities and schools, demanding to be taught in Polish, and peasants also made demands for greater use of the language in public administration. Although the Russian government removed some of its restrictions on languages and introduced religious toleration in April, workers' protests, including those of agricultural workers, continued. In June, an armed workers' uprising took place in Łódź in which hundreds were killed. In October, Poland was embroiled in the all-Russian railway strike, attacks on policemen and tsarist officials rose dramatically, and fighting between political groups, most notably the PPS, led by Jósef Pilsudski, and the National Democrats (ND), escalated. On 11 November, martial law was introduced in Poland.[48] Germany, where the January strike had ended after three weeks, made a strong contrast.

Throughout 1905 Rosa Luxemburg had reported on events in Russia and analysed their relevance to Germany in the social democrat publications. In the spring of 1905, all the top leaders of the SDKPiL, with Rosa Luxemburg the one exception, had made their way to Cracow in Poland. Remaining in Germany, continuing with her writings, she also continued to make rousing speeches in support of the Russian workers and their uprising and, through collections at the meetings, to raise money to help them. It was at this time that the German Liberal press first began to make reference to Rosa Luxemburg as 'bloody Rosa'.[49]

Within both the party and the trade-union publications the revisionist versus anti-revisionist divide was re-opened. Time and again Rosa Luxemburg contrasted the heroism of the Russian workers with the inaction of the German trade unions. After the Cologne Trade Union Conference of May 1905, where the general strike as a political weapon had been rejected as unsustainable, Rosa Luxemburg hit out at the trade-union leaders:

> Russia, well Russia, that 'savage land' . . . without organization, trade-union funds, officials—how can serious, 'experienced' German officials possibly be expected to learn from them . . . even though precisely in

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> Russia this mass-strike weapon has found unexpected, magnificent application, instructive and exemplary for the whole working-class world.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Die Debatten in Köln', *Sächsische Arbeiterzeitung,* 31 May 1905)[50]

Rosa Luxemburg joined the other top leaders of the SDKPiL in Cracow for most of August, returning in good time for the Jena congress; she then returned to Cracow after the congress, but only for a short time. She had been invited, at Bebel's request, to join the editorial board of *Vorwärts,* the central party publication based in Berlin. She was formally installed at the beginning of November; she had already started making contributions the week before, and now her contributions on the Russian Revolution became almost daily. Her contributions were anonymous, and they covered the events that brought the revolution to its peak: events that included the October general strike in St Petersburg and the preparations for the Moscow uprising. Her contributions also covered the Tsar's issuing of his October Manifesto, the short-lived amnesty for political prisoners and exiles, the Tsar's subsequent declaration of martial law and all that followed.[51]

When the SDKPiL held a conference in November, the Tsar's amnesty meant that even Felix Dzerzhinsky,[52] now released from prison in Warsaw, and Bronislaw Wesolowski, in exile in Siberia since 1894, were able to attend. It seemed that everyone was there. Everyone, that is, except Rosa Luxemburg. Writing about the revolution was no longer enough for her; she was determined to be part of it. She resigned her post and, on 28 December, set off to Warsaw under the assumed name of Anna Matscheke and the pretence of being an ordinary journalist.[53] On her arrival, on 30 December, she immersed herself in the revolution. On 2 January 1906 she wrote to Karl and Luise Kautsky:

> To characterize the situation in two words (but this is only for your ears), the general strike has just about *failed*—especially in St Petersburg . . . The reason for all this is simply that *a mere general strike by itself* has ceased to play the role it once did. Now nothing but a general uprising on the streets can bring about a decision, though for this the right moment must be prepared very carefully . . .
>
> . . . My dear(est) it is very nice here, every day two or three persons are stabbed by soldiers in the city; there are daily arrests, but apart from these it is pretty gay. Despite martial law we are again putting out our daily *Sztandar,* which is sold on the streets . . . For the present the production and printing of the *Sztandar* has to be carried out in bourgeois presses by force, with revolver in hand.
>
> (Luxemburg, Letter to Karl and Luise Kautsky, 2 January 1906)[54]

How stark the contrast must have seemed between the production of *Sztandar* and *Vorwärts,* from which she had so suddenly resigned her

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position on the editorial board. No wonder that in concluding her letter to the Kautskys she had written: 'Write at once how things are faring in the *V[orwärts]* and whether August [Bebel] is furious.'

In February 1906 a secret meeting took place between the SPD leadership and the Central Committee of the German Trade Unions at which an agreement was reached. In that agreement the SPD leadership made a commitment to do all it could to prevent a political strike from taking place and, in the event that one, nevertheless, were called, the SPD leadership also agreed that it would consult with the Trade Union Central Committee.[55]

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NOTES

1. The Government of Republican Defence stretched from Millerand on the left to the haut-bourgeois 'Progressistes' on the right. R. Stuart, *Marxism at Work: Ideology, Class and French Socialism during the Third Republic,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 52.
2. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 121–3. In November 1901, Rosa Luxemburg became joint editor of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* (Leipzig People's Paper, the Social Democrat daily paper), together with Franz Mehring, and lasted in the post for almost a year. From then on she was able to be a regular contributor to *Neue Zeit* only.
3. Rosa Luxemburg, *Collected Works* (German), Vol. III, p. 273, quoted in P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 82.
4. Ibid., p. 82.
5. J. Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914* (Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell), London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966, p. 257; Stuart, *Marxism at Work,* p. 52.
6. Robert Tombs, *France 1814–1914,* London: Longman, 1996, p. 465.
7. Ibid., pp. 114–16. The Fédération de Travailleurs Socialistes was set up in 1879; the Parti Ouvrier Francais in 1883; and the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire in 1890.
8. For the above see Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 256–7.
9. Tombs, *France 1814–1914,* p. 115.
10. Ibid., p. 468.
11. See K. Kautsky, *The Social Revolution* (1902), in C. W. Mills, *The Marxists,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, p. 171.
12. Ibid., p. 172.
13. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 112–13.
14. Ibid., p. 124.
15. For the above see W. L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 80–1, Table 3.4, and p. 105. On 1907 figures (Table 3.4), Posen had 20.7 percent of the employed population working in industry, which compares with 41.9 percent for Silesia and 63.9 percent for Saxony.
16. Ibid., pp. 102–3; Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 80–1. An SPD agrarian policy did not reappear until 1927.
17. Ibid., p. 102. The translation in 'The Erfurt Program' (http://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/1891/erfurt-program.htm) substitutes 'law of nature' with 'invariably'.

18. See ibid., p. 86, Table 3.3.
19. Ibid., p. 81.
20. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 276.
21. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 124; and for what follows.
22. For the above paragraph see ibid., pp. 124–5.
23. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 284.
24. The quotes are from the report made by the delegates of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, published in the *Socialist Standard,* 1 September 1904. See the Socialist Party of Great Britain, 'The International Socialist Congress (1904)', http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/socialist-standard/1900s/1904/no-1-september-1904/interational-socialist-congress-1904.
25. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 282, and for the fuller debate see pp. 277–84. It is indicative of Rosa Luxemburg's kindness as well of her linguistic skills that on finding that there was no translator for Jaurès's eloquent speech in defence of his party's active support for the French government of the day (although by then no socialists were ministers in it) she leapt to her feet and translated for him. In his speech, Jaurès criticized both Kautsky's and Luxemburg's arguments, but in her translation Rosa Luxemburg captured his eloquence and neither left out nor softened his criticisms. For this she received not only the audience's applause but also effusive thanks from Jaurès.
26. The article has since been published under various titles including 'Revolutionary Socialist Organization' and 'Leninism or Marxism?', see B.D. Wolfe, 'Introduction', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 11. Wolfe has it as 'Leninism or Marxism?'. It is published as 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 83–102, from which the quotations are taken.
27. V.I. Lenin, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969. For example, specific reference to this work is made by Rosa Luxemburg in 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 84.
28. For the above, see E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–23, Vol. 1,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 41 and for the two quotes.
29. See ibid., pp. 44–5; and A.B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia,* London: Fontana/Collins, 1969, pp. 248–51.
30. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 83.
31. Ibid., p. 84.
32. The references are to the French Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Commune of 1871. Louis-Auguste Blanqui advocated and employed the technique of the revolutionary coup d'état. He first used it in May 1839 when he, together with his followers, took over the arsenals in two Paris suburbs and set up barricades. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 46–7.
33. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 84.
34. Ibid., p. 87.
35. Ibid., p. 88.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 91.
38. Ibid., p. 93.
39. Ibid., pp. 93 and 101.
40. See Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 94.
41. E. Ettinger, *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches,* London: Pluto Press, 1979, pp. 56–8, 136–9.

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42. See Letter to Henriette Roland Holst in G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds) *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, p. 178.
43. For the above see B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, pp. 250–1 and 254. Der Alte Verband, the union that came closest to being identified with socialism, was not, however, the union that benefited most (p. 255).
44. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 295–6.
45. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 286.
46. Conference minutes, quoted in ibid., p. 285, and for what follows, p. 286.
47. Conference minutes, quoted in ibid., p. 285.
48. For the above see J. Lukowski and H. Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland* (second edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 203–4.
49. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 204–7.
50. Quoted in ibid., p. 207.
51. For the above paragraph see ibid., pp. 222–3 and 215.
52. To jump ahead, this same Felix Dzerzhinsky became head of the Cheka, the secret police force set up in Russia (on 20 December 1917 (western calendar)) by the Bolsheviks.
53. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 222 and 216.
54. Quoted in Ibid., p. 225. For the letter in full see Adler, Hudis and Laschitza (eds) *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 220–2.
55. For the above paragraph see Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* pp. 285–7; Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 208. P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* New York: Collier Books, 1952, p. 137, argues that it was the agreement between the party leadership and the trade-union leadership that led to the ascendancy of party bureaucrats and to the demise of 'theorists' and so the eventual break-up of the party during the war.

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4 Revolution in Russia, 1905–6
The Living Political School

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The revolution into which Rosa Luxemburg arrived at the start of 1906 had begun back in early January 1905 when a large strike had broken out at the Putilov works in St Petersburg that quickly spread to include a further 150,000 strikers.[1] In the middle of the strike, on 22 January (western calendar),[2] a peaceful workers' demonstration was organized in which around 200,000 people—men, women and children—marched to the Tsar's Winter Palace in St Petersburg to deliver a petition to the Tsar 'in search of justice and protection'.[3] Retaining faith in Tsar Nicholas II, whom they addressed in the petition 'as to a father', their 'necessary' demands included 'liberty of speech' and of the press, equality before the law and protection by the law, freedom of association, an eight-hour working day and a minimum wage. Their political demand for achieving these things was for a representative parliament: a Constituent Assembly elected 'on the basis of universal, secret and equal suffrage'. The Tsar's response was far from fatherly: as the peaceful demonstrators marched their way to the Tsar's Winter Palace, police and army troops opened fire on the unarmed marchers with the result that 130 were killed and a further 299 wounded.[4]

As news of the massacre spread, strikes swept out from St Petersburg to other cities and towns, reaching Poland just five days later. The strikes continued for nearly two months and were at their peak in February. After quieting down, strikes and violence re-erupted and continued, spreading through the spring and summer of 1905. In Poland, the May Day demonstration led to barricades being erected in Warsaw and other cities. Across Russia, not only the cities but also the railways were severely disrupted, and there were mutinies; the mutiny on the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea began on 27 June and lasted until 9 July. Peasant protests and riots also broke out and spread, taking the form in some areas of strikes and boycotts, in others the felling of forests or seizure of grain or livestock and, in their most violet form, the takeover of land and eviction of landlords.[5] In late summer, a peasants' congress was formed, and the idea of the All-Russian Peasants' Union developed.[6]

THE PETERSBURG SOVIET AND THE GENERAL STRIKE

In October 1905, a strike of printers broke out in St Petersburg and then in Moscow, where, on the 20th, a general strike began on the railways and soon extended throughout the network, bringing the administration of Russia to a state of collapse. On the evening of 26 October, a meeting, in St Petersburg, of the coordinators of the strike founded the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Elections to the Soviet were held the following day, and it met that same evening. It consisted of delegates from factories, representatives of unions and socialist party members: both Social Democrats (Mensheviks and Bolsheviks) and Socialist Revolutionaries, the party of peasant revolution.[7] The chairmen of the Soviet, the young lawyer Georgy Nosar, known as Khrustalev, was not aligned to a party at the time of his election in October, but he joined the Mensheviks in the latter part of November. The Soviet rapporteur was Leon Trotsky, a Menshevik at the time: he became chairman after Khrustalev was arrested, on 9 December.[8] Estimates of the percentage of the delegates to the Soviet who were Social Democrats range from 50 to 65 percent; on the executive, where the evidence is clearer, it was 60 percent. Social democracy was also the dominant set of ideas, with Menshevism prevailing over Bolshevism.[9]

On the morning of the day on which the elections to the Petersburg Soviet were held, 27 October, the general strike had spread to almost all the plants and factories, and the Mensheviks distributed a leaflet calling all workers in St Petersburg to join the strike.[10] All the unions went on strike, including all the professional unions, and so banks, law courts, schools, business offices and even doctors and magistrates ceased to carry out their functions.[11] Reacting not just to the strike but to the year's events, Tsar Nicholas II issued a manifesto on 30 October. It promised liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of association, expansion of voting rights to include workers and the end to absolute rule through the giving of legislative power to a representative parliament: the Duma. The following day the Petersburg Soviet passed a resolution to continue the strike. In Moscow the strike ended on 2 November, and with the strike in St Petersburg losing momentum and pogroms likely, the Petersburg Soviet then took the decision for the strike to end at noon on 4 November. The reason given for the decision was that workers would then prepare for the final struggle for a Constituent Assembly to set up a republican democracy.[12] In Finland and Poland, however, general strikes continued.

The promise of freedom made in the October Manifesto led to demonstrations for amnesty for political prisoners. In response to the promises of the manifesto the formation of peasant congresses also spread across Russia, and demonstrations took place making further demands of the government; and then the breaking out of peasant riots and revolts increased. In consequence, intent on ending the revolution, martial law was declared in many of the provincial cities; in Poland, where demonstrations were especially

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large, a state of siege was declared on 7 November, and martial law was imposed on Poland.[13] Across Russia, police and troops were mobilized; their instruction from the Minister of Home Affairs could not have been clearer: 'Rioters to be exterminated immediately by force of arms'.[14] Massacres followed. On 9 November (26 October on the Russian calendar at that time) a rebellion of sailors and soldiers broke out in Kronstadt, some twenty miles from St Petersburg in the Gulf of Finland. When the riot was suppressed after two days, the rioters who were arrested, numbering around two thousand, were court-martialled and put under threat of the death penalty.[15]

On the evening of 14 November the Petersburg Soviet called a special meeting to which nearly two thousand people came. A decree had been issued on that day for the exclusion of Poland from representation in the Duma.[16] The meeting opened with a report on the situation in Poland made by a Polish delegation. Representatives of the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt then reported on their current situation. After a long debate followed by a vote, the Soviet resolved to call a political mass strike.[17] The resolution read as follows:

> The Soviet of Workers' Deputies calls upon the revolutionary proletariat of Petersburg to manifest its fraternal solidarity with the revolutionary soldiers of Kronstadt and the revolutionary workers of Poland by means of a political general strike, which has already shown its formidable power, and by means of mass protest meetings.
>
> Tomorrow, 2 November [15 November on the western calendar] at twelve noon, the workers of Petersburg will stop work under the following slogans:
>
> Down with courts-martial!
> Down with the death penalty!
> Down with martial law in Poland and throughout Russia!
>
> (Resolution of the Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, 14 November 1905)[18]

In spite of the previous strike having ended less than a fortnight before and the primarily political nature of the new call to strike, even more workers responded to the call and stopped work than had been the case in the earlier strike. Letters and telegrams were also sent to Moscow and the provinces to ask them to join the strike. By the second day the St Petersburg railroad had been completely stopped, and workers in the districts of St Petersburg, too, had joined the strike. All efforts then turned to persuading the soldiers to join the strike. The army, however, remained loyal to the government, and troops were sent in to break up demonstrations and meetings and force strikers back to work.[19] On 18 November the Soviet met and voted for the strike to end at twelve noon on 20 November: just five days after it had begun. As Trotsky argued in his analysis of 1905, 'an insurrection is, in essence, not so much a struggle against the army as a struggle *for* the army.'[20]

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THE MOSCOW SOVIET AND THE END OF THE REVOLUTION

The general strike had had some successes: on 18 November a telegram was received stating that the Kronstadt sailors and soldiers were not to face court-martial and that it had just been a rumour (they were to be judged by a military district court); on 25 November, the government decreed the lifting of martial law in Poland.[21] The strike had not, though, achieved the eight-hour day sought by the workers, and, with the exception of only a few minor provincial cities, the Petersburg Soviet had failed in its attempt to spread the strike to the provinces.[22] Efforts, therefore, then turned to spreading the lessons of the Petersburg Soviet with a view to forming other soviets and so uniting the workers across Russia and Poland.[23] On 2 December two members of the Soviet Executive Committee, both of them Mensheviks, departed for Moscow. The Moscow Soviet was formed and met for the first time on 4 December. Unlike the Petersburg Soviet, the Moscow Soviet was dominated by Bolsheviks.

The strike in St Petersburg over, the government then moved to intensify its repression against the peasants: attacking the peasant congresses that had burgeoned and violently suppressing the various forms of protest actions and uprisings that had developed in the countryside.[24] In early December, the government directed its attention more fully to the towns. On the same day that Khrustalev was arrested, 9 December, freedom of the press was withdrawn, and on 12 December, martial law was declared in St Petersburg. On 10 December, just six days after it had been formed, the Moscow Soviet met to consider the calling of a general strike. It was agreed that in the event of the rest of the Petersburg Soviet being arrested, were it to occur, the Moscow Soviet would call a general strike.[25]

On 16 December the Petersburg Soviet's Executive Committee members were arrested; the arrests took place in the middle of their preparatory meeting for the full meeting of the Soviet later that day. Arrests were then made of a further two hundred of the Soviet's delegates as they assembled in the meeting hall. Thus ended what was to be the last meeting of the first Soviet. The very next day representatives of both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks met together with the rapidly reconstituted Executive of the Petersburg Soviet: this was the second Soviet. Declaring, in the newspaper *Izvestia,* that '. . . now the government thrusts battle upon us. Retreat is impossible', they resolved to stage a new general strike and set the date for 20 December.[26]

As planned, the general strike began on 20 December in St Petersburg and on 21 December in Moscow and then spread throughout the Russian empire. In Warsaw it began on 28 December: the very day on which Rosa Luxemburg had left Berlin on her journey to Warsaw. In Moscow, when the Soviet met to prepare for the strike, it was resolved not simply to begin 'a general political strike' but 'a general political strike and to strive to transform it into an armed uprising'.[27] The Petersburg Soviet made no such declaration to turn the strike into an armed uprising. In Moscow, the resolution was not

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only made but became a reality: the strike turned the next day into an armed revolt. Uprisings then followed in other cities.[28]

At the session held on 25 December, Alexander Helphand (Parvus), the new chairman of the second Petersburg Soviet, argued for the strike in St Petersburg also to become an armed uprising.[29] The decision taken by the Executive, however, was that an armed uprising was not practical, and they voted to end the strike, setting the date for 2 January. Parvus resigned in protest, citing the fighting workers in Moscow. But there were other factors to be taken into account. The day before, responding to the Moscow uprising, the new prime minister, Count Serge Witte, had announced that the franchise was to be extended to include most of the workers, although in elections that were still to be indirect.[30] Furthermore, on 25 December, the very day of the Petersburg Soviet's meeting, martial law was proclaimed in St Petersburg, and the Soviet distributed a leaflet in which they called on the Cossack troops not to fire on the strikers.

In Moscow, events took a sharply different turn. On 28 December the Semonov Guard Regiment arrived in Moscow from St Petersburg and brutally began to put the armed uprising down. Hundreds were killed and wounded over the three days it took, and then soldiers were dispatched to the provincial uprisings to suppress them with equal or greater brutality. Their action in ending the strike having saved workers' lives, the second Petersburg Soviet was ended on 2 January when nearly all the remaining members of the Executive Committee were arrested.[31] This was the context in which, on the same day, Rosa Luxemburg, having just arrived in Warsaw, had written in her letter to the Kautskys:

> . . . the general strike has just about *failed*—especially in St Petersburg . . . The reason for all this is simply that *a mere general strike by itself* has ceased to play the role it once did. Now nothing but a general uprising on the streets can bring about a decision, though for this the right moment must be prepared very carefully.
>
> (Luxemburg, Letter to Karl and Luise Kautsky, 2 January 1906)[32]

Analysis of the preparation for 'the right moment' continued to be at the centre of Rosa Luxemburg's thought through to the end of her life. But for now she had more pressing demands on her time.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRACY OF THE KINGDOM OF POLAND AND LITHUANIA, SDKPiL

Although the SDKPiL had involved itself in the revolution from January 1905 and had seen its membership rise significantly, from around two thousand members at the beginning of 1905 to thirty thousand by 1906,[33] at the start of 1906 the party was still in need of a carefully written, properly

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thought-through programme. On Rosa Luxemburg's return to Warsaw, this became her task. In the programme[34] she laid out that the SDKPiL's immediate political goal was for a Constituent Assembly, elections for which would be direct, by secret vote and with universal suffrage. The Constituent Assembly would be for all of Russia and would produce a new constitution, which would be for a republic. This was the bourgeois revolution, on which basis the final goal of social revolution would later be achieved.

In her *Reform or Revolution,* first published, as articles, in 1900, her 'final goal' (in contrast to Eduard Bernstein's 'ultimate aim') had been expressed as 'the conquest of political power and the suppression of wage-labour'; as she had gone on to explain: 'Between social reforms and revolution there exists for social democracy an indissoluble tie. The struggle for reforms is its means: the social revolution, its aim.'[35] Also in the SDKPiL programme, therefore, Rosa Luxemburg set out that following the achievement of the Constituent Assembly the bourgeoisie would be made to stay loyal to the revolution, and while awaiting the democratic constitutional reforms that would be worked through in the Constituent Assembly, a workers' provisional government would hold the reins until those democratic reforms took effect.

According to the programme all minorities would be represented proportionately in the Constituent Assembly, and along with this newly elected central government of the republic of all-Russia, there would also be autonomy for each of the separate countries within Russia. Thus Poland would have its own national assembly (*sejm*) in Warsaw, and, as for all the nationalities, Poles would be given the freedoms to use their own language, to have their own national system of education and to develop their own culture. There would also be local government for towns and villages, and judges and officials at every level would be elected. There was, however, no mention of soviets.

The SDKPiL programme further set out that there would be full emancipation of women, equality for all before the law, and freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. To these were added, in line with discussions in the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, at the time: 'The abolition of a standing army and the creation of an army of the whole people—that is the best guarantee of a country's peaceful development and the best means of facilitating the final liberation from the yoke of capitalism.'[36] Also in line with SPD demands, the SDKPiL programme included free education for all; progressive taxes on income, property and inheritance; and, of course, protective labour legislation.

TO PRISON AGAIN

On 4 March 1906, Rosa Luxemburg, together with Leo Jogiches, was arrested and imprisoned; on 11 April, they were then moved to Pavilion X of the Warsaw Citadel, which was notorious for the incarceration of

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'dangerous' political criminals. Rosa Luxemburg embarked on a hunger strike that lasted six days. In combination with the overcrowded conditions, the hunger strike undermined her health. Her poor health together with the money paid over, ostensibly by her family in Poland, brought her release on bail on 8 July 1906. In fact, or at least as close to certainty as can be, and definitely against Rosa Luxemburg's knowledge or wishes, the money paid over had been collected back in Germany by the SPD.[37] Under the conditions of bail she was required to remain in Warsaw, although her intention before her arrest, with the arrangements already made, had been to return to Berlin. On release from prison she quickly learnt that on her return to Germany she would face prosecution for incitement to violence based on the speech she had made at the 1905 conference in Jena, where she had drawn the lesson from the events in Russia of 'when evolution would turn into revolution even in Germany'.[38] In time it would lead to further imprisonment.

On 8 August (1906) Rosa Luxemburg was allowed to leave Warsaw to journey to Finland, where she was instructed to report to the police. By then, in her absence, the SDKPiL had aligned with the Bolsheviks. Her own position approximating somewhat closer that of the Mensheviks, she had told the German SPD not to favour either faction above the other. Once in Finland, however, having met him only once before, she found herself spending a lot of time with Lenin. In his flat in Kuokkala, Rosa Luxemburg and Vladimir Lenin, together with Lev Kamenev, Gregory Zinoviev and Alexander Bogdanov, discussed the Russian Revolution frequently and at length. Based on what Nettl describes as 'mutual intellectual respect', Lenin and Luxemburg became friends, and although, six years later, their friendship was to be damaged by disagreements over the expulsion of Karl Radek from the SDKPiL by the party's Central Committee it was not completely broken until the end of 1913.[39]

THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO IN PRACTICE

Although defeated, the 1905 revolution had led to some political changes, be they more for image than for the real purpose of satisfying demand for liberal government. In his October Manifesto of 1905 the Tsar had conceded a constitution (Organic Laws) that made a step towards constitutional monarchy. The step was small: the constitution set down few restrictions on the powers of the monarch, who had the right both to approve all legislation and to govern by decree. The Duma, the parliament set up by the constitution, had neither the right to petition nor the right to approve the budget; all that it could do was to veto legislation.[40] The suffrage introduced was also narrow and favoured the large landowners. The franchise excluded women, workers in factories of fewer than fifty employees, migrant workers and landless peasants. The elections were also indirect: for example, the

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electoral colleges gave one deputy for every 2,000 landowners and one deputy for every 90,000 workers.[41] Political parties competed in the elections, which were held in the spring of 1906, but the Social Democrats boycotted the elections, as did the Socialist Revolutionaries. Furthermore, within three months, this first Duma was dissolved for being too radical.[42]

'THE MASS STRIKE, THE POLITICAL PARTY AND THE TRADE UNIONS'

During her stay in Finland, Rosa Luxemburg devoted herself to writing a pamphlet on the Russian Revolution. The pamphlet had been commissioned by the Hamburg branch of the SPD for the forthcoming congress to be held in Mannheim. Once the manuscript had been completed and sent off, she left Kuokkala, on 14 September 1906, for Hamburg and then went on to attend the SPD congress at Mannheim. Her pamphlet on the Russian Revolution turned into far more than an analysis of the revolutionary events for the benefit of German readers. Drawing comparisons between the cases of Russia and Germany it was also a pointedly critical analysis of the trade-union leadership in Germany. At its centre was the role of the mass strike.

In the 'pamphlet', Rosa Luxemburg saw the 1905 Russian Revolution as 'the first historical experiment on the model of the mass strike',[43] and the lesson that it taught 'above all' was 'that the mass strike is not artificially "made", not "decided" at random, not "propagated", but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability.' It followed, therefore, she argued, that the debates conducted by those such as the revisionists and German trade unionists over the desirability and pros and cons of the mass strike (which she categorized as '*subjective criticism*') were irrelevant. What was relevant was '*objective investigation*' of the historically determined conditions from which the mass strike springs.

The lesson of the uprising in St Petersburg in January 1905, Rosa Luxemburg argued, was that it did not happen as a consequence of its being organized: it was 'general direct action' that 'awoke class feeling and class consciousness in millions upon millions as if by an electric shock'.[44] She continued:

> And this awakening of class feeling expressed itself forthwith in the circumstances that the proletariat mass, counted by 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. Thereupon there began a spontaneous general shaking of and tugging of these chains.
>
> (Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', p. 171)

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Although enthusiastic about the spontaneous nature of the uprising, she made clear that the general strike that had broken out in January 1905 could not have succeeded in ending autocracy. Certainly that was the job of the proletariat, but, she argued, in order to achieve it 'the proletariat requires a high degree of political education, of class consciousness and organization'.[45] This could not, however, be achieved through instruction ('pamphlets and leaflets', as she puts it) 'but only by the living political school, by the fight and in the fight, in the continuous course of the revolution'; and it could be achieved only if the timing was right. In line with 'the dialectical materialist method of social inquiry', which, in her 'Foreword to the Anthology', she viewed as 'the vital core, the quintessence, of the entire Marxist doctrine',[46] that timing for the end of absolutism would be dependent on 'the inner social and class development of Russian society'. For the overthrow of absolutism, bourgeois society must be in place. From the continuation of the struggles in Russia through the spring and summer, she also drew the lessons of how the bourgeoisie, too, were brought to the workers' side through the experience of the struggle itself and that rural risings had changed class relations in the countryside.[47]

From the subsequent general strikes Rosa Luxemburg drew further lessons. Of the 'October days', the general strike had led both to initial success in the goal of an eight-hour working day and to the Tsar's October Manifesto, with its promise of political freedom. Although the promise of the manifesto turned out to be short-lived, it demonstrated the potential of the workers for creating their democracy. It had led immediately to workers setting up trade unions and opening society through other associations and speeches and publications. Whereas the first general strike, in January 1905, had shown how mass political action turns into 'economic action' and, as in October, led to 'rapid victory' and then to the second general strike, the third general strike, in December, demonstrated the change to 'open insurrection and armed barricades' in Moscow. This third general strike she described as 'the highest point in the ascending line of political action and the mass strike movement'.[48]

The mass strike is not, then, just one strike; it is 'the method of motion of the proletariat mass', and it can be any number of strikes that take a wide variety of forms, not only economic strikes but also political strikes, and it can stretch over years. As she explained: 'It is absurd to think of the mass strike as one act, one isolated action. The mass strike is rather the indication, the rallying idea, of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps decades.'[49] The mass strike is the class struggle. As such, the mass strike is, at the same time, both economic and political and, in Rosa Luxemburg's view, therefore, diametrically opposed to the view taken by the leadership of the German trade unions. The mass strike and the revolution are inseparable. The mass strike cannot simply be 'called at will', even by the strongest and best organized social democratic party. It is not the organizing of one single strike, even a general one, as in St Petersburg or

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Łódź, Poland: the mass strike is the movement of the whole working class and inherently involves spontaneity.

As the analysis of the three general strikes in Russia in 1905 had shown, actions are dynamic, and, in impacting on later events, strikes therefore differ. As such, no single formula of organization could apply to every general strike. So Rosa Luxemburg argued that the role of the social democrat in the revolution is not to take care of the 'technical side', the calculating and organizing of the strike, but to 'assume *political* leadership in the midst of the revolutionary period'.[50] Through this political leadership, the 'feeling of security, self-confidence and desire for struggle', which the workers need, can be maintained alongside their spontaneity.

What events in Russia and Poland in 1905 and 1906 had taught Rosa Luxemburg was that the mass strike—the general strike where workers of all kinds withdraw their labour—was not organized, coordinated, planned or conceived by the trade-union executive, but, rather, the refusal to work was made by the workers themselves in the immediate situation faced by them, directly. Quite in line with her argument, back in 1904, against Lenin's 'centralism',[51] she was again arguing that the mass strike was not a technique of class struggle that could be taught and practised: it was the class struggle itself. Similarly, in line with her view expressed at the SPD conference held in Jena in September 1905, which rejected the stance taken by the German trade union at their Cologne conference and labelled as 'asses' those who would not learn from what had taken place in Russia,[52] she drew attention to what the Russian case had taught:

> 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. Of course, this living, active class feeling of the proletariat will considerably diminish in intensity, or rather change into a concealed and latent condition, after the close of the period of revolution and the erection of a bourgeois-parliamentary constitutional state.
>
> (Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', p. 200)

Essentially, what the Russian Revolution had taught, then, had been the crucial importance of learning through action. Continuing with her theme of the value of 'the living political school'[53] and pursuing her comparison between Russia and Germany, she confirmed the importance of the SPD's role in political leadership as opposed to leadership as organization (management and control):

> If we now leave the pedantic scheme of demonstrative mass strikes artificially brought about by order of parties and trade unions, and turn to the living picture of a people's movement arising with elementary

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> energy, from the culmination of class antagonisms and the political situation—a movement which passes, politically as well as economically, into mass struggles and mass strikes—it becomes obvious that the task of social democracy does not consist in the technical preparation and direction of mass strikes, but first and foremost, in the *political leadership* of the whole movement.
>
> (Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions, p. 200)

Outside the revolutionary situation itself, she argued that, as the vanguard of the proletariat, the role of social democrats was to 'hasten the development of things and endeavour to accelerate events' by communicating to the entire proletariat 'the *inevitable advent* of this revolutionary period, the inner *social factors* making for it and the *political consequences* of it'.[54]

It followed from her argument that the German trade-union leadership was pushing against class interests in seeking to prevent a mass strike. This had been exactly what they had done at their conference in Cologne in May 1905. What she still did not know was that the SPD leadership, at their secret meeting with the Central Committee of the German Trade Unions, in February 1906, had already agreed that the SPD executive would do all it could to prevent a political strike from taking place and would consult with the Trade Union Central Committee.[55]

BACK IN GERMANY

On her return from Finland to Germany, in September 1906, Rosa Luxemburg found that her pamphlet on the mass strike that she had sent to Hamburg was considered by the SPD executive to be too provocative, too antagonistic towards the German trade-union leaders. This reaction was hardly surprising once seen in light of the secret meeting of the SPD leadership with the Central Committee of the German Trade Unions that had taken place in February that year. The original version of Rosa's pamphlet being printed in Hamburg was therefore stopped, its printing blocks destroyed as a precaution against police raids, and in its stead a toned-down version was produced. In consequence of the delay the pamphlet could not be circulated to the delegates before the SPD congress met in Mannheim on 23 September 1906.[56]

At the Mannheim congress the apparent contradiction between the positions taken by the trade unions at their conference in Cologne and the SPD's conference in Jena was discussed, but, no doubt because of the agreement reached at the secret meeting, it was down-played. Karl Kautsky's attempt to make SPD decisions binding on every trade-union member was foiled by the conference's adopting only the part of his proposition that reintroduced the party's superior position. Thus the party's radicalism of 1905

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was halted: the mass strike returned to being a responsive weapon of defence and no longer a pro-active weapon of political action.[57] Rosa Luxemburg's position was now out of line with the conference hall positioning in Germany, and publicly so.

Rosa Luxemburg set to keeping the revolution alive through analysis of the 'objective investigation' of the historically determined conditions of revolution: the 'inevitable advent'.[58] Although it had failed, the Russian Revolution had produced some forward moves. The setting up of the Duma, although offering little to celebrate in the way of real freedoms, was a step in line with Rosa Luxemburg's theorizing that the bourgeois society was a necessary development in autocratic Russia for social democracy to be achieved. From 1907 to 1917 Russia had a multiparty system, which meant that although the left suffered repression Social Democrats had some representation in the Dumas; and the decision to participate in the elections made at the Russian Social Democrats' (Unification) congress held in Stockholm in 1906 also, formally, ended the split in the party that had occurred in 1903.[59] During those years, too, although under government restrictions, the newspapers had more freedom to cover political and social issues than they had had before the revolution. The revolution also succeeded in legalizing trade unions, and although seriously threatened and in decline from 1907 to 1912 not only did they not disappear, but other workers' organization such as clubs and consumer cooperatives began to develop and grow.[60]

Crucially, for Rosa Luxemburg's thinking, in the November 1905 strike in St Petersburg, Russian workers had come out in support of Polish workers. Polish and Russian workers united: that was Rosa Luxemburg's way towards international socialism. And good news soon arrived from Poland. In November 1906, just a year after that crucial strike, the Polish Socialist Party split formally into the 'Revolutionary Faction' under Jósef Pilsudski and the 'left', and the left then gravitated to the SDKPiL.[61]

NOTES

1. A. D. Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies: A Study of Labor Organization in the 1905 Russian Revolution,* Indiana University PhD, 1979; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1980, p. 18.
2. Russia before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 used the Julian calendar, which is thirteen days earlier than the western calendar. The calendar was changed on 1/14 February 1918. In order to achieve consistency, both across time and from country to country, dates in this book are given according to the western calendar. The few exceptions are clearly stated and mostly concern the 1917 revolution.
3. 'Petition of the Workers to the Tsar on January 22', Document 143, in R.W. Postgate, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906: Documents Selected and Edited with Notes and Introductions,* London: Grant Richards, 1920, p. 363, and for the following quotes, p. 364. The figure of 200,000 people is from P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 97.

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4. Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* p. 19; A. Ascher, 'Introduction' in J.D. Smele and A. Heywood (eds) *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives,* London: Routledge, 2005, p. 2.
5. L. Trotsky, *1905* (Translated by Anya Bostock), London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972, pp. 188–90.
6. Ibid., p. 192.
7. By the second half of November the Soviet had 562 members. See ibid., p. 250. From 2 December, following a decision made ten days earlier, the number of delegates in the executive was considerably expanded, and the Polish Socialist Party and the Jewish Bund were included with one delegate each. See Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 87–8.
8. Strictly, a new collective leadership of three was elected on 9 December 1905. Trotsky topped the secret ballot, and it was he who opened the sessions and closed them and also led debates. See Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 237 and 243.
9. For the above see ibid., pp. 106 and 108.
10. Ibid., p. 50.
11. See Postgate, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* pp. 354–5.
12. For the above paragraph see Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 134–5.
13. Ibid., p. 183.
14. See Trotsky, *1905,* p. 196.
15. Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 182.
16. For the above see ibid., pp. 183–4; Postgate, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* pp. 356–7.
17. It is this strike that in her analysis of the 1905 revolution, published the following year, Rosa Luxemburg classifies as 'the first demonstrative mass strike'. R. Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, p. 180.
18. Quoted in Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* p. 186.
19. For the above see ibid., pp. 187, 189 and 191.
20. Trotsky, *1905,* p. 269.
21. Ibid., pp. 170–1.
22. Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 192–3.
23. Ibid., p. 216.
24. See Trotsky, *1905,* pp. 187–96.
25. Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 301–2.
26. For the above see ibid., pp. 256 and 300. Strictly, the strike on 20 December was called by 'All the Socialist Parties', which included the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Polish Socialist Party; they had drawn up their first common manifesto on 13 December 1905. See Postgate, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* Document 164, p. 385.
27. See Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* p. 303.
28. For details see ibid., p. 300.
29. Ibid., pp. 304–5, and for what follows, p. 306.
30. Postgate, *Revolution from 1789 to 1906,* p. 358. For Rosa's bemused reaction to this and to the St Petersburg Social Democrats' proposal, in January 1906, to take part in such elections (they were four-class elections!) see Letter to Luise and Karl Kautsky, 11 January 1906, in G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds) *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, pp. 222–6.
31. For the above see Morgan, *The St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies,* pp. 308–10.

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32. Quoted in P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 225.
33. E. Ettinger, *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life,* London: Harrap, 1987, p. 122.
34. For the details of the SDKPiL programme that follow see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 229–33. It is important to note that Rosa Luxemburg's programme was written before the SDKPiL aligned with the Bolsheviks and to take especial note, therefore, of attention to the procedure for ensuring the immediate revolutionary outcome.
35. R. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973, p. 8.
36. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 231.
37. For the above see ibid., pp. 236 and 239.
38. Conference minutes quoted in W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 285–7. See also coverage of the Jena conference in Chapter 3, above.
39. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 242–3, and for further discussion of the Radek expulsion see pp. 355–8. The complete breakdown of Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin's friendship came over the final split of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party. During 1912 the Bolshevik and Menshevik Duma representatives tended to pull together; on Lenin's insistence they were formally split apart. At the meeting of the International Bureau, held in London in December 1913, Rosa Luxemburg tabled a motion for steps to be taken 'to bring about unity' in the Russian party; the motion referred to the split in the Duma delegation as 'the last act in two years of compromising the growing labour movement in Russia . . . on the part of Lenin's group' (quoted in Nettl, pp. 358–9). For an example of Lenin's harsh turn against Rosa Luxemburg see V. I. Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination,* Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976, which was first published in April–June 1914 in the journal *Prosveshcheniye.* Even so, the warmth of feeling that Lenin retained for her is clearly evident in his defence of her after her death in 'From "Notes of a Publicist"', in M-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, Appendix B (excerpt), p. 440, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.
40. See D. Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, pp. 193–5. In Max Weber's assessment, the Duma was set up by the Tsar to create the required image of constitutional government in order to secure loans abroad.
41. For the above see M. Liebman, *The Russian Revolution,* New York: Vintage Books, 1972, p. 37.
42. R. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (second edition), London: Routledge, 1998, p. 13. In the election for the Second Duma, held in 1907, the socialists did participate, and they won 113 of the 478 seats. This Second Duma lasted just over three months. Manipulation of the electoral system together with police harassment to achieve the parliament desired, with landowners dominating, enabled the Third Duma to last the expected five years to 1912.
43. Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', p. 157, and for the quotes that follow, pp. 160–1.
44. Ibid., p. 171.
45. Ibid., p. 172 and for the quotes that follow.
46. R. Luxemburg, 'Foreword to the Anthology: *The Polish Question and the Socialist Movement*' (1905), http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1905/misc/polish-question.htm, pp. 12–13.
47. For the above see Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', p. 173.

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48. Ibid., p. 180.
49. Ibid., p. 182, and for the paragraph see pp. 182–7.
50. Ibid., p. 189, and for the quote that follows, p. 190.
51. R. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, p. 84. For discussion see Chapter 3, above.
52. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party*, p. 285.
53. Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', p. 172.
54. Ibid., p. 200.
55. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 287. See discussion in Chapter 3, above.
56. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 247.
57. For the above see Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* pp. 286–7.
58. Luxemburg 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', pp. 161, 200.
59. A. Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored,* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992, p. 129.
60. Ibid., p. 374. For similar observations for Poland see J. Lukowski and H. Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland* (second edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 205.
61. Lukowski and Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland,* p. 205.

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5 Elections, Imperialism and War
Objective Investigation

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When Rosa Luxemburg had left Germany at the very end of 1905 on her journey to Poland she had departed from a country for which there was considerable scope for optimism. In 1903 not only had the German Social Democratic Party, SPD, impressively increased their votes in the election to 31.7 percent of the total on the first ballot and, in consequence, significantly raised the number of SPD Reichstag deputies, to eighty-one, but also, and crucially, the support for the SPD in that election had increased in line with the rapid expansion of the working class. In line with Karl Marx's 'law of Nature'[1] and, so, the SPD's Erfurt Programme of 1891, concentration of capital into fewer and fewer hands would inevitably lead to the continuing expansion of the proletariat and so support for the SPD; the speed of the expansion was the indicator of how soon the coming of the socialist society would be.

The figures available are for male workers only and extend a few years beyond 1903, but they show that the number of men classified as employed as 'manual workers in industry, commerce, transport' more than doubled between 1882 and 1907: a rise from 4,134,000 to 8,385,000, and to over 11 million if agricultural workers and those with no fixed occupation are included.[2] To include agricultural workers and those with no fixed occupation as belonging to Marx's idea of the proletariat, however, undermines the importance of the nature of industrial work for developing class consciousness. In Marx's analysis, agricultural workers and those without a fixed occupation lack the condition of being brought together in large numbers in factories or mines. Lacking this condition for raising class consciousness is problematic, not least because of the problem of accessing trade-union membership.

The social democrats had difficulty in reconciling policies specially designed to attract non-industrial wage earners. As explained in Chapter 1, the Erfurt Programme left the problem unresolved, and, as explained in Chapter 3, the desire of land workers to own the land on which they worked proved particularly difficult to square with the demands of factory and plant workers who wanted cheaper food. In Marx's theory, private property was the basis of exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.[3] Nevertheless, the niceties of definitions of the working class aside, there is no dispute that

manual workers in Germany were growing as a proportion of the working population and, furthermore, at the expense of agricultural workers, who were declining in number (down from 3,630,000 in 1882 to 3,029,000 in 1907).[4]

With such evidence of the rapid growth of the working class and the good results in the 1903 election in mind, although these did not constitute sufficient evidence to herald the imminent end of bourgeois society, the economic forces of capitalism could, at least, be seen to be developing in line with expectations. Although it was perhaps not apparent at the time, for following the occupational and industrial censuses of 1882 and 1895 the next census was not carried out until 1907, there was, however, also good reason for pessimism. Going against the expectations that followed from Marx's 'historical tendency of capitalist accumulation', expressed in the SPD's Erfurt Programme of 1891 as 'the economic development of bourgeois society leads by a law of nature to the demise of the small enterprise',[5] whereas the number of industrial workers was rising, the number of small enterprises was not declining, and the size of the bourgeoisie was increasing.

On the evidence collected in Germany in 1907 the number of men classified in the census as 'entrepreneurs, independents in industry, commerce, transport' went not down but up: from 2,173,000 in 1882 to 2,265,000 in 1907. Furthermore, along with this rise in owners of firms, the number of men employed as salaried workers nearly quadrupled from 296,000 in 1882 to 1,131,000 in 1907.[6] Such developments in the class structure fitted with Eduard Bernstein's view that social democrats needed to work together with other social classes where common interests could be found, which would mean working together not only with other workers' parties and organizations but also with sympathetic bourgeois parties and their representatives. But politics is full of surprises, and time for debating and planning strategy and tactics for the next election was unexpectedly cut short.

THE 1907 ELECTIONS

The election scheduled for 1908 instead took place in early 1907. In December 1906, Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow dissolved the Reichstag following the combined opposition of the SPD and the Centre Party to the appropriation of funding for the 'Hottentot' war (the suppression of the Nama rebellion) in the German colony of Southwest Africa (today's Namibia). The two parties had first joined in their opposition to the government's colonial policies in May 1906 after learning of the appalling atrocities that were taking place, General Trotha having ordered extermination.[7] The elections became known as the 'Hottentot' elections, and German nationalism featured strongly in them with the SPD portrayed as the arch-villains of anti-nationalism and as the fomenters of class hatred.[8] At the start of the election campaign, Chancellor Bülow wrote to the head of the Reich League

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against Social Democracy, General von Liebert, and in his letter described the election as 'an election for national honour and well-being, against Social Democrats, Centrists, Poles and Guelphs' and portrayed the SPD as 'seeking the destruction of everything that was valuable and decent in German life'.[9]

The campaign was bitterly fought. Not only was the SPD portrayed as 'anti-national', opposed to all that was good in German society, but employers together with their employers' organizations used intimidation and blacklisting to force workers to break their allegiances with their trade unions and also with the SPD. Trade unions and the SPD were viewed as inextricably bound up with each other, and this was especially the case in the heavy and metal industries. To counter the social democratic trade unions, industrial enterprises introduced their own 'national' workers' organizations: the 'yellow' (or 'liberal') trade unions. These yellow trade unions, which, rather than being organized independently, were set up by the companies in which the workers were employed, were opposed to strikes. The case they made was in terms of the 'right to work'. The employers were also deliberately divisive, setting up systems that set groups of workers apart from each other. For example, in respect of metal workers, the more highly qualified workers and supervisory workers were offered the incentive of status as an 'industrial official'. Furthermore, the League against Social Democracy, headed by General von Liebert, not only engaged in anti-SPD propaganda but also put up direct opposition by campaigning for 'national' candidates in eighty-two constituencies.[10]

Given the anti-SPD nature of the election, it was not entirely surprising that votes for the SPD should fall; rather, given the circumstances, its fall by 2.7 percentage points (from 31.7 to 29.0 percent) seems small. Although the fall in the percentage of votes was not large, the consequences for the number of Reichstag deputies, however, proved devastating. The 20.4 percent of deputies achieved by the SPD in 1903 that had produced eighty-one deputies fell to just 10.8 percent in 1907, producing just forty-three deputies: one fewer than in 1893. Their number cut by nearly half, the SPD deputies no longer had the strength required to form a significant opposition to government policies, not even by working together with parties with similar views on any particular policy. In contrast, votes for the Centre Party, which were also down slightly from 19.7 percent in 1903 to 19.4 percent in 1907, translated into an increase in the number of Centre Party deputies in the Reichstag: up from 25.2 percent of the deputies to 26.4 percent, which gave them 105 seats.[11]

The SPD were well aware of the effect that the unequal electoral districts had on the relationship between their votes and deputies, but the decline in the number of votes received was the subject of heated debate. The most widely favoured interpretation of the fall in votes in the election within the SPD was that it demonstrated the viciousness of the class struggle.[12] There was certainly evidence to support this view both in the bourgeoisie's portrayal of the SPD as 'anti-national' and in the development of the 'national' workers' organizations, the yellow trade unions. The industrial

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enterprises had set out not only to oppose the independently organized trade unions and to portray them as all under the influence of the SPD but also to divide the working class both through alternative organizations and through status differentials.

Bernstein's diagnosis of the problem was different. His view, the view shared by the revisionists, was that the party's dogma had made the crucial error of insisting at election time on focussing on the industrial working class and failing to appeal also to other groups of potential supporters. As he put it, '[p]arty strife is not identical with class struggle and in our socially complex society there is a large stratum whose class interests are not as clear-cut as those of manual workers and who would therefore seek to be bound to the Social Democratic Party by bonds of idealism.'[13] Given the divides within the SPD over the practical approach of vote-getting for participation in government versus the idealism of transformation to a socialist society only through a complete takeover of government, there is irony in its being Bernstein who emphasized idealism: the appeal of voting to those who would benefit only indirectly from policies designed for the material improvement of others.

For Rosa Luxemburg, the disappointing election results confirmed her view of the importance of action in keeping workers' support for socialist policies and, thus, keeping the SPD itself alive. 'I feel that those of the masses who are organized in the party are tired of parliamentarism', she wrote to her friend Clara Zetkin, and, in the same private letter, she condemned the 'opportunist editors, deputies, and trade union leaders' and the 'general stagnation'.[14] Rosa Luxemburg had fought hard in the campaign and had willingly gone to make a rallying speech in the Kiel constituency where Carl Legien, the chairman of the free trade union federation and a prominent right-wing member of the SPD, was defending his seat.[15]

MOVING OUTWARD

Rosa Luxemburg continued as associate editor of *Neue Zeit*. Although unable to return to Poland, she also remained active in Polish affairs as the main spokesperson for the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL, on theory and as the most important contributor to *Prezegląd Socjaldemokratyczny,* the party's theoretical journal.[16] In May 1907, she attended the Russian party congress in London as a leader of SDKPiL and also as an SPD fraternal delegate. On the congress resolutions the SDKPiL largely sided with the Bolsheviks, not the Mensheviks, but there was one exception, an important one. The exception was the Menshevik resolution utterly disapproving armed raids and the taking of money so captured: the resolution was adopted with strong support. Both Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches voted for the resolution and, so, against Lenin.[17] The SDKPiL took an important stance against the Bolshevik position.

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Whereas they paid no heed to the possible implications of the decline in the SPD votes in the recent elections in Germany, the SDKPiL was acutely aware of the armed raids being carried out in Poland by Pilsudski and the Revolutionary Fraction.[18] The SDKPiL therefore supported mass action and not the Bolshevik position of armed uprising.[19]

On her return to Germany from the congress in London, Rosa Luxemburg served her second term of imprisonment. At the end of 1906, she had gone on trial at Weimar on the charges, as mentioned in Chapter 4, connected with her Jena speech. The two-month sentence she received had been scheduled to begin in the summer of 1907.[20] After her release from prison, in August she attended the International Congress at Stuttgart. This time she was without a German mandate: her recent spell in prison had forfeited her the time needed to obtain a mandate from a constituency. Her attendance, therefore, was entirely as a representative of the Polish Social Democrats and, as such, under the Russian group.[21]

High on the agenda of the Stuttgart Congress was the issue of colonialism. The Paris Congress of 1900 had requested a study on colonialism, but by the time of the Amsterdam Congress of 1904 the commission set up had not reached agreement on policy, and study groups were therefore set up. After lengthy debate at the Stuttgart Congress, a resolution opposing colonialism was unanimously agreed. It made reference to 'the murderously destructive wars' engendered by 'capitalist colonial policies'. Its concluding statement read: 'Congress condemns the barbarous methods of capitalist colonialism and demands, in the interests of the development of the productive forces, a policy based on peaceful cultural development and one which develops the world's mineral resources in the interests of the whole of humanity.'[22]

At the top of the agenda at the congress was 'militarism and international conflicts'. After long debate, a resolution on militarism and war was drawn up with the aim of achieving unanimous agreement. Rosa Luxemburg argued strongly for an amendment to be made and succeeded in having added to the end of the resolution two paragraphs, which she and Lenin had agreed together but with her wording. The resolution, as it stood, re-affirmed the position of the International as being for peace, not war: against 'militarism and imperialism', viewed as inherent aspects of capitalism furthering the interests of 'bourgeoisie class-rule' and therefore opposed to socialism and opposed by the working classes of all countries.[23]

The Luxemburg-Lenin Amendment on Militarism and War

The Luxemburg-Lenin addition to the resolution on militarism and war at the 1907 International Congress at Stuttgart, which became the last two paragraphs of the full resolution, read as follows:

> In the case of a threat of an outbreak of war, it is the duty of the working classes and their parliamentary representatives in the countries taking

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> part, fortified by the unifying activity of the International Bureau, to do everything to prevent the outbreak of war by whatever means seem to them most effective, which naturally differ with the intensification of the class war and of the general political situation.
>
> Should war break out in spite of all this, it is their duty to intercede for its speedy end, and to strive with all their power to make use of the violent economic and political crisis brought about by the war to rouse the people, and thereby to hasten the abolition of capitalist class rule.
>
> (Luxemburg-Lenin addition to the resolution on militarism and war at the 1907 International Congress at Stuttgart)[24]

The International Bureau, mentioned in the resolution, was the central organizing permanent body of the Second International: it had a paid Secretariat, which was situated in Brussels. The Bureau consisted of two delegates from each party, and these delegates elected an Executive Committee. The Second International had run for the first eleven years without any permanent organization: congresses were called, organized and paid for by the local party hosting each congress. The Bureau had been established, as the International Socialist Bureau, at the Paris Congress in 1900.[25]

In Rosa Luxemburg's speech proposing the amendment she argued:

> We cannot just stand with our arms crossed and wait for the historical dialectic to drop its ripe fruit into our laps. . . . Jena [the 1905 SPD congress] showed the SPD to be a revolutionary party by adopting a resolution to use mass strikes in certain circumstances. . . . True this was not intended as a weapon against war, but to achieve general suffrage . . . our agitation in case of war is not only aimed at ending that war, but at using the war to hasten the general collapse of class rule.
>
> (Rosa Luxemburg's speech at the 1907 International Congress at Stuttgart)[26]

The speech showed Rosa Luxemburg's continuing commitment to the position taken at the Jena congress on the mass strike and confirmed her view that although the causes of the mass strike could be analysed in accordance with Marx's historical materialism—for the political mass strike would be the class struggle—war could be just the kind of condition that would intensify the necessary material conditions to generate the revolutionary action and with the desired outcome. In 1907, of course, the role of war leading to revolution was theoretical.

The Years at the Central Party School

In October 1907, Rosa Luxemburg took up a post at the Central Party School in Berlin, which the party had founded in 1906 in order to enhance the adult education of socialist workers.[27] Her work at the school continued

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to keep her busy over the years that followed. Until 1911 she also continued with her SDKPiL publications and consultations: 1911 was the year in which the SDKPiL split. Of her numerous such contributions, Nettl especially picks out, for its 'brilliant theoretical polish',[28] her article 'Autonomy and the National Question', published in *Prezegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* in August 1908, in which she laid out the arguments for the SDKPiL's internationalist position. Although by then the firmly agreed party view, it had never before been set out systematically and explained carefully and analytically. In 'Autonomy and the National Question' she questioned the whole idea of abstract rights, as in a nation's 'right to self-determination', and, using many historical examples and not just that of Poland in support, argued that the idea of a nation was incompatible with socialism: rejecting the possibility that 'the possessing classes and a self-conscious proletariat could take one and the same position and figure as one undifferentiated national whole'.[29]

Rosa Luxemburg was not, at the time, a member of the SDKPiL Central Committee, and, in consequence, she was only indirectly involved with the split that occurred in the party in 1911; its direct consequence for her was that she wrote very little on Polish affairs after it.[30] She remained, however, absorbed with her work at the Central Party School, where she taught courses in political economy and economic history and, from 1911, also contributed to a course on the history of socialism. The courses, which she greatly enjoyed teaching and for which the students were highly complimentary, lasted from October to Easter each year, leaving her plenty of time both to be active in politics and to continue with her writing.

Rosa Luxemburg's work at the school led her to write two books. The lectures that Rosa Luxemburg wrote for her political economy course provided the basis for the first draft of a textbook, *Introduction to Political Economy;* she completed the final draft a few years later, during her next, and far longer, stay in prison.[31] In the process of writing the first draft, she discovered a problem with Marx's position on the 'historical tendency of capitalist accumulation'. It led, in the autumn of 1911, to her putting the *Introduction to Political Economy* to one side and beginning to write the book for which she is most famous: *The Accumulation of Capital.* Completed by the middle of 1912, it was published for the first time in 1913.

SPEAKING OUT

Prior to beginning *The Accumulation of Capital,* however, Rosa Luxemburg had, again, plunged into controversy. The issue of suffrage reform in Prussia, where the three-class voting system remained, led to demonstrations in February and March 1910, and they coincided with strikes. The interaction between political and economic movements reinvigorated her writing on the importance of the mass strike, and, in February, she wrote an article, 'What Next?', in which she returned to her argument,

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laid out in her 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions' pamphlet of 1906, on the role of the SPD being to provide political leadership for the mass strike.[32] The article also recommended not only that the leadership take steps to encourage the mass strike but also that it agitate for a republic. She submitted it to *Vorwärts*. Then, mostly at weekends but, at one point, taking time off from her lectures, which she suspended, Rosa Luxemburg travelled widely across Germany delivering speeches on universal suffrage.

Vorwärts rejected the 'What Next?' article on the grounds that agreement had been reached not to engage with the question of the mass strike for the time being. The article was sent next to *Neue Zeit;* Kautsky said that he liked the article and considered it important but that he would not publish the section on republican agitation, on the grounds that there was nothing in the party programme about a republic, and he also reserved the right to publicly challenge its conclusions. But then he did not publish the article.[33] It began what became a bitter break between Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky (although not Louise Kautsky), through the debate between them that took place on the pages of *Neue Zeit* and then spread out across the International with most taking Karl Kautsky's side.[34]

The Morocco Crisis

In the summer of 1911, rather than pouring oil on the troubled waters surrounding the 'What Next?' dispute, Rosa Luxemburg poured oil on embers and caused an uproar. In July the threat of foreign war with France and England had re-emerged[35] after a warship had been sent to Agadir, Morocco, on the instructions of the Kaiser, to protect German interests.[36] At this time the SPD Executive was focussing attention on the party's campaign for the forthcoming Reichstag elections, which were due in 1912, and the Executive was concerned not to allow the Morocco Crisis, through whipping up nationalism as a weapon against the SPD, to overshadow their plan to concentrate on domestic policies. Such, after all, had been exactly what had happened in the 1907 election with such disastrous results. A letter to this effect, explaining the necessity for keeping to domestic policies and avoiding the potentially damaging effects on the party of nationalism moving centre stage in the election, was written by Herman Molkenbuhr, a member of the party's Executive.

Molkenbuhr had written the letter in answer to one sent by the International Socialist Bureau to all member parties enquiring about their reactions to the Morocco events. Copies of Molkenbuhr's letter were then distributed, and Rosa Luxemburg received one in her capacity as representative of the SDKPiL in the International Bureau. She chose to publish it, in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung,* and to do so not only along with a fierce attack on its arguments but also without including the opening section of the letter which

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explained the reasons why the situation was not expected to lead to a war.[37] She stated her position in no uncertain terms:

> The real purpose of the *Reichstag* elections is to enable us to spread *Socialist education,* but this cannot be achieved if we narrow the circle of our criticism by excluding the great international problems . . . the fruit of the entire historical development inside and outside Germany, and the advantage of *this* situation can only be lost if we continue to regard the entire life of the party and all the tasks of class struggle merely from the point of view of the ballot slip.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Leipziger Volkszeitung,* 24 July 1911)[38]

At the 1911 party congress, held at Jena, Rosa Luxemburg was publicly criticized by no lesser person than the party chairman, August Bebel, for her 'serious indiscretion'.[39]

The 1912 Election

When election time arrived in January 1912, Rosa Luxemburg, along with other staff and students at the Party School, was out campaigning for the SPD. The outcome of the election was a resounding reversal of the misfortunes of 1907: the SPD won 34.8 percent of the votes in the first ballot and increased the number of deputies in the Reichstag to 110, the largest number of representatives of any of the parties.[40] A problem arose immediately, however. The SPD had agreed a deal with the Progressive People's Party (Fortschrittliche Volkspartei)[41] for the second ballots (held in constituencies where no party had won an overall majority) not to run against each other: fielding only the candidate with the best chance of winning. The Progressives, unlike the Social Democrats, however, did not keep to the deal.[42]

As this confirmed her view against working with the liberal parties, in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* Rosa Luxemburg argued strongly against the 'new era' and for 'steadfastness' and 'more calculation of distance for the great and decisive factors of class struggle'.[43] Matters were then made worse within the Reichstag, where the SPD representative Philipp Scheidemann was made vice-president of the Reichstag and then lasted in the post only a few weeks, being brought down by the National Liberals. And yet worse, in order to be in keeping with the National Liberals, the SPD introduced party resolutions supportive of the military: improvements of pre-military training in schools and, for the SPD cooperatives, the possibility of tendering for army supplies.[44]

One advantage for Rosa Luxemburg was that her opposition to the SPD's 'new era' gained her the support of Franz Mehring, lead writer in *Neue Zeit*. By June 1912 his relationship with the journal was severed completely; in the summer of 1913 Rosa Luxemburg's articles for *Leipziger*

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Volkszeitung were being either refused or drastically toned down.[45] It was in that year that her major work, *The Accumulation of Capital,* was published.

THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL

The Accumulation of Capital, which had grown out of her preparations for an economics textbook while working at the Party School, went far beyond the publications of other Marxist theoreticians at the time. Whilst remaining Marxist in applying the dialectical materialist method, her work challenged Marx through finding his analysis of capitalism wanting, and it went on to propose a new argument, which brought in her concerns about imperialism and militarism. She had begun writing the book after the Morocco Crisis and before the upset she had caused in the SPD over her publishing of Molkenbuhr's letter had settled. Her deeply held concerns about the brutality of colonialism, its damaging effects on the local economies, and the political upheaval and wars that would follow are made very clear in the book. As she later summarized in 1915, for the benefit of those critics who had not understood her argument:

> The development of capitalism has been possible only through constant expansion into new domains of production and new countries. But the global drive to expand leads to a collision between capital and pre-capitalist forms of society, resulting in violence, war, revolution: in brief, catastrophes from start to finish, the vital element of capitalism.
>
> (Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital—an Anti-Critique,* p. 196)[46]

Focussing, as the title suggests, on Marx's position on the accumulation of capital in Volume I of *Capital,* Rosa Luxemburg found that Marx's analysis, as presented in Volume II of *Capital,* was incomplete. Marx had died at this crucial point of his analysis, and Volumes II and III of *Capital* had been published after his death. Focussing on the relationship between production and consumption, she found that Marx had failed to provide an explanation of where the demand comes from that he argues to be essential for keeping the accumulation of capital going. The problem was that the capitalists had no way of knowing that they would increase their profits (Marx's 'surplus value') if they increased their investment in their capital (for example, by buying new machinery) for they had no way of telling that there would be demand for the extra goods that they then produced. Without an incentive for expansion of capital that followed logically from the nature of the capitalist mode of production, there would be no law—no 'law of Nature'[47]—that would lead to the inevitable end of capitalism and, therefore, to the social revolution.

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Seeking the answer to the question of where demand comes from to ensure that capitalists have the incentive to expand, that is, to keep on accumulating capital, Rosa Luxemburg employed an impeccable Marxist approach: investigating material conditions, employing historical cases and structuring her book in line with the dialectical method. In the first part of her book, she showed that the answer had not been found in the works of the classical economists, and neither could it be found in Marx's work; then, in the second part, through criticism of each of the theorists' work in turn, she showed that no existing economic theorist, neither 'bourgeois economists' nor Marxist ones, had provided a satisfactory answer since. In the third part of her book she developed her own answer: her synthesis to Marx's thesis and the later economists' antithesis.

Rosa Luxemburg found her answer to her question about where demand comes from to ensure that capitalists keep on accumulating capital in the capitalist system's venture into colonialism and neo-colonialism. That venture, she argued, is exclusively inherent to the capitalist mode of production: incentives for invasion of pre-capitalist economies relate both to production and to consumption. The capitalist systems' venture into pre-capitalist economies increases the market for capitalists' goods and does so without the need to increase workers' wages back home, which is needed in order to raise consumption (i.e. demand) there. At the same time, these new colonies and quasi-colonies require huge capital investment (such as the building of railways), and investment is guaranteed because of the demand for the goods (such as minerals and cotton) that are unobtainable at home.

The pressure to expand into new territories continues, Rosa Luxemburg argued, because '[f]rom the very beginning, the forms and laws of capitalist production aim to comprise the entire globe as a store of productive forces.'[48] Thus, capitalism 'in the final stage of its historical career' is imperialism.[49] Her view of imperialism as the final stage of capitalism enabled her to interpret the expansion of colonialism both as evidence of the inevitable end of capitalism and as a measure of the closeness of its end. Her view also enabled her to focus in on the role of governments in capitalist societies. Crucially, it followed that, in the earlier stages of colonialism, revolutions take place in these 'backward colonies'[50] not to overthrow capitalism but to install governments and systems that operate to serve the capitalist system. This argument fits with her position on the necessity for a bourgeois revolution before a proletarian revolution. Foreign loans by governments to governments are also viewed in this light as aiding such newly developing capitalist states to the benefit of the accumulation of capital and the maintenance of interests by established capitalist states, with the new states made ever more dependent on the capitalist system in its pursuance of the accumulation of capital.

With respect to the final phase of capitalism—imperialism—Rosa Luxemburg drew attention to the increase that this brings in competitiveness not simply between capitalist firms but between capitalist countries. Her

conclusion was that the competition between capitalist countries was leading to increasing violence and wars and also to governments constructing protective tariffs in defence of the bourgeoisie, whose interests in respect of the accumulation of capital the governments represent. She argued that by the time of the imperialist stage of capitalism, the international system of free trade has passed and given way to aggressive trade protection, by which point the role of governments was such that, 'in reality, political power is nothing but a vehicle for the economic process'.[51] Thus, it is in her final chapter that Rosa Luxemburg focusses on militarism in the last phase of capitalism.

Militarism, in the final stage of capitalism, is no longer the means for capitalist countries to take over colonies and, Rosa Luxemburg argues, becomes a weapon used by capitalist countries against each other in the 'competitive struggle' for 'areas of non-capitalist civilisation'.[52] She also argues that militarism is a device of governments to increase capital accumulation further by becoming major consumers of the production of weapons and armaments. It is through this understanding that she generates her argument for the eventual social revolution. Government purchases of military goods are funded through taxation, and in order to increase their consumption of such purchases taxation must be increased; it is the working class who essentially 'foot the bill' through decreased wages and falling real incomes owing to indirect taxation coupled with higher prices as a consequence of protective tariffs.[53] This will be why, she explains, the 'international working class' will 'revolt against the rule of capital', and the pressure for accumulation will be replaced by the aim of 'the satisfaction of toiling humanity's wants by developing the productive forces of the entire globe'.

The explanation for the incentives for capitalists to keep the accumulation of capital going that would inevitably lead to class conflict and achieve the 'ultimate aim' of social revolution (the explanation that Marx had left incomplete) Rosa Luxemburg had found in militarism. Not only had she completed the explanation to support Marx's 'law of Nature', but the explanation that she had found also brought to the fore that socialism was not something that would, nor therefore could, be achieved within any one country. As she stated in her final sentence: 'socialism is by its very nature an harmonious and universal system of economy'.[54]

The Accumulation of Capital has been widely viewed not only as Rosa Luxemburg's most important work but also, by many, as the best work by a Marxist thinker since Marx's *Capital* itself. At the time when it was published, however, although her brilliance in writing was acknowledged, her work was not well received. She felt that reviews in the Social Democrat press had not understood her arguments; this was why she later used her time in prison to lay out the arguments again more simply and with more straightforward illustrations.[55] Certainly it was a hard book for anyone who was not trained in economics, and it was very long; it also did not concern

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itself with the SPD. In proposing a new Marxist theory that challenged Marx's own theory it may, to some, perhaps, simply have seemed arrogant. But whatever the case, there is no doubt that the timing of its publication, 1913, was not ideal for guaranteeing a good reception.

In 1913 important changes occurred in both the German and the Russian social democratic parties. In the German case, in August of that year, August Bebel died, and Friedrich Ebert succeeded him as party chairman.[56] In Russia, in October, the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, RSDRP, formally split into two separate party organizations: the Duma representatives divided into six Bolsheviks and seven Mensheviks. In mid-December, Rosa Luxemburg attended the meeting of the International Bureau, which was held in London, where she tabled a motion for steps to be taken 'to bring about unity' in the Russian party. It was decided that the issue of the RSDRP split should be discussed but with full information and at a larger conference, to be organized for a later date.[57]

For Rosa Luxemburg, 1913 then ended on an up-note. In consequence of her articles no longer being accepted by any of the party publications, at the end of December the first issue of a new publication appeared: *Sozialdemokratische Korrespondenz*. Its editors were Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring and Julian Marchlewski.[58]

1914: TRIALS AND WAR

On 20 February 1914, Rosa Luxemburg was put on trial in Frankfurt, charged, under paragraphs 110 and 111 of the Criminal Code, with having called for public disobedience of the laws. The prosecution's case focussed on a speech she had made on 16 September 1913 at a meeting in Bockenheim, near Frankfurt, in which, in the context of discussing war, she had said, 'If they think we are going to lift the weapons of murder against our French and other brethren, then we will shout: "We will not do it".'[59] She received a sentence of a year in prison. Following the announcement of the sentence, however, protests broke out in Frankfurt and in Berlin, and, with an appeal pending, Rosa Luxemburg toured western Germany making speeches on militarism, which were enthusiastically received by the crowds and then reported, fully and sympathetically, in the Socialist press and also reported in both the Liberal and Conservative press.[60] The Public Prosecutor's office continued, therefore, to monitor her speeches.

On 29 June 1914, a second trial opened, which lasted until 3 July. This second trial was held in Berlin, for, this time, it was the Minister of War who sought her prosecution, and the Minister of the Interior joined in by adding the issue of the legality of calling publicly for demonstrations and strikes.[61] Rosa Luxemburg had rankled the Minister of War by writing an article condemning the harsh sentences given to Landwehr members of the German Army for trifling offences,[62] in which she also argued that brutal treatment

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was a common occurrence in the barracks. The prosecution was brought on the basis that Rosa Luxemburg had insulted the army. The defence called for witnesses, and 30,000 soldiers willing to give evidence of their mistreatment came forward. Buckling under the weight, the trial was postponed but under the possibility of it being transferred to a military court.

The Berlin trial was not transferred, and so Rosa Luxemburg left for Brussels, in mid-July 1914, to prepare for the conference that the International Bureau had organized for considering the issue of the RSDRP split. It was scheduled to be held on 29 and 30 July, but in light of the threat of war that was building in the wake of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June, the International Bureau met, in Brussels, on 27 July. The following day, Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, declared war on Serbia; on 29 July Russia ordered a partial mobilization.[63] Retaining their conviction that peace could still be achieved and supporting a resolution to this effect, the gathering at the conference, among whom were most of the leaders of the European socialist parties, proceeded with their discussion of the RSDRP split. Rosa Luxemburg insisted that the conference submit its report on Russian unity to the meeting of the International Socialist Congress to be held in August 1914, whose place of meeting was changed from Vienna to Paris and whose timing was brought forward to early in the month.[64]

The International Congress did not take place. On 31 July Jean Jaurès, the prominent socialist member of the Chamber of Deputies, was assassinated in Paris. On that same day both Russia and Austria-Hungary ordered full mobilization, and the German government sent an ultimatum to the Russian government. That was also the day on which Rosa Luxemburg returned to Berlin. The following day, 1 August, Germany declared war on Russia. Rosa Luxemburg quickly became fully aware of the SPD's shift to patriotic support of Germany in the event of war, and, over the following two days, she and Clara Zetkin contacted the more radical SPD members of the Reichstag with a plan to organize a campaign against the war.[65] On 3 August Germany declared war on France; Britain entered the war the next day.

On 4 August a crucial debate on the granting of funds to the government to prosecute the war took place in the Reichstag. Over the previous two days the 110 SPD Reichstag delegates had discussed the issue: with the majority in favour and only fourteen against, and having agreed to vote unanimously, with party loyalty paramount, the SPD supported the government by voting in favour of war credits.[66] Rosa Luxemburg pursued her anti-war campaign both within Germany and through the International, but it fell to Karl Liebknecht to fight a one-man campaign within the Reichstag itself.[67] On 2 December 1914, Liebknecht was to be the sole deputy to oppose the subsequent vote for war credits.[68]

In October Rosa Luxemburg's appeal for the trial that had taken place back in February, in Frankfurt, was dismissed. Ill health and a spell in hospital in December 1914 postponed her sentence to March 1915, but in

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February she was unexpectedly seized, not by the state prosecutor's office, but by the criminal police department, and taken to prison.[69]

NOTES

1. K. Marx, 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, p. 234. For previous discussion see Chapter 3, above.
2. For the figures in the above paragraph see W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1981, p. 80, Table 3.1. and p. 86, Table 3.3.
3. In 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', pp. 232–3, Marx emphasizes the difference between the artisan-type workers in earlier capitalist society and the later factory-type workers. The crucial difference is that the later factory-type workers lacked the independence of the earlier artisan-type workers and so were entirely dependent on wages. Being entirely dependent on wages, the factory-type workers were, therefore, completely open to exploitation by the owners of the factories and plants in which they were employed. The agricultural workers' desire for their own plots of land made them more like the workers in early rather than late capitalism.
4. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 86, Table 3.3.
5. Quoted in ibid., p. 102.
6. For the above figures see ibid., p. 86, Table 3.3.
7. See J. Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914* (Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell), London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966, p. 313, where the Hereros tribe is mentioned more specifically.
8. For the above see Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 90; and G. Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 30.
9. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 90. The Centre Party (*Zentrum*), which drew support mainly from Catholics, both workers and the middle class, was included in Liebert's list not only because the party had voted against the credits but also because the party had helped in the setting up of Christian (on paper interdenominational but, in practice, Catholic) trade unions to aid the protection of workers. Then, in 1905, the central body of these trade unions, the Christlicher Gewerkverein, removed from its statutes the statement that a member was an 'enemy of Social Democratic principles and endeavours'. See B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, p. 255.
10. For the above paragraph see Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* pp. 90 and 99. The 82 constituencies included 32 of the 36 in which the SPD had entered the second ballot.
11. For the above figures see ibid., p. 80, Table 3.1.
12. Ibid., p. 110.
13. E. Bernstein, *Ignaz Auer, eine Gedenkschrift* (Berlin, 1907), quoted in Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 110.
14. See letter in P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, pp. 148–9. The letter is thought to have been written sometime in early 1907; the uncertainty over the date is confirmed in G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds) *The Letters of*

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Rosa Luxemburg (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, pp. 236.

15. J. Sperber, 'The Social Democratic Electorate in Imperial Germany', in D.E. Barclay and E.D. Weitz (eds) *German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990,* New York: Berghahn Books, 1998, p. 168.
16. See P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 254–5 and 343.
17. Ibid., p. 330.
18. See J. Lukowski and H. Zawadski, *A Concise History of Poland* (second edition), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 205, where Pilsudski's actions are referred to as 'terrorist attacks', carried on throughout 1907.
19. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 332. In a footnote (p. 332, fn 1), Nettl quotes Rosa Luxemburg's argument in her speech at the congress: 'The Polish comrades and I do not share the point of view of Bolshevik comrades . . . as regards the so-called armed uprising.' He also notes, however, that she voted with the Bolsheviks for a 'watered-down' resolution.
20. Ibid., p. 252.
21. For the above see ibid., pp. 256–7.
22. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 319, and for the full resolution.
23. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 270; Braunthal *History of the International,* pp. 334–7, and for the whole resolution, Appendix 2.
24. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 270.
25. See Braunthal, *History of the International,* pp. 243–4.
26. Conference minutes, quoted in ibid., p. 268.
27. Having ended her personal relationship with Jogiches in the spring of 1907 (she learned that he had been unfaithful) it was essential for Rosa Luxemburg to find paid work. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 256–7. Although it was affected, particularly in the earlier years of their separation, their political interaction continued.
28. Ibid., p. 341.
29. Quoted in ibid, Appendix: 'The National Question', p. 507. Excerpts from the articles by Rosa Luxemburg published in *Prezegląd Socjaldemokratyczny* in 1908–9 are presented as 'The National Question' in P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 136–44. Although he did not criticize it back in 1908 when it was published, it is Rosa Luxemburg's 'Autonomy and the National Question' that Lenin attacks so harshly in his *The Right to Self-Determination* (1914). See Chapter 4, fn 39.
30. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 344. The split occurred partly due to Jogiches's leadership style, partly due to policy questions in respect of independent trade unions, partly due to the party's relationship with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), more specifically with the Left PPS, and partly due to Lenin's manoeuvres in 1910 to assure Bolshevik control of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP). See pp. 344–8.
31. For the above see ibid., pp. 264–5.
32. Ibid., pp. 283–4.
33. Ibid., pp. 284–5. It was published instead, most of it, that is, under the title 'What Next?' in the *Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung,* edited by Konrad Haenisch. See ibid., p. 286; and also R. Looker (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, pp. 148–59, for the article, translated as 'The Next Step'.
34. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 287–95. For extracts from Kautsky's critique of Luxemburg's argument for the mass strike, '*Was Nun?*' in *Neue*

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Zeit in 1910, see P. Goode (ed. and translator), *Karl Kautsky: Selected Writings,* London: Macmillan, 1983, pp. 53–73. Kautsky makes a 'don't rock the boat' argument in which he makes clear that he expects an absolute majority of seats for the SPD soon, possibly in the next Reichstag election, and perhaps an 'overwhelming majority', but that he also expects that such a result will itself lead to 'decisive' class struggles as the ruling class fights back to preserve its power (pp. 69–70). For an example of Luxemburg's reply in defence of her position see sections of her article published in *Neue Zeit* in 1910: 'Theory and Practice', in Le Blanc and Scott, *Socialism or Barbarism,* pp. 147–65. Her major criticisms are that Kautsky has completely reversed the position on the mass strike that he held only five years before (in the Jena resolution) and that the party had failed the workers when the workers took action, through the party's unwillingness to provide political leadership: even to the point of the party being an obstruction.

35. War between France and England had threatened in 1898 over Sudan. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 328.
36. For details of the Morocco Crisis (Agadir Crisis) see Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1992, pp. 719–42.
37. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 295–6.
38. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 296. The full text 'Concerning Morocco' that appeared in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* is in Looker, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 160–7.
39. Quoted in ibid., p. 298.
40. See Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party,* p. 80, Table 3.1, and p. 81, Table 3.2.
41. The Progressive People's Party was formed by a merger of middle-class progressive groups in 1910. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 279.
42. Ibid., 303–4.
43. Ibid., p. 305.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., pp. 311–12.
46. Excerpts, from which the quote is taken, are in Le Blanc and Scott, *Socialism and Barbarism,* pp. 178–201.
47. Marx, 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation', p. 234.
48. R. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (Translated by Agnes Schwarzchild), London: Routledge, 2003, p. 338.
49. Ibid., p. 398.
50. Ibid., p. 399.
51. Ibid., p. 433.
52. Ibid., p. 434.
53. For the above quotes see ibid., pp. 434 and 435. For the below quotes see ibid., p. 447.
54. For the above quotes see ibid., p. 447.
55. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 318.
56. Wilhelm Liebknecht had died in 1900.
57. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 358–9.
58. Ibid., pp. 313–14. Franz Mehring was twenty-five years older than Rosa Luxemburg; he had lost his place as lead writer of *Neue Zeit* at the end of 1911 because of his opposition to the SPD's electoral policy for the 1912 elections (p. 311). Julian Marchlewski, one of the Polish students at Zurich University who, back in 1893, along with Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and Adolf Warszawski, had founded the Social Democracy of the Kingdom

of Poland, SDKP, which became the SDKPiL, had moved to Germany in 1907.

59. Ibid., p. 321, quoting from *Leipziger Volkszeitung,* 21 February 1914.
60. Ibid., p. 323.
61. Ibid., p. 324.
62. See Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 207. The *Landwehr* consisted of older men in military service.
63. Braunthal, *History of the International,* p. 348.
64. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 361.
65. Ibid., p. 371.
66. P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* New York: Collier Books, 1952, p. 277. Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, the Reich Chancellor, portrayed the outbreak of war as Russian aggression against Germany.
67. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 376–7.
68. In the meeting of the SPD Reichstag delegates beforehand, seventeen were opposed, but only Liebknecht dared to vote against in the Reichstag. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* p. 284.
69. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 378–9.

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6 War, Revolutions and Freedom
From behind Prison Walls

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Prison walls kept Rosa Luxemburg, a woman of action, contained for nearly all of the war. She was let out of prison from January to July 1916 but was then not released until 9 November 1918, two days before the official ending of the war through Germany's defeat. Locked away, she was also kept from participating in the Russian Revolution, which broke out in February 1917. She used her time to participate in the only way she was able: through her writing. In April 1915 the first edition of *Die Internationale* was published: a paper for the social democrat faithful dealing with theoretical issues but designed to get through censorship. Before her imprisonment Rosa Luxemburg, along with Franz Mehring and Julian Marchlewski, had played a major role in the preparation for its publication, with Leo Jogiches also taking an important practical part. From inside prison, she continued to play a role in the publication of *Die Internationale:* mostly through the help of Mathilde Jacob, her secretary and friend, who not only visited and carried messages but also secreted Rosa Luxemburg's writings out of the prison.[1] At the same time as she was writing for *Die Internationale* Rosa Luxemburg was also writing what she referred to as her 'study of the war', which was to become 'The Crisis in the German Social Democracy'.[2]

The first edition of *Die Internationale* included two of Rosa Luxemburg's articles: one under her own name, on rebuilding the International, in which she argued for the importance of continuing the struggle for peace and for the crucial role of the international proletariat in that struggle; the other under the name of Mortimer, a scathing criticism of Karl Kautsky's latest book.[3] Her criticisms focussed on Kautsky's views on imperialism and took issue with his 'modern democracy' as the aim of socialism. Taking a quote from his book she argued:

> '[F]ull democracy, not formal democracy, but real and effective democracy' can exist only when economic and social equality has been established, i.e., when a socialist economic order has been introduced.
>
> (Luxemburg, article in *Die Internationale*, quoted in Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 240)

Die Internationale failed, however, to pass military censorship. The first edition was, therefore, also its last. The censor had all the copies confiscated, and those involved in its publication were indicted by the Public Prosecutor on charges of high treason.

After the banning of *Die Internationale* the group's publications went underground. A network for distribution of information to sympathetic protesters already existed: it had developed first in a district of Berlin and then in other cities. The first illegal publication distributed had been Karl Liebknecht's explanation for voting against the war credits in November 1914. He had initially written it to the Speaker of the Reichstag, but the speaker had refused to enter it in the written records. The publications became known as the Spartacus Letters (*Spartakusbriefe*), and, inevitably, they became of intense interest to the secret police.[4]

In March 1915 a crucial test for Social Democrat deputies in the Reichstag came over the annual budget, in which, this time, rather than being dealt with separately, the war credits were included. Otto Rühle joined Karl Liebknecht in voting against the budget, and thirty-one other Social Democrats abstained by leaving before the vote.[5] Votes were again taken in August and differed only in that Rühle abstained, leaving Karl Liebknecht once again the sole objector. At the end of the year, on 29 December 1915, however, things changed: twenty deputies of the Social Democratic Party, SPD, voted against new war credits, and there were twenty-two abstentions. Those who voted against included both Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky. In March 1916, following a heated debate in the Reichstag on the emergency budget in which Hugo Haase attacked the war and was then expelled from the party, a new opposition formed: an ad hoc group, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft, also known as the 'Centre' group.[6] It was this group that, in January 1917, having been gradually driven out from the SPD, would eventually form the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD.

A year earlier, intent on retaining a clear distinction from the ad hoc Centre group with the aims of both attracting mass support and remaining within the SPD, a secret meeting was held, on 1 January 1916, at Karl Liebknecht's law offices, to formally constitute the International Group (Gruppe Internationale): the name chosen for having been organized initially for the distribution of *Die Internationale*. The group adopted as its programme the twelve declarations and six propositions that Rosa Luxemburg had originally drawn up, but completed too late, for the conference at Zimmerwald, Switzerland, that took place in September 1915.[7] This work had been smuggled out of prison in December 1915. Opposed to both war and imperialism and reaffirming the crucial importance of the international solidarity of the proletariat, the International Group's programme fitted with the thesis of *The Accumulation of Capital* (1913). The fifth declaration read:

> 5. The World War serves neither national defence nor the economic or political interests of the masses anywhere; it is merely an outcrop

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> of imperialist rivalry between capitalist classes of different countries for the attainment of world domination and for a monopoly to exploit countries not yet developed by capital. In the present era of unabashed imperialism national wars are no longer possible. National interests serve only as deception, to make the working classes the tool of their deadly enemy, imperialism.
>
> (International Group programme, adopted 1 January 1916)[8]

The ninth declaration opened with 'Imperialism as the last phase of the political world power of capitalism is the common enemy of the working classes of all countries'.

Fifteen days after the secret meeting held to constitute the International Group, which had had to take place in her absence, Rosa Luxemburg was released from prison. To her dismay, she found that the 'study of war' manuscript, which had been smuggled out of prison back in April 1915, had still not been published. When finally published, in April 1916, it became the International Group's initial statement of policy.[9] With the title 'The Crisis in the German Social Democracy' the manuscript was published under the pseudonym Junius, and it quickly became known as the Junius pamphlet, *Juniusbroschüre*.[10]

THE CRISIS IN THE GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY: THE JUNIUS PAMPHLET

In the Junius pamphlet, Rosa Luxemburg began by presenting the evidence that, before the war, the German SPD had been a Marxist party working for the interests of the workers, internationally, with war understood in all its carnage as benefiting only the owners of the means of production through the exploitation of the workers. It had also been a party, she showed, that had consistently won support and votes by clearly declaring its opposition to war. Such was the party before the war: 'And then came the incredible fourth of August, 1914. Did it *have* to come?' she asks.[11] Her answer is that the Social Democrat group of Reichstag deputies could have taken a stand against the war but chose, instead, to interpret it as war against Russian despotism, and they did so by ignoring both current and historical evidence and by neglecting analysis of imperialism.

Applying historical materialist analysis to explain why '[t]he memory of our party has played its shabby trick',[12] Rosa Luxemburg noted the special features of the development of imperialism in Germany. In respect of the economy, she highlighted the shortness of the time over which industrialization and commercialisation had developed. By the end of the 1880s, it had, she argued, led to 'the most pronounced growth of monopoly in Europe' (in the steel and iron industry so crucial to railroads, mines and armaments) and

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to 'the best developed and most concentrated banking system in the whole world'.[13] She then drew attention to the particular nature of the German political system that accompanied 'this live, unhampered imperialism':

> Germany is under a personal regime, with strong initiative and spasmodic activity, with the weakest kind of parliamentarism, incapable of opposition, uniting all capitalist strata in the sharpest opposition to the working class.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', p. 282)

Thus, she concluded that a party acting within the existing system was, by 1914, incapable of opposition.

Rosa Luxemburg then raised and tackled a series of other important questions about the war. In answer to the question of what should be done once the war has begun, and in response to the claim that once war has begun it is everyone's duty to defend against foreign invasion, she argued that under imperialism, as the final stage of capitalism, 'a war of national self-defence' is 'impossible'.[14] Her reasoning was that, as a consequence of colonialism, the war inevitably becomes a world war and one in which the bourgeoisie pursues its goal of profit making above that of national self-defence. Therefore, she argued, it is essential that the proletariat continue to pursue the class struggle and to demand the removal of all forms of political oppression 'since the greatest political freedom is the best basis for national defence'. And, she continued, it is the 'first duty' of social democracy to demand their removal and the removal, also, of 'all political inequalities, since only a free people can adequately govern its country'.[15]

Re-affirming the view on the importance of political leadership, which she had expressed in 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions' (1906) and even quoting from it, Rosa Luxemburg argued forcefully for the importance of the party for leadership of the proletariat: to rally and inspire so as to strengthen the resolve of the masses and not to be weak in reflection of the masses' lack of resolve. As to the question of whether the proletariat would have supported the social democrats had they opposed the war, she answered as follows:

> '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. Did our parliamentarians demand an absolute assurance of victory from the generals of the Prussian army before voting in favour of war credits? What is true of military armies is equally true of revolutionary armies. They go into the fight, wherever necessity demands it, without previous assurance of success.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', p. 316)

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She then raised the question of the end of the war. The victory of either side, she argued, with all the dividing up of territories and exchange of colonies would lead before long to a new world war, and, specifically, the case of a defeated Germany 'would introduce an era of undivided rule for militarism and reaction all over Europe, with a new war as its final goal'.[16] In her summary, 'Theses on the Tasks of International Social Democracy', she rallies the masses in their class struggle both against war and against imperialism:

> The final goal of socialism will be realized by the international proletariat only if it opposes imperialism all along the line, and if it makes the issue 'war against war' the guiding line of its practical policy; and on condition that it deploys all its forces and shows itself ready, by its courage to the point of extreme sacrifice, to do this.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', p. 330)

To this end, she argued for the absolute necessity of building a new workers' International that, in times of peace as well as war, would have as its 'supreme goal', above 'parliamentary and trade union action', the fighting of imperialism and war.[17]

MAY DAY TO THE UNDERGROUND ORGANIZATION

In the same month that the Junius pamphlet was finally published Rosa Luxemburg moved to action: on 22 April 1916 she decided to call a May Day demonstration against the war. Having failed to persuade the centrists to join in, she and Karl Liebknecht along with a few others advertised and organized the demonstration for 1 May in the Potsdamerplatz, Berlin. The police were ready in force, and as Karl Liebknecht opened with 'Down with the government, down with the war' he was promptly arrested. On 28 June he was sentenced for treason to two and a half years of hard labour.[18] The sentence provoked a spontaneous reaction: 55,000 workers went on strike in Berlin munitions factories; there were also strikes in Brunswick and Bremen, and demonstrations took place in Stuttgart. It was the first political mass strike of the war.[19]

The strike, however, had a negative effect for Karl Liebknecht: on 23 August, his sentence was increased by a higher military court to four years and one month. His appeal rejected, he began his sentence on 6 December 1916. Shortly after his arrest, the Reichstag had voted for the immunity given him as a deputy to be lifted, and it did so with the support of most of the SPD deputies. The sympathy for Karl Liebknecht that this lifting of his parliamentary immunity sparked in members of the Centre group led to proposals for reconciliation between its group and the International Group,

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but the proposals were spurned by Rosa Luxemburg, who wanted nothing less than the Centre group's full support for the International Group. Thus, she continued in battle with the party authorities.[20]

On 10 July 1916, the month before Karl Liebknecht's sentence was increased and nearly four months before he began his sentence, Rosa Luxemburg was re-arrested by the secret police and sent back to prison. No trial took place. In October she was sent to the old fortress at Wronke in the province of Posen, and then, a year later, in July 1917, she was sent to the prison in Breslau, where she remained, still held without trial, until the end of the war. Inside prison, Rosa Luxemburg continued her writing, and she retained communications with her group. Through exchanges of letters and through her visitors she managed to have her works smuggled out of prison and also to keep in touch with news of the events taking place outside. With others of the International Group arrested soon after Rosa Luxemburg's arrest in 1916, it fell to Jogiches to take charge of the production and distribution of the circulars, the Spartacus Letters. He did so under the pseudonym of W. Kraft, and it was he who strengthened the underground organization and carried out conspiratorial work until he, too, was arrested and sent to jail. After that, Ernst Meyer and Paul Levi took over the work, and it was through this that the Spartacus League (Spartakusbund) was able to emerge, on 11 November 1918.[21]

FURTHER ACTION: MASS STRIKES

Alongside underground activity, outward revolutionary action was also taking place in Germany and, furthermore, taking the form on which Rosa Luxemburg attached so much store: political mass strikes. Following the first such strike, which had occurred on 28 June 1916 in reaction to the sentence passed on Karl Liebknecht, a second, far larger strike occurred in April 1917, and then, in January 1918, an even larger one took place. The June 1916 strike had been initiated by a group of around fifty to eighty local officials of the Berlin Metalworkers Union opposed to their union's agreement. In line with all other unions, the Berlin Metalworkers Union had agreed not to take strike action during the war. This group of metalworkers opposed to the agreement became known as the Revolutionary Shop Stewards; over time they gained the support of almost all of those employed in the armaments industry in Berlin and developed support more widely across Germany.[22]

The Revolutionary Shop Stewards were also crucial in the other two major strikes, each precipitated by the government's cutting of rations: in April 1917 bread rations were cut by a quarter. It was in that month, on 7 April, that the Centre group (the Arbeitsgemeinschaft) separated from the SPD and formally formed the USPD.[23] Rosa Luxemburg along with all of the International Group then withdrew their support from the SPD and became members of the USPD. The SPD that she had joined and had felt it

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'an honour' to be campaigning for in 1898 had, by then, become the largest and best organized socialist party in the world and was allied with the world's strongest trade-union movement. Its assets, which constituted great wealth, included newspapers and publishing houses, buildings and cooperatives, and it employed thousands of staff in its huge bureaucratic organization.[24] Following the 1912 elections, in which the SPD won 34.8 percent of votes on the first ballot, the party had 110 deputies and, so, had become the largest party in the Reichstag. But the SPD that Rosa Luxemburg now left, in 1917, was also the party, along with its trade unions, that rather than providing the necessary political leadership had chosen to negotiate away from mass strikes and to concentrate on reforms and vote-getting; and the party had moved from its stance for pacificism and against imperialism to support for the imperialist government in war.

The January 1918 strike had begun not in Germany but in Austria, similarly in reaction to a cut in the white flour ration. From Austria the strike had then spread into Germany, with around 200,000 workers on strike in Berlin on 28 January and also strikes in other German cities. Only in Berlin and Munich, however, did the strike last for as long as a week. The strike ended when the armaments factories in Berlin were placed under martial law. Although the January 1918 strike did not last long, its major demands showed it to be a very clear example of a political mass strike: not simply spontaneous and quickly spread, the major demands were for a rapid end to be brought to the war and without either annexations or indemnities.[25]

The demands of the January 1918 strike for an end to war without annexations or indemnities were in line with the Bolsheviks' opening gambit at the peace negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk.[26] Locked away in prison, not only did Rosa Luxemburg have to sit out the political mass strikes taking place in Germany and the action during the formation of the USPD; her prison walls also kept her from the two revolutions in Russia in 1917 and the events that followed in Russia in 1918.

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION, RUSSIA 1917

The February Revolution had begun in Russia much like the 1905 revolution. On 23 February (8 March on the western calendar), 90,000 workers went out on strike in Petrograd.[27] The following day the number rose to 200,000. Street riots then broke out, but this time, unlike in 1905, the Petrograd garrison of soldiers refused to help the police, some even firing on them. Over the week the Tsarist regime disintegrated, and dual power took its place: the Duma ignored the Tsar's orders to adjourn and, instead, set up the Provisional Government and then played no further part; at the same time, following the precedent of 1905, the Petrograd Soviet of the Workers' Deputies (soon to be Workers and Soldiers' Deputies) set up a second government.[28]

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The leaders of the Petrograd Soviet were members of the socialist parties—Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. On the Executive Committee the SRs were the largest in number, there were more Mensheviks than Bolsheviks, and both the president and one of the vice-presidents were Mensheviks. On 1 March 1917 (old calendar), the Soviet issued 'Order Number One', which commanded all military and naval units to form local councils: soviets. Through these soldiers' and sailors' councils every military and naval unit and their weapons were under the control of the Petrograd Soviet.[29]

In the Provisional Government neither Mensheviks nor Bolsheviks were members. Prince Lvov, a liberal nobleman who had been head of the local government association, the Union of Zemstvos, headed the Provisional Government, which was made up of members of the Kadet Party and moderate conservatives with just one exception. Alexander Kerensky, a member of the SR party and also one of the two vice-presidents of the soviet, became the Minister of Justice in the Provisional Government.

Lenin, not in Russia but in Switzerland when the revolution broke out, did not return to Russia until 3 April (old calendar). On the following day he delivered two speeches, his 'April Theses', published in *Pravda* on 7 April. He argued for an end to the war, for rejection of the Provisional Government, for the rejection of dual power and for all power to go to the soviets. He also argued for nationalization of all lands and amalgamation of banks and for a change of name from Bolshevik to Communist Party.[30] In May Kerensky became Minister of War, and five other socialists, this time including not only SRs but also Mensheviks, joined the Provisional Government. In July Kerensky replaced Prince Lvov to become the head of the Provisional Government.

In June a Bolshevik-led uprising in Petrograd failed, but in September a coup led by the Minister of War, General Kornilov, also failed, and this led to the gaining of pro-Bolshevik majorities in both the Petrograd and the Moscow soviets. In Moscow, the Bolshevik majority was absolute, and the results of the local elections in other industrial cities led to majorities made up of Bolsheviks and Left SRs.[31] In contrast to the Menshevik- and SR-dominated First Soviet Congress, in the Second Soviet Congress 390 of the 650 members were either members of the Bolshevik Party or Bolshevik sympathizers, such as Left SRs.[32] Between February and October 1917 (old calendar), membership of the Bolshevik Party had grown from around 25,000 to around 300,000.[33]

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION TO THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR

The October Revolution, which overthrew the Provisional Government and installed the Bolsheviks in power through a coup led by the Military

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Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, headed by Trotsky, who was by then a Bolshevik, took place on the night of 24–25 October (7–8 November 1917 on the western calendar). After the Bolshevik coup, the Soviet Congress set up a temporary central government, the Council of People's Commissars, Sovnarkom. Sovnarkom was dominated by Bolsheviks but also included members of the Left SRs, and its Chairman was Lenin. Alongside Sovnarkom the soviets retained a form of dual power with Sovnarkom through the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) of the Congress of Soviets, which had first met in June.[34]

Within days of the overthrow of the Provisional Government, Sovnarkom decreed itself interim powers of legislation, with VTsIK given the right to 'defer, modify or annul' Sovnarkom's legislation.[35] Unlike the dual power situation under the Provisional Government, Bolsheviks sat on both Sovnarkom and VTsIK. The power decreed to Sovnarkom was 'interim' because the Provisional Government, before it had been overthrown, had finally got around to organizing elections for the Constituent Assembly, which were set to be held on 12 to 14 November (old calendar). The elections to the Constituent Assembly, promised by the Provisional Government, went ahead as planned. Suffrage was universal: both men and women voted in the election. Forty million votes were cast. but the Bolsheviks gained less than a quarter of them, and 175 of the total 707 seats; the majority of votes went to the SRs, and the 410 seats they gained represented a clearly workable majority.[36]

The Constituent Assembly met on 31 January 1918 (18 January, old calendar) and was dissolved the next day. With friction between the Sovnarkom and VTsIK, Sovnarkom soon took on the right to issue urgent decrees without consulting VTsIK. The only party in Russia that opposed the war, the Bolsheviks had begun negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, just three weeks after the October Revolution, finally achieving the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918 (western calendar),[37] although at the cost of major territorial sacrifices. In total, 27 percent of arable land, 33 percent of manufacturing industries and 26 percent of the population went to Germany.[38] Once the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ending the war with Germany had been signed, the Left SR members, being opposed to the treaty, withdrew from Sovnarkom. Thus, Sovnarkom became a single-party government, and on 8 March, on Lenin's insistence, the Bolshevik Party was re-named the Communist Party.[39]

Although no longer in Sovnarkom, Left SRs remained both in the soviets and in VTsIK and continued to remain so after June 1918: the month in which Right SRs and Mensheviks were banned.[40] The right that Sovnarkom had taken on to issue urgent decrees without consulting VTsIK became written into the Constitution for the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, which was approved in July 1918. Following the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, violent opposition to the government grew, increasing through the summer of 1918 and turning, in September, into outright civil war.

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News of the events in Russia filtered through to Rosa Luxemburg, heard from visitors and pieced together from brief accounts in Russian and German newspapers smuggled into her cell. She responded in the only way her situation allowed: she wrote 'The Russian Revolution'.[41] The work was not published until 1922, fully three years after her death; and because of her untimely death, it was also in unfinished form, in some places just notes.

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LUXEMBURG'S 'THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION'

Opening with criticisms of the SPD and specifically naming Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg quickly made the point that these events in Russia demonstrated that the SPD's position on the possibility of proletarian revolution in Russia successfully overthrowing the Tsar had been proved wrong. Importantly, she then stressed that, given the 'hardest conceivable conditions' under which the revolution was taking place—in the middle of a world war; fought against Germany, 'the most reactionary military power in Europe'; and without any support ('completest failure') from the international working class—an ideal outcome for democracy and socialism could not be expected:

> [I]t 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. On the contrary, elementary conceptions of socialist politics and an insight into their historically necessary prerequisites force us to understand that under such fatal conditions even the most gigantic idealism and the most storm-tested revolutionary energy are incapable of realizing democracy and socialism but only distorted attempts at either.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 28)

Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks are all praised for their leadership in driving the revolution forward in the months between February and October, and she argues that their promise of land, peace and power under the soviets won over the majority of the masses and that without this drive to radicalism, as the lessons of the history of the English and French revolutions had shown, the alternative would have been the return of monarchy. Although, in this light, the Bolsheviks were 'the historic heirs of the English Levellers and the French Jacobins', Rosa Luxemburg argued that the task faced by the Bolsheviks after 'their October uprising' was 'incomparably more difficult than that faced by their historical predecessors',[42] and, explaining the difficulties in turn, she then proceeded to criticize the Bolsheviks' handling of them.

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The first of the difficulties that Rosa Luxemburg identified was the peasants' seizure of land. Initially the Bolsheviks approved it, and she approves it, too, as a 'political measure to fortify the proletarian socialist government'. As a socialist economic measure, however, it was far from a good tactical move, she argued: 'the direct seizure of the land by the peasants has in general nothing at all in common with socialist economy'.[43] Socialist economic reform would allow small peasants their land (as in the longer run they would be won over by the benefits of the socialist changes), but for large and middle-sized farms nationalization would be essential, and allowing peasants just to grab these lands created new obstacles to their necessary nationalization. Not the least of these obstacles, she argued, was that it reinforced the existing village power structures: for those with the most power were in the best position to ensure that they got the most. Socialist economic reform, she explained, was also contradicted by the Bolsheviks' land policy in reinforcing the conflict of interest between town and country, which is characteristic of bourgeois society, when what was needed was a unified planning for the mutual interests of both agrarian and industrial production.

The second of these difficulties Rosa Luxemburg viewed as the 'nationalities question' and the Bolsheviks' slogan of the right to self-determination that was then made so crucial to their negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. In short, she argued that the slogan had enabled the bourgeois representatives of the nationalities (such as in Finland, Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Baltic countries and the Caucasus) to engage in counter-revolution: to side with Germany, that is, and to destroy what their proletariats had previously won for themselves. In essence her position is that the policy had gone completely against the international proletariat, set in motion the disintegration of Russia and, for the six weeks between the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the signing of a supplement to it, allowed Germany to act as a dictatorship over Russia. From this situation of German dictatorship, she argued, 'arose the terror and the suppression of democracy'.[44]

Rosa Luxemburg offered as a proof of the suppression of democracy the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Allowing Trotsky's defence that the timing of the election was at fault, she argued that in those circumstances new elections should have been called; she roundly rejected Trotsky's claim that, as he put it, 'the cumbersome mechanism of democratic institutions'[45] could not keep pace with the speed of political developments in Russia at the time. She argued against him as follows:

> Any living mental connection between the representatives, once they have been elected, and the electorate, any permanent interaction between one and the other, is hereby denied.
>
> 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.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 60)

Rosa Luxemburg is not simply arguing for elections: 'And is this ever-living influence of the mood and degree of political ripeness of the masses upon the elected bodies to be renounced in favour of a rigid scheme of party emblems and tickets in the midst of revolution?' she asks. She answers: 'Quite 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 the most wonderful fashion.'[46] It is this, she argued, that is a 'powerful corrective' to what Trotsky referred to as the 'cumbersome mechanism of democratic institutions':

> . . . namely, the living movement of the masses, their unending pressure. And the more democratic the institutions, 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.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 62)

Rosa Luxemburg recognizes that, as for all human institutions, all democratic institutions have 'limits and shortcomings', but she argues that Trotsky and Lenin's solution of getting rid of the Constituent Assembly '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 political life of the broadest masses of the people.'[47]

Not content only to criticize the Bolsheviks for their dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, she also criticized their suffrage law for not constituting universal suffrage. In limiting suffrage to those who labour, the law wrongly therefore, she argued, excluded the middle class and also, given the economic upheaval of the time, the unemployed and those between jobs, from all classes. She, again, criticized the Bolsheviks because, in practice, elections to a representative body had not been held, and she went further. Not only had they dissolved the Constituent Assembly, failed to introduce universal suffrage and, in any case, failed to hold new elections to a representative parliament, the Bolsheviks had also attacked democratic rights:

> . . . the destruction of the most important democratic 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 . . . it is a

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> well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', pp. 66–7)

During the immediate stage after the proletarian revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which Lenin and Trotsky were engaged, it was crucial, Rosa Luxemburg argued, that the masses had every opportunity to practise and develop their social democratic skills through training, education and experience: 'for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not able to exist'.[48] She criticized Trotsky's claim that through their 'open and direct struggle for governmental power the labouring masses accumulate in the shortest time a considerable amount of political experience and advance quickly from one stage to another of their development', arguing 'just because this is so, they have blocked up the fountain of political experience and the source of this rising development by their own suppression of public life!' Faced with the 'giant tasks' ahead 'the most intensive political training of the masses and the accumulation of experience' are essential, she argued, and emphasizing her position continued:

> Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 69)

Freedom of thought was crucial because, just as she had argued against Lenin's 'pitiless centralism' in 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy' back in 1904,[49] contrary to what she refers to as 'the tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of the dictatorship', there was no 'ready-made formula' for socialist transformation 'in the pocket of the revolutionary party', no 'sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied'.[50]

Her argument went further: 'The whole mass of the people must take part', she argued, because it was also the only way to prevent dictatorship 'from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals' and to prevent corruption.[51] She then went on to criticize Lenin, directly:

> He is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror—all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralizes.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 71)

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Lenin's dictatorship, she argued, was a 'bourgeois' dictatorship, like that of the Jacobins: it was not a proletarian dictatorship, which is 'a dictatorship of the *class*, not of a party or of a clique—dictatorship of the class, that means in the broadest public form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy'.[52] Summarizing her whole position and then emphasizing all those 'devilishly hard conditions' faced by the Bolsheviks and recognizing that the outcome could not, therefore, be expected to 'conjure forth the finest democracy', she then concluded with a dire warning:

> The danger begins only when they ['Lenin and his comrades'] make a virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances, and want to recommend them to the international proletariat as a model of socialist tactics.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 79)

OUT OF PRISON

In July 1918, Rosa Luxemburg had been moved to a prison in Breslau, from which she was finally released on 9 November 1918. On the same day, Leo Jogiches, too, was released from prison. It was also the day on which the revolts, which had begun at the end of October, reached the streets of Berlin, where a general strike took place. And it was the day on which the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II was announced and the Imperial Chancellor handed power to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the SPD, the largest party in the Reichstag. To Ebert's horror, in a speech made in the early afternoon, Karl Liebknecht, who had been released from prison on 23 October, proclaimed Germany the Socialist Republic.[53] Two days after Ebert was handed power the official end to the war arrived. Rosa Luxemburg found, on her release, that, contrary to her plea in 'The Russian Revolution', the Spartacus Group had been entirely won over by what she had termed the Bolsheviks' 'model of socialist tactics'.[54]

NOTES

1. For the above see P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 377–8. P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 237, has Luxemburg and Mehring as the joint editors.
2. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 379.
3. K. Kautsky, *The National State, the Imperialist State and the League of States*. Nuremburg, 1914.
4. Each letter was signed 'Spartacus', chosen for being the name of the leader of the largest slave rebellion in Ancient Rome. From December 1914 until

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August 1915 the letters appeared simply under the title '*Zur Information*' (Information Bulletin). From August 1915 to October 1918 they appeared under the title '*Politische Briefe (Spartakus)*' (Political Letters). Along with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, their other main contributors were Franz Mehring, Julian Karski (Marchlewski) and Ernst Meyer. See Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 255, fn 1.

5. P. Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* New York: Collier Books, 1952, p. 285.
6. For the above see ibid., pp. 286–7; and Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 381 and 390.
7. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 384–6.
8. Ibid., pp. 392–3, and for the text of the programme in full.
9. See M.-A. Waters, 'Introduction to "The Junius Pamphlet"', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, p. 258.
10. The choice of name is a reference to letters criticizing George III and his government written by a 'Junius' in the *Public Advertiser* for a number of years, beginning in 1769. See Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 245, fn 1.
11. R. Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York, Pathfinder Press, 1994, p. 268.
12. Ibid., p. 288.
13. Ibid., p. 282.
14. Ibid., p. 310.
15. Ibid., p. 314, and for the quotes above, p. 312.
16. Ibid., pp. 322–3.
17. Ibid., p. 331.
18. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 399.
19. See Frölich, *Rosa* Luxemburg, p. 254.
20. For the above paragraph see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 399–400.
21. For the above see ibid., pp. 401–2 and 424.
22. B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, pp. 287–8.
23. This was against the advise of both Bernstein and Kautsky. See Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism,* p. 288.
24. For the above see J. Braunthal, *History of the International 1864–1914* (Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell), London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966, p. 301.
25. Moore, *Injustice,* p. 289.
26. Ibid. For an account of the negotiations between 9 December and 3 March 1918 see A. B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia,* London: Fontana/Collins, 1969, pp. 511–32.
27. St Petersburg had its name changed to Petrograd in 1914, because of the war.
28. For the above paragraph see Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks,* p. 410.
29. For the above paragraph see ibid., pp. 410–11 and 419.
30. V. I. Lenin, *The April Theses* (1917), http://historyguide.org/europe/april.html.
31. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks,* pp. 469–70.
32. Ibid., pp. 487–8.
33. R. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (second edition), London: Routledge, 1998, p. 21.
34. E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–23, Vol. 1,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 156.
35. Quoted in ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 120; Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks,* p. 516.

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37. A reminder: the western calendar was adopted on 1/14 February 1918.
38. J. F. N. Bradley, *Civil War in Russia 1917–20,* London: B.T. Batsford, 1975, p. 46.
39. For the above see Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks,* pp. 532–3.
40. When VTsIK met in Moscow in July 1918 there were 745 Bolsheviks, 352 Left SRs and 35 other delegates. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–23,* Vol. 1, pp. 169–72.
41. R. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967.
42. Ibid., p. 41 ('October rising', p. 40).
43. Ibid., p. 41.
44. Ibid., p. 56.
45. Ibid., p. 59.
46. Ibid., p 61.
47. Ibid., p. 62.
48. Ibid., p. 68, and for the following quotes see pp. 68–9.
49. R. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, p. 84.
50. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 69.
51. Ibid., pp. 70–1.
52. Ibid., pp. 76–7.
53. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 443.
54. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 79.

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7 Into the German Revolution
On through the Weimar Republic

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In the Council of People's Representatives (Rat der Volksbeauftragten, RdV), the provisional government formed under Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democratic Party, SPD, shared equal power with the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD, which in return withdrew from their most radical positions.[1] The RdV were to have authority until elections to the Constituent Assembly took place, which were scheduled for January 1919. The RdV was not the only body that claimed authority. Initially, as in Russia in respect of the provisional government and the soviets, a form of dual power emerged in Germany. Before Rosa Luxemburg's release from prison, workers' and soldiers' councils had already begun to form in various cities, and, on 10 November, the day after her release, councils were elected in the Berlin factories and barracks. On the same day of their election the delegates of these councils were sent to a meeting at the Circus Busch, the traditional place for gatherings of large numbers of people in Berlin.

At the Circus Busch meeting the delegates set up their own Executive Council, much along the lines of the Petrograd Soviet, but, crucially unlike the Russian case, the German delegates ratified their provisional government, the RdV.[2] The Spartacus Group, however, recognized only the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. At the point of the formation of the provisional government the Spartacus Group dropped the name of International Group to become officially, on 11 November 1918, the Spartacus League (Spartakusbund).

Rosa Luxemburg argued at the 11 November meeting for the Spartacus League to stay within the USPD's organizational framework.[3] The Spartacus League Programme, written by Rosa Luxemburg[4] and published in *Rote Fahne* on 14 December under the title, 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?', included the pledge:

> *Spartakus* will never undertake to govern other than through the clear and unmistakable wish of the great majority of the proletarian masses of Germany, and never without their conscious agreement with the ideas, aims, and methods of *Spartakus*.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?', *Rote Fahne,* 14 December 1918)[5]

At a Spartacist demonstration on 6 December, sixteen people were killed by the Republican Defence Force that had been set up on 17 November under the command of Otto Wels, the Social Democrat Commandant of Berlin. On 21 December, Otto Wels's force attacked a group of revolutionaries that included mutineers who were holding out at the stables of the Imperial Palace. In protest at the attack, the USPD members of the provisional government resigned. Shortly before the USPD members' resignation from the provisional government, however, at the second Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, held on 16 to 21 December, this time with delegates from across Germany and not just Berlin, a motion to admit Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht to the congress in an advisory capacity had been defeated and heavily so.[6]

With the USPD and the Spartacus League unable to agree on either policies or tactics and in the midst of mass actions, the decision was finally taken by the Spartacus League to found a new party. The next day, 30 December 1918, the founding congress of the Communist Party of Germany, the KPD (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands), took place. In her speech at the congress Rosa Luxemburg again declared her position:

> Socialism cannot be made and will not be made by order, not even by the best and most capable Socialist government. It must be made by the masses, through every proletarian individual. . . . And what is the form of the struggle for Socialism? It is the strike.
>
> (Luxemburg, speech at the KPD founding congress, 30 December 1918)[7]

The Communist Party that she spoke for was the one set out not by the current practice of the Bolsheviks but by the theory of Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto* of 1848. In line with the position taken in the Manifesto, Rosa Luxemburg supported the KPD executive's proposal to participate in the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly, but the KPD congress rejected it.[8] Her views were unwavering on the importance of the masses learning through the experience of elections, and this was especially so when, as in this case, elections were to be conducted on the basis of true universal suffrage: that is, women and men of all classes, with everyone having a direct vote, and the resulting government was to be based on proportional representation. But Rosa Luxemburg was outvoted, and the decision of the KPD congress was to boycott the election. Respecting the vote, she abided by the majority decision.

On 3 and 4 January 1919, the provisional government, now entirely SPD, attempted to sack the left-wing Berlin Chief of Police, Emil Eichhorn. This led directly to the January uprising and so, in turn, to the deaths of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Eichhorn refused to leave his post, claiming he was responsible not to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior but

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to the executive of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council. The USPD called for protest demonstrations on 5 January; the new Spartacus newspaper *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag) called for action; the KPD executive called for the workers to engage in the strongest action but rejected any idea of attempting a government takeover.[9] The Berlin USPD leadership, the KPD executive and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards then issued a joint call to the workers to take action in mass demonstrations. The size of the demonstrations on 5 January far exceeded expectations. Seizing the moment and optimistically expecting that they would be joined by troops, which they were not, the KPD decided to give their leadership to the mass political strike.

Over the following days the uprising was savagely suppressed by Freikorps troops, the right-wing paramilitary forces under Gustav Noske, the new commander-in-chief for Berlin and also a prominent member of the SPD.[10] Reacting to the events, the USPD and Revolutionary Shop Stewards opened negotiations with the government; the KPD did not. With the leadership of the mass action split and the uprising suppressed, the Freikorps then sought out the 'Spartacists'.

Through the pages of *Rote Fahne* the KPD affirmed their commitment to the masses. On the 14 January, *Rote Fahne* published what was to be Rosa Luxemburg's final editorial, in which she posed the crucial question about the uprising, 'Spartacus Week' as she referred to it, and its defeat: 'Was it a defeat based on raging revolutionary energy and inadequate maturity of the situation, or on the weakness and indecision of the action?'[11] Her answer to her question was 'Both!' but it was only the failure of leadership that she blamed and not the mass uprising, for the history of international socialism, she explained, is built on class struggles and 'historical defeats'. In this she was echoing one of the arguments she had made, back in 1904, against Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward:*

> The working class demands the right to make its 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.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 102)[12]

It was on the very next day, 15 January 1919, that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were captured and murdered. Poignantly, at the closing of her speech at the KPD founding congress, on 30 December 1918, she had posed the question of how long the revolution would take, to which she had answered, 'Who among us cares about the time, so long only as our lives suffice to bring it to pass?'[13]

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COMPARING GERMAN FAILURE WITH RUSSIAN SUCCESS

In the explanations offered in the histories and commentaries for the failure of the January uprising in Germany as compared to the success of the October Revolution in Russia it is unsurprising that the problem of leadership features, with Lenin's theory and practice viewed favourably as compared with Rosa Luxemburg's. But it is the winners, not the losers, who write history, and in this case there was not just one winner but two winners: in Russia, the Bolsheviks; and in Germany, the new coalition government in which the SPD was the party with the largest number of votes.

The differences between Germany and Russia were undoubtedly important in explaining the contrast between their revolutionary events, and leadership was certainly among those important differences. In Germany, on the day of the Circus Busch meeting, 10 November 1918, Ebert, as the leader of the SPD and so the head of the provisional government, had received a telephone call from General Groener, the head of the Armed Forces. Ebert responded by making a deal, which he kept secret from the other members of the SPD. Part of this deal was for the government to continue to rely on the support of the officer corps. In Russia the Bolsheviks had not stayed reliant on the traditional relationship between the government and the army. When taking power in Russia on 7–8 November 1917, the Bolsheviks had had the Military Revolutionary Committee, the armed wing of the Petrograd Soviet, at their disposal. Furthermore, not only had the Bolsheviks their Military Revolutionary Committee, but the Petrograd Soviet also had control of the army under Order Number One and had had this since the spring of 1917. In addition, at the time of their takeover, the Russian army had also been otherwise and elsewhere engaged in fighting in the First World War.

One year on, in Germany in November 1918, things were very different. By then the war was at an end, and the troops were returning home with the army high command intact. In Germany the Executive Council, formed at the Circus Busch meeting on 10 November 1918, did not have the equivalent of Order Number One. But these differences were not the only reasons why Ebert made his deal with General Groener. There was another part to his deal, and it was the reason why he kept the agreement secret from members of the SPD: the other half of the deal was to fight Bolshevism.[14] Fear of Bolshevism was understandable. In Russia, civil war, which had rumbled through the summer, had fully broken out in the autumn of 1918; in Germany, the war having come to its end, it was peace, not war, that was wanted. But in the eyes of both Groener and Ebert, Bolshevism was not just something that was going on in Russia: Bolshevism was communist revolution and synonymous with the Spartacists. For any action, irrespective of who was actually involved, it would be Spartacists who would be given the blame. Frölich dramatically recounts the situation:

> Every crime up and down the country was attributed to Spartakus. Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and their followers were presented as a

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> horde of murderous and sadistic beasts, and the Anti-Bolshevist League, liberally supplied with Government money, invented new monstrosities every day and sent them out into the world on sensational posters which appeared on walls and hoardings everywhere. . . . the killing of the Spartakist leaders was openly advocated in public meetings and in the Press. Without interference by the social-democratic authorities the *Heimatdienst,* the corrupt tool of the old imperial Government, issued huge placards:
>
> 'Workers! Citizens!
>
> Our Fatherland is threatened with destruction. Save it! It is no longer threatened from without, but from within. Spartakus threatens it. Kill their leaders! Kill their leaders! Kill Liebknecht! When they are dead you will have peace, work and bread.
>
> Soldiers from the Front.'
>
> (Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 303)[15]

The Spartacus League, which had emerged on 11 November 1918, had begun the organization of their armed wing, the Red Soldiers' League, on 15 November. Two days later, the provisional government had set up the Republican Defence Force under the command of Otto Wels. The Red Soldiers' League was mainly concentrated in Berlin, and reports suggest that at its peak the League had 12,000 soldiers, approximately equal to the size of the Republican Defence Force.[16] At the time of its forming, on 30 December 1918, the KPD judged the historical conditions as not ripe for government overthrow, but once the size of the political mass strike on 5 January 1919 became clear, the KPD had risen to the occasion to shoulder the role of leadership in support. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote in *Rote Fahne* on 8 January 1919:

> The masses are ready to support any revolutionary action, to go through fire and water for Socialism. But they need clear guidance, and ruthless determined leadership. . . . Germany has always been the classic country of organization, and still more of the fanatic organization mentality, but . . . the organization of revolutionary actions can and must be learnt in revolution itself, as one can only learn swimming in the water. . . . The lesson of the last three days calls loudly to the leaders of the workers: do not talk, do not discuss endlessly, do not negotiate, act.
>
> (Luxemburg, *Rote Fahne,* 8 January 1919)[17]

At the time of Rosa Luxemburg's untimely death, the governments of both Germany and Russia had good reasons to wish to undermine any claims for her importance, as activist or theorist. Her actions in Germany in becoming ever more revolutionary had clashed with the SPD's striving for the respectability they thought necessary for achieving their goal of an outright parliamentary majority in the forthcoming elections. Blame for the SPD's failure to achieve that majority could be deflected onto Rosa Luxemburg

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and the other Spartacists. In the case of Russia, her writings on the Russian Revolution were highly critical, and what was worse for her critics was that the work was finally published at a time when her arguments seemed increasingly to be being proved right.

WEIMAR GERMANY

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Four days after Rosa Luxemburg's murder, the SPD succeeded in gaining the largest share of the poll in the elections that were held on 19 January 1919 to select the Constituent Assembly to frame a new constitution. Although it was the largest share, the 37.9 percent of the votes received by the SPD was a long way from a majority. In addition, the USPD gained 7.6 percent, but even with these votes added together with those of the SPD the socialists still gained only a total of just over 45 percent of the votes cast. And this was in an election in which not only did the KPD not stand, but, as explained, the elections were held on the basis of genuine universal suffrage: women and men of all classes, without tax qualifications. In respect of seats in the Constituent Assembly, out of the total of 423, these votes translated into 165 for the SPD and 22 for the USPD. In line with revisionist thinking, the SPD therefore formed a coalition with two bourgeois parties: the Centre Party (Zentrum), which had 91 seats, and the German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei, DDP), which had 75 seats. The DDP was the new name for the left-liberal Progressive People's Party.[18] On 11 February, five days after the Constituent Assembly convened in Weimar, Friedrich Ebert was elected president.[19]

The constitution[20] was drawn up between February and June and included many of the demands made by the SPD in the Erfurt Programme of 1891. The vote was given to all men and women over the age of twenty with voting direct (no more three-class system anywhere) and cast through secret ballot; and the constitution also instituted proportional representation and included the referendum. In addition, it laid down some of the protections demanded for workers: the right to form free associations, the introduction of an eight-hour workday and the right to have workers' councils. Furthermore, the Weimar Constitution established a republic, the very thing that Rosa Luxemburg had argued the SPD leadership should agitate for in her article 'What Next?' in 1910. That very article had been rejected by *Vorwärts* and then not published in *Neue Zeit* after Kautsky said that he would not publish the section on republican agitation, on the grounds that there was nothing in the party programme about a republic.[21] The article had led to the bitter break between Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky and had spread out across the International, with most taking Kautsky's side.[22]

The federal republic established by the constitution retained the two houses of parliament, the Reichstag and the Reichsrat, with a president as the head of state. The upper house, re-named the Reichsrat, was now

only to have delaying powers; as before, it was to be made up of deputies appointed by the states' parliaments, now seventeen in number and with Prussia no longer dominating. Crucially, the same rules of suffrage applied to both houses and also to presidential elections. The president was to be elected every seven years, the Reichstag every four, and the Reichstag was given the powers to make laws, set budgets and consent to the appointment of ministers and force the resignations not only of ministers but also of the head of the cabinet: the chancellor.

The decision for the president to be chosen by the electorate rather than elected within parliament followed from a lesson drawn from the example of the French Third Republic, where the president was elected by the parliament but the parliament had disorderly assemblies.[23] The view taken was that to avoid such disorder the parliamentary system should be counterbalanced by a strong presidency. The authority given to the president to refer any law passed in the parliament to popular referendum was one of the devices for ensuring this balance. There were, in addition, three other such devices. The president was given the capacity to rule through decree in times of emergency (Article 48), the right to appoint and dismiss the chancellor and individual cabinet ministers and to form governments, and the power to dissolve parliament.

Through the early part of 1919, the Freikorps went on to suppress workers' strikes and demonstrations violently, with conflicts taking place in Hamburg, Bremen, the Ruhr, Bavaria and then, in May, Munich. The following year, on 13 March 1920, with support of the Freikorps and regular army units a coup was staged in an attempt to overthrow the government, the Kapp Putsch. In response, workers formed the Red Ruhr Army, and the putsch was defeated, on 17 March, by a general strike in which even members of the state bureaucracy in Berlin participated. The Red Ruhr Army then quickly established control of some large cities, but they were defeated by 30 March.[24]

The Reichstag Elections

The first Reichstag elections held under the Weimar Constitution took place in June 1920. The SPD fared far worse than it had in January 1919: its share of the vote fell to 21.6 percent. Large numbers of socialist supporters switched to the USPD, which gained 17.9 percent of the votes cast in the election, and the KPD, which had not stood in the 1919 election, gained 2.1 percent.[25] The combined left-wing total of 41.6 percent of the total votes cast in the June 1920 election was very close to the figure for industrial workers as a percentage of the German workforce.[26] Even by 1910, white collar workers already made up 26.4 percent of the workforce. The outcome of the election was that the SPD-Centre Party-DDP coalition lost its absolute majority, and the SPD was left out of the new coalition government.[27]

The SPD returned to the coalition in May 1921 and remained in it until November 1922. The party was also to be part of the coalition government from August 1923 to November 1923 and from June 1928 to March 1930.

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But in the Weimar Republic, the SPD never again managed to poll as high a percentage of votes as it had in January 1919, and this was the case even though the USPD ceased to be a party in 1922.[28] The USPD's disintegration was the consequence of Lenin's insistence that parties belonging to the Third International must conform to the 'Twenty-One Conditions', which meant that they must be modelled on the Russian Communist Party and adopt Bolshevik tactics. In consequence, the USPD membership was pursued by both the KPD and the SPD, with the left merging with the KPD and many of the remainder re-joining the SPD: after this, the left-wing votes stayed split between the SPD and the KPD.[29] The total of these left-wing votes, however, remained below 50 percent: the highest combined total gained being 40.4 percent in 1928. The highest KPD vote was in November 1932, when the party gained 16.9 percent.[30]

On 30 January 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor: the National Socialists (National Socialist German Workers' Party, Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei, NSDAP, or Nazi Party) still the party with the largest number of seats in the Reichstag in spite of the fall in their votes.[31] With the president's support, Article 48 enabled Hitler to issue emergency decrees through which his opposition was arrested and silenced.[32] In the following election, held on 5 March, the Nazi Party with support from the German National People's Party (Deutschenationale Volkspartei, DNVP) managed to secure a majority. Importantly, the votes gained by the NSDAP were not at the expense of the SPD and KPD; for those parties, support stayed constant and, at times, even increased. The SPD and the KPD together gained 37.1 percent of the votes cast in the November 1932 election (the NSDAP 33.1 percent), and even in the violent March 1933 election the SPD and KPD together gained 30.6 percent of the votes (the NSDAP, 43.9 percent).[33]

Rather than being at the expense of the two left-wing parties, the votes gained for the National Socialists were at the expense of the bourgeois parties. Over the years, the declines in support for the DDP and the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP) were the most pronounced. The DDP, at 18.6 percent of the votes in January 1919 and 8.3 percent in June 1920, was at just 1 percent by June 1932. The more right-wing DVP, which vied with the DDP, was similarly down to just 1.9 percent in June 1932, from a high point of 13.9 percent in June 1920.[34] As Rosa Luxemburg had foreseen, whereas the hitherto supporters of liberal parties proved too weak to sustain democracy, the working class provided its strongest and most reliable supporters.

EXPLAINING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC'S FAILURE

There were clear faults in the Weimar Constitution, and not least with respect to Article 48, which had given the president the capacity to rule through decree in times of emergency and which had been used to assist Hitler after

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he became chancellor. Article 48 highlighted that the Weimar Constitution had overestimated the importance of a strong president and underestimated the importance of a strong parliament, but it was not the only weakness in the constitution. The operation of the system of proportional representation also weakened the parliament, sapping its vitality. It led to the spawning of large numbers of parties and to the polarization of extremes, which led to highly unstable governments with frequent government alterations. There were twenty cabinets between 13 February 1919 and 30 January 1933, and not only were the governments short-lived, but they also had a parliamentary majority for only about half of the Weimar years. Clear coalitions of opposition also failed to emerge, which further weakened the party system. The proliferation of parties was such that, following the 1928 election, eighty-eight seats were held by parties that polled less than 5 percent of the total votes cast.[35]

Small adjustments to the constitution, such as allowing only parties to have seats in parliament if they polled over 5 percent, as Germany had from 1949, or a candidate run-off for presidential elections, as France has, might have made a difference to the survival of the Weimar Republic. Rosa Luxemburg would have objected to the participation of the SPD in coalition governments with bourgeois parties, but had the Weimar Republic survived, she would have approved of the continuation of the 'representative bodies' around which 'the living fluid of the popular mood' flowed as compared with the Bolsheviks' dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, which had also been elected on the basis of universal suffrage and multiparty elections.[36] And she had added: 'And the more democratic the institutions, 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.'[37]

Rosa Luxemburg was clear that the Weimar Republic, whatever exact form its constitution would take, would be a bourgeois democracy. In Engels's terms, the Weimar Constitution had merely removed 'the fig-leaf from absolutism' and erected 'a screen for its nakedness'.[38] Back in 1880, Marx had contrasted the 'military despotism' of Germany with England, where the workers had 'wrung' legal power and legal liberties from the ruling classes, and he had argued in no uncertain terms that 'you cannot get rid of a military despotism but by a Revolution'.[39] In Germany, after the war, the traditional power groups had not been removed and were, Berger argues, 'still powerful enough to undermine the basis for successful democratization'.[40]

As supporting evidence for his argument, Berger recounts the effects of the Stinnes-Legien Agreement of 1918, the agreement between the industrialists and the socialist trade unions: no sooner had it been signed than the industrialists moved 'to reinstate the authoritarian "master-in-one's-own-house" attitude that dominated industrial relations before 1914'.[41] Not only did the employers' federation reject workers' participation in industry, but they also

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undermined the workers' principal economic achievement of an eight-hour day and voiced their contempt by coining the phrase for the Weimar Republic of 'trade-union state'. Importantly, the army also remained unchanged and maintained its Prussian traditions and system of rigid obedience. Lawyers and the bureaucracy similarly carried on behaving as if they were still under Junker-dominated authoritarianism.[42] It was this 'social reality' of Weimar Germany remaining authoritarian, militaristic and nationalistic that, Dahrendorf argues, 'provided a basis for the militant protest against the political form of democracy'.[43]

In the 'The Junius Pamphlet', written in 1914 following the SPD's failure to oppose the war, Rosa Luxemburg had drawn attention to Germany's weak parliament:

> Germany is under a personal regime, with strong initiative and spasmodic activity, with the weakest kind of parliamentarism, incapable of opposition, uniting all capitalist strata in the sharpest opposition to the working class.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', p. 282)

The explanation offered for this weakness of the parliament, 'incapable of opposition', drew on her position developed in *The Accumulation of Capital*. It was the consequence of the 'live, unhampered imperialism' in Germany, which had developed in the 'shortest possible space of time' and which, by the end of the 1880s, had led to 'the most pronounced growth of monopoly in Europe' and to 'the best developed and most concentrated banking system in the whole world'.[44] In accordance with her theory of the relationship between imperialism—the last stage of capitalism—and militarism, the growth of monopoly was in the steel and iron industry, so crucial to railroads, mines and armaments. Germany's economic and financial system of monopolies and cartels remained, now made more vulnerable through Germany's defeat in war.

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND THE RISE OF HITLER

Weimar Germany was hit very hard by the Great Crash of 1929. Between 1928 and 1932, exports were cut by more than half, and the export crisis not only was accompanied by overproduction but also coincided with a severe crisis in agriculture. The gross domestic product fell from 88,100 million reichsmarks in 1928 to 56,700 in 1932. Over those years unemployment soared: from 8.4 percent in 1928 to 30.1 percent in 1932. By the winter of 1930–1, five million people were unemployed; in the following winter, 1931–2, the number reached six million.[45] Faced with such levels of unemployment, the question of how to reform the unemployment

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insurance led directly to the fall of the last democratically legitimated government, in March 1930, and from then on presidential cabinets were formed.[46]

The dramatic rise in unemployment following the economic crash approximated the material conditions that Rosa Luxemburg had anticipated as the start of the successful socialist revolution. In her view what Germany at this point of economic crisis needed was political mass strikes and a workers' party that demonstrated political leadership. In the reality of Germany in 1930, however, more than workers' political strikes and responsive and inspiring leadership was needed. Trotsky had argued in his analysis of the 1905 Russian Revolution that 'an insurrection is, in essence, not so much a struggle against the army as a struggle *for* the army'.[47] But in Germany in the early 1930s, it was not simply the soldiers' support for the revolution that had to be won; the Nazis' paramilitary gangs also had to be destroyed.

Once Hitler had become the chairman of the National Socialists, in 1921, the party had developed a paramilitary force, the Storm Division (or Storm-Troopers), the SA, and its subsection, the Protection Squads, the SS. By 1931 the SA approximated the size of the Reichswehr, the 100,000-strong state army.[48] By January 1933, the SS had 52,000 men, and the following month, after the general strike called by the communists for 31 January, which failed, 40,000 SA and SS members were made auxiliary policemen. Such were the forces that Hitler and his Nazi Party were able to use in their violent campaign in the run-up to the 5 March election in 1933.[49] Yet, in the election in 1928, the year before the Great Crash of October 1929, the NSDAP had polled just 2.6 percent of the votes.[50]

Although still without a majority of votes in the March 1933 election, in which the NSDAP polled 43.7 percent, support from the DNVP gave the necessary majority with a combined total of 51.9 percent of the votes. With that narrow margin the Nazis immediately set about destroying democracy. They began with the Länder parliaments, which they dissolved on 13 March and replaced with Nazi majorities everywhere, and then, on 7 April, they appointed Nazi Federal Commissions to run them.[51] Utilizing Article 48 of the constitution, the Enabling Act passed on 23 March with only the Social Democrats voting against it, for by then the Communists were proscribed, enabled the Nazi Party to rule through decree. Also in March, the prosecution of 'political enemies' began with the setting up of special courts. With prisons soon inadequate to contain them, they were incarcerated in old warehouses and factories.[52] To deal with political crimes, in April a secret police, the Gestapo, was created. On 14 July 1933, the NSDAP was declared the single legal party.

The communists had called a general strike, on 31 January, but it had failed and had been exploited to the hilt by the Nazis in the run-up to the March election. A fire that broke out in the Reichstag was blamed on the communists, in spite of the lack of any supporting evidence, and propagandized as

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the start of a communist revolution. Rosa Luxemburg's analysis had not, however, relied only on the mass uprising within a country. As she had written at the end of November or beginning of December 1918, in respect of the Bolshevik revolution, to Adolf Warszawski, the head then of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPIL:

> Certainly, the agrarian relations that have been established [in Russia] are the most dangerous aspect, the worst sore spot of the Russian revolution. But here too there is a truth that applies—even the greatest revolution can accomplish only that which has ripened as a result of [historical] development. This sore spot also can only be healed by the European revolution. And it is coming!
>
> (Luxemburg's Letter to Adolf Warszawski, end November/beginning December 1918)[53]

Although not exactly what Rosa Luxemburg had in mind, theoretically the communist regime in the Soviet Union could have come to the aid of German communists in 1933, but years before, his ideas first developing in the autumn of 1924, Stalin had abandoned international socialism for 'socialism in one country'. The new theory had the principal advantage for Stalin, in his moves towards his goal of defeating all possible contenders for the supreme position that Lenin had held, of being directly opposed to Trotsky's internationalist theory of 'permanent revolution', which Trotsky had formulated in 1906 and to which, at the time, Lenin had been opposed.[54]

NOTES

1. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 441.
2. See B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, p. 293; and, for what follows, also E.D. Weitz, *Creating German Communism, 1890–1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 85 and 92–3.
3. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 451.
4. Ibid., p. 468. Nettl's source for stating that the programme was written entirely by Rosa Luxemburg is Radek's *Diary.*
5. Ibid., pp. 469–70. This passage in R. Looker (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, p. 285, is translated as: 'The Spartacus League will never take over governmental power in any other way than through the clear, unambiguous will of the great majority of the proletarian masses in all Germany, never except by virtue of their conscious assent to the views, aims, and fighting methods of the Spartacus League.' B.D. Wolfe, 'Introduction', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 17, quotes the translation in Looker and wrongly ascribes it to *Rote Fahne,* 18 November 1918.
6. For the above see Moore, *Injustice,* pp. 299–301; Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 462–3.

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7. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 473. For long excerpts from her speech see P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 240–60.
8. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 474.
9. For the above see ibid., pp. 477–8.
10. See Moore, *Injustice,* p. 308. Noske accepted the job of commander-in-chief for Berlin on 10 January 1919. It was the day on which the Freikorps troops were used for the first time. In February, after the election, Noske became the Minister of Defence.
11. R. Luxemburg, 'Order Reigns in Berlin', *Die Rote Fahne,* 14 January 1919, in Looker, *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* pp. 305 and 306.
12. R. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in Le Blanc and Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism*. For earlier discussion see Chapter 3.
13. R. Luxemburg, 'Speech at the Founding Convention of the German Communist Party', in Le Blanc and Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism,* p. 260.
14. See Moore, *Injustice,* p. 294.
15. P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 303.
16. Moore, *Injustice,* p. 299.
17. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 480.
18. For the above see F. Arends and G. Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', in D. Berg-Schlosser and J. Mitchell (eds) *Conditions of Democracy in Europe, 1919–39: Systematic Case Studies,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, pp. 193–7 and 203.
19. The Constituent Assembly met in Weimar in order to break with Prussian traditions. See M. Balfour, *Germany: The Tides of Power,* London: Routledge, 1992, p. 40.
20. For the Weimar Constitution in full see 'Weimar Republic', http://www.zum.de/psm/weimar/weimar_vve.php.
21. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 284.
22. See Chapter 5, above.
23. G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp. 127–8, and for what follows.
24. For the above paragraph see Moore, *Injustice,* pp. 311–13.
25. See Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 203, Table 8.4.
26. In 1910 the figure for industrial workers was 40.1 percent of the German workforce. See S. Bartolini, *The Political Mobilization of the European Left, 1860–1980: The Class Cleavage,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 133, and for the other figures for 1910 that follow. For a detailed discussion of changes between 1913 and 1920 see Moore, *Injustice,* pp. 275–84. In short, the percentage of industrial workers changed little.
27. See Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 205, Table 8.5, and for what follows.
28. See ibid., p. 203, Table 8.4.
29. For the above, see ibid., pp. 194–5 and 203; Weitz, *Creating German Communism,* pp. 97–8.
30. For the above see Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 203, Table 8.4; W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875–1933: From Ghetto to Government,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1981, pp. 115 and 121.
31. In the July 1932 election the NSDAP gained 37.3 percent of the votes and by far the largest number of seats (230 out of 608); in the November elections

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they gained 33.1 percent of the votes and 196 seats. Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 203, Table 8.4.

32. R.H. Ginsberg, 'Germany: Into the Stream of Democracy', in M.E. Fischer (ed.) *Establishing Democracies,* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996, p. 93.
33. See Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 203, Table 8.4.
34. Ibid. and p. 202, Figure 8.2.
35. For the above see M.R. Lepsius, 'From Fragmented Party Democracy to Government by Emergency Decree and National Socialist Takeover: Germany', in J.J. Linz and A. Stepan (eds) *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes,* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 43–4.
36. See R. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 60.
37. Ibid., p. 62.
38. F. Engels, 'A Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Program of 1891', June 1891, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1891/06/29.htm, pp. 5–6.
39. K. Marx, Letter to Henry Mayer Hyndman in London (1880), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/letters/80_12_08.htm.
40. S. Berger, 'The Attempt at Democratization under Weimar', in J. Garrard, V. Tolz and R. White (eds) *European Democratization since 1800,* London: Macmillan, 2000, p. 108.
41. Ibid.
42. R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968, p. 246.
43. Ibid., p. 399.
44. R. Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, p. 282.
45. For the above see Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', pp. 208 and 200–1; and Balfour, *Germany,* p. 49.
46. See Berger, 'The Attempt at Democratization under Weimar', p. 109.
47. L. Trotsky, *1905* (Translated by Anya Bostock), London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1972, p. 269.
48. N. Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany: The Führer State, 1933–1945,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 9. Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 197, has the size of the SA rising to 470,000 in 1932.
49. See M. Burleigh and W. Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 60; and M. Broszat, *German National Socialism, 1919–1945,* Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio Press, 1966, p. 141.
50. Arends and Kümmel, 'Germany: From Double Crisis to National Socialism', p. 203, Table 8.4.
51. Broszat, *German National Socialism,* pp. 142–3.
52. Balfour, *Germany,* p. 55.
53. G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds), *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, p. 485.
54. See I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 284. Deutscher comments that Stalin chose to ignore totally that Lenin had been won over to Trotsky's ideas on permanent revolution in 1917. For neat summaries and discussion of both theories see pp. 284–91. Although Trotsky retrospectively claimed in *My Life: The Rise and Fall*

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of a Dictator, (London: Thornton Butterworth, Limited, 1930) that Rosa Luxemburg, representing the Polish Social Democratic Party, supported his theory in 1906, Nettl argues that although Parvus was of Trotsky's view (Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 230–1). Rosa Luxemburg held back from ever suggesting that there was a scientific law that could get Russia to a socialist society without a lengthy bourgeois stage (ibid., p. 156, fn 1). Nettl stresses that in 'The Mass Strike', also written in 1906 ('The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', in M-A. Waters [ed.] *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, pp. 257–331), Rosa Luxemburg argues that German workers *should* heed what was going on in Russia and give solidarity to the Russian workers: a political argument about learning lessons, not a social scientific theory. This fits with Chapter 4.

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8 After the Russian Revolution
Through Past 1945

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'The Russian Revolution', which Rosa Luxemburg had written in prison as the events in Russia in 1917 and 1918 unfolded, was not published until 1922, and then from a draft. The finished manuscript had been hidden for safety during the uprising in Germany in January 1919 and hidden too well. Once unearthed, much later, a new edition with corrections to the 1922 version plus additions to the text was published in 1928.[1] The 1922 version, based on the draft, was edited by Paul Levi, Rosa Luxemburg's close friend. Levi had been one of Rosa Luxemburg's two defence lawyers in her February 1914 trial and had continued to act as her counsel; he had then become an important member of Spartacus.

Together with Ernst Meyer, Paul Levi had run Spartacus when Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and Leo Jogiches were in prison; both Levi and Meyer had remained in the executive once Liebknecht, Luxemburg and Jogiches were restored to the leadership after their release from prison in November 1918.[2] Following Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's murders in January 1919, Jogiches had become the leader of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). On 10 March 1919, Jogiches, too, was murdered, and Levi then became the leader of the KPD.[3] It was Levi who continued the campaign, which Jogiches had begun, for their murderers to be sought, arrested and put on trial.

Levi had visited Rosa Luxemburg in prison in Breslau to discuss the article, intended as a Spartacus Letter, which she had written in September 1918 on the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The article was so harshly critical of the treaty that the decision had been taken that it should not be published because enemies would misuse it, and he discussed the issue at length with Rosa Luxemburg during his prison visit. In the end she accepted the decision, but as soon as he left she had sat down to set out her position in full; so it was that she began writing the draft of 'The Russian Revolution', which she had then sent to him within the month. On its receipt, through an intermediary, Paul Levi found a message from Rosa Luxemburg that read: 'I am writing this pamphlet only for you and if I can convince *you* then the effort isn't wasted.'[4]

It was the pamphlet sent to Paul Levi 'only for you' that was published in 1922. The year before, in February 1921, he had resigned as Chairman

of the KPD in rejection of the realities of Lenin's communism and the dominance of Lenin's party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, CPSU, in the Third International. Russia, the then Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, RSFSR, had been embroiled in civil war since September 1918, and February 1921 was the month in which official reports recorded a total of 118 uprisings in areas all over Russia. At the same time, workers' strikes and demonstrations were also taking place in the cities. In Moscow, these events reached their peak on 23 February 1921 with 10,000 workers taking part in a demonstration, following which martial law was imposed.[5] The next month the Kronstadt Rebellion occurred: Kronstadt was the erstwhile stronghold of the Bolshevik revolution.

The rebellion defeated and the civil war essentially at an end, at the Tenth Party Congress, held in March 1921, Lenin then established single-party control: the centralization to which Rosa Luxemburg had been so vehemently opposed as the destroyer of democracy. At the Tenth Party Congress, all opposition parties and trade unions were banned. Discipline within the Communist Party was also made compulsory, and opposition forbidden within the party. Later that year, in October 1921, 24 per cent of party members were expelled from the party.[6]

From mid-1921 the Politbureau, the Political Bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee, began to displace Sovnarkom in importance.[7] In April 1922 Stalin, already one of the five members of the Politbureau, which also included Lenin and Trotsky, was appointed General Secretary of the Central Committee. In January 1924 Lenin died.

FREEDOM

At the end of 1924, in his introduction to an edition of Leon Trotsky's *Lessons of October* (published by E. Laub of Berlin in 1925), Paul Levi took up Rosa Luxemburg's theme on freedom. Criticizing the Bolsheviks for turning themselves into 'the only legal party in Russia' such that 'only they have freedom of press and assembly, and only they have freedom of speech', he argued: 'But freedom which exists for one alone, only one person, only one party, is just not freedom.'[8] He echoed Rosa Luxemburg in 'The Russian Revolution'[9]:

> Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 69)

In 'Leaving Leninism', written and published in 1927, the year in which Stalin hounded Trotsky out of the Soviet Union, Levi berated Trotsky for not perceiving the lessons of the 'cannons in Kronstadt'[10] until six years

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too late and, in effect, for not seeing the lessons that Rosa Luxemburg had drawn in 'The Russian Revolution'. In line with Rosa Luxemburg's position, Levi poured especial scorn on the notion that the Russian 'landed peasants' and the Russian 'propertyless industrial workers' had the same interests and was scathing about the idea that Lenin's 'descendants' should have made 'a canonical law out of the theory' to be adopted by communist parties elsewhere.[11] Levi argued that the Bolsheviks were going against Marx's analysis in arguing that the state can shape class interests. The causal relationship, he argued, goes in the opposite direction: it is class interests that form the basis of the state:

> [T]here are absolutely *no* state forms which can cancel out the existing class contradictions; since the form of the state is indeed the expression and the result of the class contradictions and not their cause.
>
> (Levi, 'Leaving Leninism', p. 2)

As Marx had argued in his 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', 'Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it.'[12] And Marx had criticized the German workers' party in proposing to adopt the Gotha Programme, for 'instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future one) as the *basis* of the existing state (or of the future state in the case of future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own *intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases*.'[13]

Levi then went on not simply to argue that the state cannot remove class contradictions but to argue that because any such attempts must fail (he calls such attempts 'witchcraft') a coalition is far preferable to a single-party state (his phrase was 'the soviet government in the Russian model'). He reasoned as follows:

> When the illusion of class solidarity is destroyed in the coalition government and the contradictions become apparent again, then the coalition separates out into its constituent parts and the parties which were previously paralysed in the coalition once again take up their natural functions. But in the soviet form in the Russian model, we see happening—precisely what we now see in Russia. Previously the contradictions had no form: they seek the form in the one existing party, separate the party into factions and then into fragments, result in those previously called friend and leader being called traitor and finally put the comrades under the *gun* of the comrades of yesterday.
>
> (Levi, 'Leaving Leninism', p. 2)

Unsurprisingly, views within the Communist movement were highly critical of Paul Levi, and the views of Stalinists were especially so: 'Menshevik' as

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a term of abuse applied to him being particularly popular. Views of Rosa Luxemburg within the Communist movement, following the publication of 'The Russian Revolution', are less clearly understood. Some of her close associates, Adolf Warszawski and Clara Zetkin, for example, initially sought to resolve her criticisms of the Bolsheviks' conduct of the revolution through arguing that it was due to errors—the consequence of being locked in prison away from the reality of events and of being deprived of full information—and using Rosa Luxemburg's active participation in revolutionary action on her release from prison as evidence of her having changed her mind.[14] How firm Rosa Luxemburg's critics were in their views, however, is difficult to know, for these assessments were made, as Nettl explains, 'admittedly on instructions from the executive of the KPD and the Comintern in its dispute with Paul Levi'.[15]

An interesting illustration of the questionable firmness of views is that of the Marxist theorist Georg Lukács, a member of the Hungarian Communist Party. Reacting to the publication of Rosa Luxemburg's 'The Russian Revolution' immediately after Levi published her work (after January 1922, that is), Lukács made a carefully argued defence of the Bolshevik Party's organization and conduct. In that defence he stressed Luxemburg's over-emphasis on spontaneity and 'organic' revolution and threw in an accusation of utopianism and a suggestion that she was too soft on Mensheviks. Crucially, he also drew attention to the 'undialectical nature' of aspects of her thought. Yet only a year before (January 1921) he had praised her highly exactly for her dialectical method and had linked Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin together in praise.[16]

On the question of Rosa Luxemburg's behaviour in Germany from her release from prison in November 1918 to her death in January 1919 as evidence of her change of mind, suffice it to say that observed behaviour cannot alone constitute proof of her attitudes. One of the other pieces of evidence offered in support of the claim that she had changed her position is the letter which she had written at the end of November or the beginning of December 1918 to Adolf Warszawski, then the head of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL, in answer to his questions about the position to be adopted about the Russian Revolution. In it, as mentioned in Chapter 7, having acknowledged that 'the agrarian relations that have been established [in Russia] are the most dangerous aspect, the worst sore spot of the Russian revolution', she had argued that 'even the greatest revolution can accomplish only that which has ripened as a result of [historical] development. This sore spot also can only be healed by the European revolution. And it is coming!'[17] Rather than the letter to Warszawski constituting evidence of her having changed her mind, Rosa Luxemburg's actions in the German Revolution are perfectly compatible with her long-held internationalist position that revolution in Russia had to be combined with proletarian revolution in Europe, not least in Germany. It was simply that the European revolution that was 'coming' did not come.

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Equally, Rosa Luxemburg's actions after her release from prison in 1918 to her death in 1919 were consistent with her unwavering position concerning the necessity of providing the political leadership that she advocated in response to the general mass strike: the uprising of the proletariat that had begun on 5 January 1919. And she had stated this in her final editorial, published in *Rote Fahne* on 14 January 1919, just five days before she was murdered. In it she had asked: 'Was it a case of raging, uncontrollable revolutionary energy colliding with an insufficiently ripe situation, or was it a case of weak and indecisive action?'; to this question she had answered 'Both!' But she had blamed only the weakness of leadership and not the mass uprising, arguing that the history of international socialism is built on class struggles and their defeats.[18] As explained in Chapter 7, in this she was re-affirming one of the arguments she had made, back in 1904, against Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*:[19]

> The working class demands the right to make its 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.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy' [1904], p. 102)[20]

Action in support of the dialectic of history in which the proletariat are allowed to make mistakes was more important to Rosa Luxemburg even than her own life.

COMMUNISTS AND NATIONALISTS

The European revolution that Rosa Luxemburg said was 'coming' in her letter to Adolf Warszawski but that did not come did try to arrive. Following the suppression of the January uprising in Germany, Soviet republics were established in Hungary in March 1919 and in Bavaria in the following month. With Russia by then embroiled in civil war, Lenin's Bolshevik regime was neither economically nor militarily strong enough to offer practical support. In Hungary the Soviet republic lasted until August 1919, in Bavaria only until April 1919. In Poland, however, rather than a supportive revolution, Marshall Pilsudski led the Polish army in an invasion of Ukraine in May 1920. As mentioned, in Chapter 4, long before acquiring his high military position, Pilsudski had been the leading member of the Polish Socialist Party, PPS, and had subsequently led the party's nationalist Revolutionary Fraction. Initial success in driving the Polish army out of Ukraine encouraged the Red Army to then march on Warsaw with the wider objective of pushing on through Poland to take Germany.[21]

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The aim of taking Germany held the prospect for the Bolsheviks of the ultimate goal of international communism; more immediately, it held the prospect of capturing a highly developed capitalist base sorely needed by economically backward Russia. The timing could be justified, but the conditions were not ripe. As explained in Chapter 7, following the Kapp Putsch, an attempt to overthrow the German government with the support of the Freikorps and regular army units which took place from 13 to 17 March 1920, German workers had formed the Red Ruhr Army, and the putsch was defeated by a general strike in which even members of the state bureaucracy in Berlin participated. As also explained, the Red Ruhr Army had then quickly established control of some large cities but by 30 March had been defeated.[22]

In spite of the Red Ruhr Army's defeat, the Russian communists held to their belief in a communist revolution in Germany, and they continued to do so even after the Russian Red Army met defeat in Poland. In October 1920 the Red Army was forced to retreat, leaving Poland independent.[23] The Russian communists were so wedded to their view that Trotsky continued to extol it in his *Lessons of October,* where he argued that had the KPD exercised the kind of decisive leadership that Lenin showed in October 1917, then the KPD could have taken power in Germany in October 1923—taken power, that is, at the time of the French occupation of the Ruhr and hyperinflation, when uprisings threatened.[24]

Levi strongly disagreed with Trotsky's view. Accepting the logic of the argument that revolution can happen under such catastrophic conditions, Levi argued, in his 'Introduction' to Trotsky's *Lessons of October,* that the mistake that Trotsky made was to think that, under such circumstances, it must be the Communist Party that would take power. The reality, Levi argued, was that the Communists were not the only option; there was by then also the National Socialists. His disgust is palpable:

> [I]nstead of a strong proletarian force at the end of the war in the Ruhr, there was a nationalist-Communist stench which poisoned the whole of Germany. The Nationalist Socialists lay claim to the same right which the Communists assert, to be the heirs of the foundering Germany: the one presents itself as National Communist, and the other as Communist-nationalist.
>
> (Levi, 'Introduction to Trotsky's *Lessons of October*', p. 3)

In late September through October 1923, while left uprisings (communist) threatened in Saxony and Thuringia, right uprisings (nationalist) threatened in Prussia and Bavaria. It was in Bavaria, in a beer cellar in Munich on 8 November, that Adolf Hitler proclaimed a revolution.[25]

Neither the National Socialists nor the Communists were legitimate heirs, Levi argued, and he went on to argue that as a consequence of the exaggerations made by the Russian Communist Party, made even wilder through

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the party's dominance in the Communist International (the Third International), the Ruhr war of 1923 had set the seeds from which the National Socialists could grow. Through the war in the Ruhr, both the Communists and the National Socialists, he argued, 'registered their claims almost simultaneously, one in Saxony, the other in Munich'.[26]

Perhaps, like Levi, Rosa Luxemburg's decision, too, might have been to resign from the KPD and move back into the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD: she had, after all, wanted the Spartacus League to stay loosely within the USPD for as long as possible rather than to form a separate party, the KPD. Perhaps, in consequence, she, like Paul Levi and the bulk of what remained of the USPD, might then later have reintegrated into the left wing of the Social Democratic Party, the SPD. But Rosa Luxemburg had died too soon to witness the realities of Communist Party rule in the Soviet Union and the growth of Nazism in Germany and to face those choices about parties that Levi had made.

LENIN VERSUS STALIN

On the publication of Rosa Luxemburg's 'The Russian Revolution' in 1922, Lenin had immediately accused Paul Levi of publishing it in order to ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie by 'republishing precisely those writings of Rosa Luxemburg in which she was wrong'.[27] Lenin's 'Notes of a Publicist', from where these words are taken, had, like Rosa Luxemburg's 'The Russian Revolution', also been written some time before its publication and was published only after the author's death. Written at the end of February 1922, Lenin's 'Notes of a Publicist' was first published on 16 April 1924, in issue no. 87 of *Pravda:* Lenin had died in January that year. Lenin's attack in 'Notes of a Publicist' was directed at Paul Levi, not at Rosa Luxemburg.

Much in line with the views of her close associates, Adolf Warsawszki and Clara Zetkin, regarding Rosa Luxemburg's 'errors' in 'The Russian Revolution', Lenin argued that Rosa Luxemburg had been 'mistaken' on things at various times. These included, of course, her assessment of the Russian Revolution, which Lenin was careful to point out she had 'corrected' after her release from prison in the short time before her death. Employing a quotation from an old Russian fable—'Eagles may at times fly lower than hens, but hens can never rise to the height of eagles'—Lenin paid Rosa Luxemburg the highest compliment: 'But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle.'[28] The 'hens', 'in the backyard of the working class movement, among the dung heaps', as Lenin put it, included, by name, not only Paul Levi but also Karl Kautsky and Philipp Scheidemann.[29] They, along with 'all that fraternity', Lenin wrote, 'will cackle over the mistakes committed by the great communist': Rosa Luxemburg.

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The publication of Lenin's 'Notes of a Publicist', in 1924, occurred as Stalin began his manoeuvrings into total power. In his position as party general secretary his power grew such that by 1928, having outmanoeuvred possible alternative successors to Lenin, not least of these being Trotsky, Stalin had emerged in full control of both the party and the state.[30] As early as 1925, with the objective to mould the KPD to the Bolshevik model, Stalin together with his supporters ordered a 'specific onslaught on Rosa Luxemburg's whole legacy'.[31] Ruth Fischer, the then head of the KPD but only recently arrived from Vienna, accepted the task, and in words full of vitriol she told German communists that Rosa Luxemburg and the influence she had had on them and the workers' movement were 'nothing less than a syphilis bacillus'.[32]

What had offended the Stalinists so had been Rosa Luxemburg's commitment not to socialism alone but also to active mass democracy. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Rosa Luxemburg had written the party programme for the newly formed Spartacus League, which was published in *Rote Fahne* on 14 December 1918. In the summary at the end she had included the words:

> *Spartakus* will never undertake to govern other than through the clear and unmistakeable wish of the great majority of the proletarian masses of Germany, and never without their conscious agreement with the ideas, aims, and methods of *Spartakus*. Government by the proletariat can only battle its way to complete clarity and readiness, step by step, through a long valley of sorrows, of bitter experience, of defeats and victories. The victory of the *Spartakus* is not at the beginning but at the end of the revolution: it is the same thing as the victory of the great masses of the Socialist proletariat . . .
>
> (Luxemburg, Spartacus League programme, 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?' *Rote Fahne,* 14 December 1918)[33]

Nettl comments, 'Here was the famous statement that *Spartakus* would take power only with the support of the majority of the masses, which has led to such bitter squabbling between Social Democrats and Communists over Rosa Luxemburg's intellectual corpse.'[34] And he adds, 'It was this idealism, this apparent commitment to orthodox liberal democracy, which later brought a powerful section of the German Communist Party under the leadership of Ruth Fischer to diagnose Rosa Luxemburg's influence in the German working-class movement as "syphilitic".' Although its being her commitment to 'orthodox liberal democracy' may be an oversimplification, there is no doubt that, as Arendt puts it, 'The gutter had opened.'[35]

The gutter's opening ensured that Rosa Luxemburg's complete works were not collected together for publication, and when, after the Second World War, a selection of her works were published in a two-volume edition in East Germany it was, as it explained, 'with careful annotations

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underlying her errors'. And a publication by Fred Oelssner soon followed: a book describing itself as 'a full-length analysis of the Luxemburgist system of errors'.[36] This contrasts with Lenin's view of Rosa Luxemburg and her works:

> But in spite of her mistakes she was—and remains for us—an eagle. And not only will Communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her *complete* works (the publication of which the German Communists are inordinately delaying, which can only be partly excused by the tremendous losses they are suffering in their severe struggle) will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of Communists all over the world.
>
> (Lenin, 'From "Notes of a Publicist"', p. 440)

After Lenin's death and as the flow in the Stalinist gutter grew yet stronger, it was Trotsky who rode to Rosa Luxemburg's defence. In exile since 1927, Trotsky was in Turkey when he finally received a copy of Stalin's article 'On Some Questions in the History of Bolshevism'. Trotsky responded by writing 'Hands off Rosa', published in two parts in *The Militant* in August 1932. Trotsky had, by then, become well acquainted with Stalin's re-writing of history and treated it with disdain, but, as he explained in 'Hands off Rosa', his decision to write the publication had been stirred by Stalin's 'barefaced calumny about Rosa Luxemburg'.[37] For his own self-serving purposes, Stalin had claimed that from 1903 onwards Rosa Luxemburg had supported Karl Kautsky against Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Trotsky set Stalin straight on the facts: Rosa Luxemburg was never a centrist nor even a left-centrist; and he emphasized that Lenin's views developed over time and benefited from listening to others' ideas, including those of Rosa Luxemburg. Part of Trotsky's evidence was Lenin's letter of 27 October 1914 to Alexander Schliapnikov, in which Lenin wrote '. . . R. Luxemburg was right, she *long ago* understood that Kautsky had the highly developed "servility of a theoretician"—to put it more plainly, he was ever a flunkey. . .'.[38]

Also as evidence against Stalin's 'barefaced calumny about Rosa Luxemburg' Trotsky referred again to Lenin's comparison of Rosa Luxemburg to an eagle, quoting the old couplet in full:

> Betimes the eagles down swoop and 'neath the barnyard fowl fly,
> But barnyard fowl with outspread wings will never soar
> amid the clouds in the sky.

Trotsky added, 'Precisely the case! Precisely the point! For this very reason Stalin should proceed with caution before expending his vicious mediocrity when the matter touches figures of such stature as Rosa Luxemburg'; he

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went on to exclaim, 'Her participation in the January 1919 insurrection has made her name *the banner of the proletarian revolution*.'[39] Trotsky concluded that it was not only 'our duty to shield Rosa's memory from Stalin's calumny' but also our duty 'to pass on this truly beautiful, heroic and tragic image to the young generations of the proletariat in all its grandeur and inspirational force'.[40]

Trotsky continued his defence of Rosa Luxemburg in 'Luxemburg and the Fourth International', published in *New International* in August 1935,[41] but this time to correct the exaggerated claims made by 'left-centrists', especially in France, Belgium and Germany. These claims were for her views on spontaneity as counter-posed to 'Bolshevik-Leninists'. While emphasizing the mistakes of Rosa Luxemburg's 'The Russian Revolution' and re-affirming his and Lenin's claim that she had changed her mind, Trotsky sought not to dismiss her ideas on spontaneity but, rather, to balance them with her views on the importance of political leadership. Observing around him the economic depression, the successful advance of fascism and the collapse of the Third International he berated 'the crisis of proletarian leadership'.[42]

Almost as if now completely won over to Rosa Luxemburg's position, Trotsky argued, 'The crisis of proletarian leadership cannot, of course, be overcome by means of an abstract formula.'[43] The solution he offered, in 1935, was not tight organization from above but proletarian leadership developed, over time, from below through strengthening the self-confidence of the proletariat. He was not, of course, completely won over to Rosa Luxemburg's view, but enough to argue for 'our work for the Fourth International' to be placed 'under the sign of the "three L's", that is not only under the sign of Lenin, but also of Luxemburg and Liebknecht'. It was not to be. Stalin had Trotsky assassinated, in Mexico, in August 1940.

STALIN AND HITLER

When Rosa Luxemburg criticized Lenin in 'The Russian Revolution'—'He is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror'[44]—she, surely, could not have foreseen the scale of Stalin's terror. Stalin's policies of forced collectivization of agriculture, forced nationalization of industry, the Great Purges and the 'corrective labour camps' were not the inevitable consequences of the revolution of October 1917: the policies were chosen from alternatives advocated by alternative leaders.[45] But although the scale of terror may not have been foreseen, the single-party system certainly enabled Stalin to rise to the position of supreme leader and so to implement his chosen policies. As Rosa Luxemburg had also argued in 'The Russian Revolution', the dictatorship of the proletariat should constitute

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'a dictatorship of the *class*, not of a party or a clique', adding 'dictatorship of the class, that means in the broadest public form on the basis of the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, of unlimited democracy'.[46]

Writing in 1927, Levi had been well aware of what was happening in the Soviet Union through Stalin's ambition for total power: 'Previously the contradictions had no form: they seek the form in the one existing party, separate the party into factions and then into fragments, result in those previously called friend and leader being called traitor and finally put the comrades under the *gun* of the comrades of yesterday.'[47] In 1924 Levi had been equally clear about Germany and the rise of the Nazis: 'The Nationalist Socialists lay claim to the same right which the Communists assert, to be the heirs of the foundering Germany':[48] neither, he argued, could lay claims to being the legitimate heirs, and, as explained, he had blamed the Russian Communist Party, through exaggerating the events in the Ruhr, of setting the seeds from which the Nazi Party could grow.

By the time that Levi died in 1930, having mysteriously fallen to his death from the balcony of his flat, the National Socialists were approaching the final laps that would bring them to power in March 1933, when Hitler, too, would create a single-party dictatorship and, like Stalin, would then erect a terror regime under which millions of people would be killed[49]—a regime that would continue through to 1945: defeated in the Second World War by the Allies, which included Britain, the United States and Stalin's Soviet Union.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Rosa Luxemburg had argued in 'The Junius Pamphlet' that once the war that had begun in 1914 was over, irrespective of whether Germany or England and France were the victors, there would inevitably be 'a new world war'.[50] Her prediction proved correct. The war that began in 1939, however, was not the same kind of war as that of 1914–18. The Second World War was not simply an imperialist war fought for territory to expand markets and exploit people and resources: Nazi Germany sought colonies on the continent of Europe, in Poland and in Russia most especially; and the race-thinking that was at the centre of Nazi thought and action was of a new kind. The members of the underclass (*Untermenschen*) as defined by Hitler were not those of the 'areas of non-capitalist civilisation'[51] that Rosa Luxemburg had identified. They were Europeans: Jews, including those in Germany itself, and also Slavs and Gypsies; and this was irrespective of the number of their generations that had lived in Germany. Furthermore, the areas of Europe taken over by the Nazis were targeted not simply to be new markets for consumption and production and not straightforwardly to be exploited for their labour. Certainly, large numbers were exploited by

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forced labour, but large numbers, of Jews most especially, were also destined for extermination.[52]

The nature of the Second World War challenges Rosa Luxemburg's universal view of imperialist nations. Not only did it highlight the differences between the liberal democracies that fought to defeat the German Nazi regime, but the outcome of the war also brought out further differences. For Germany there were two outcomes. In West Germany the outcome was the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the return of pluralism, aided by the liberal democracies: Britain, the United States and France. In East Germany, after the split occurring in 1949, the Stalinist-communist system was put in place.[53] Poland was one of the many other Eastern European countries that also had the Stalinist-communist system imposed by the Soviet Union.

In Britain, in the post-war general election, a workers' party, the Labour Party, was elected to power and so formed a government without need for a coalition with another party. Through the setting up of a welfare state and a national health system, workers' conditions were greatly improved, and the new Labour government soon began to dismember its empire. As Eduard Bernstein had anticipated, for Britain ('England') all this was accomplished without violent revolution. Though there was some nationalization, essentially, as Rosa Luxemburg had argued in *Reform or Revolution,* however, it was, indeed, the 'mode of distribution',[54] not the mode of production, that changed. Furthermore, the contrasts in the freedom and democracy in Britain and America in comparison with Germany and the Soviet Union through to 1945 had also shown that Bernstein, too, had been wrong to generalize: in his case, from England to Germany.

MOVING FORWARD

After the Second World War, with Nazism defeated and Stalinist-communism spread across Eastern Europe and then Germany split into East and West, views of Rosa Luxemburg's 'intellectual corpse'[55] stayed divided. With her reputation so ravaged by the forces of Stalinism and Nazism—the 'syphilis bacillus', 'bloody Rosa', the Bolshevik-Jew—it fell, in the West, to the New Left to resuscitate and redefine her image. Commenting in the mid-1960s, Arendt took the view that the New Left did so as 'a symbol of nostalgia for the good old times of the movement, when hopes were green, the revolution around the corner, and, most important, the faith in the capacities of the masses and in the moral integrity of the Socialist or Communist leadership was still intact'.[56]

The New Left soon gave way to the new social movements, and to these the appeal of Rosa Luxemburg was that she had been an actual revolutionary who had fought and died in a revolution, a revolutionary who had taken

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a stand against war and endured imprisonment, a revolutionary who was a Marxist and, yet more remarkable, a woman.

The New Social Movements

Rosa Luxemburg featured as a heroic figure for the students' movements. Their anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, their anti-capitalist positions and their support for socialism, if showing no close reading of her work, came within the spirit of her ideas on imperialism and war. Although nowhere in her works did she suggest that ex-colonies could leap straight to communism, not least because of her concerns for democracy, she would, no doubt, have viewed the students' engagement in mass action favourably as an example of people learning from taking part 'within the school of public life itself'.[57] And her sympathies would have been able to draw on her own experience of having been a student revolutionary. It is also difficult to think other than that, while rueing their members' incapacity to appreciate the importance of the class struggle, Rosa Luxemburg would, similarly, have been sympathetic to the Green Movement's emphasis on grass-roots democracy.

What Rosa Luxemburg would not have forgiven were the breakaway groups spawned from some of the students' movements, most notably in Germany, that engaged in terrorism. She had been absolutely clear in 'The Russian Revolution' that '[i]t is rule by terror which demoralizes'.[58] She had also been very upset on learning that Felix Dzerzhinsky, who had been a member of the SDKPiL, had become the head of the Cheka, the Bolshevik government's secret police: '[H]ow can Josef be so cruel?', she had asked.[59] When, for example, Ulrike Meinhof of the Red Army Faction (Baader-Meinhof gang) in Germany is compared with 'Red Rosa' it is with the myth of Rosa Luxemburg as 'bloody Rosa', the violent revolutionary of the German Revolution—the January uprising of 1919—with which the comparison is being made. Although later denied, it was reported that at Meinhof's graveside the funeral oration delivered described her as 'the most significant woman in German politics since Rosa Luxemburg'.[60]

The comparisons of Rosa Luxemburg, held in prison for so long for her radical beliefs and her stand against war, to female members of the Baader-Meinhof gang when they were being held in Stammheim Prison, were understandably hard to resist: both for journalists and for gang members alike. But not only had Rosa Luxemburg been strongly against terrorism, but she had also stated her political views clearly and openly in her speeches and writings. She had also stood trial and used her court appearances as a platform for stating her views. Newspapers had printed her statements, and some, in the left-wing press, had printed them in full. And, unlike the members of the Baader-Meinhof gang who had committed

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suicide in prison—Meinhof even before the trial was over—Rosa Luxemburg's courage had remained steadfast.

With respect to the Women's Movement, unlike her very good friend Clara Zetkin, who was head of the German Socialist Women's organization and the editor of the socialist women's paper *Die Gleichheit* (Equality), Rosa Luxemburg had never sought identification of herself through her gender. Like all social democrats, she was, of course, a strong supporter of women's suffrage, but, as she made clear in a speech made in 1912, one of the few examples of her addressing the question directly: 'The current mass struggle for women's political rights is only an expression and a part of the proletariat's general struggle for liberation. . . . Because of the female proletariat, general, equal, direct suffrage for women would immediately advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle.'[61] It would be the socialist revolution that would bring liberation, for both men and women equally: women's liberation a class concern for which both men and women of the proletariat would take action together.

At the International Socialist Women's Conference held in Stuttgart in 1907, Rosa Luxemburg, as the only woman on the International Socialist Bureau, reported on its work and, in support of Zetkin, encouraged the International Socialist Women's organization, saying, '[Y]ou will create this moral center of the International out of yourselves.'[62] She also wrote articles for *Gleichheit* in which she set out her views, particularly on the mass strike, and, in the later years, it became an important vehicle for her anti-war views.[63] In 1911, when she was to attend the SPD women's conference in Jena, her main reason for attending being to support Clara Zetkin, who had not been put in charge of the newly set up 'Women's Bureau' and so had not been given a designated seat on the party executive, Rosa Luxemburg wrote to Luise Kautsky: 'Are you coming for the women's conference? Just imagine, I have become a feminist! I received a credential for this conference and must therefore go to Jena.'[64] The category into which Rosa Luxemburg put herself was not that of feminist but of socialist.

Another letter, this time written to Konrad Haenisch, demonstrates Rosa Luxemburg's position well.[65] Following her argument for the SPD to advocate a republic, which had led to her split with Karl Kautsky and to her becoming sidelined within the party, Rosa Luxemburg had become rather isolated and uncommunicative. Exasperated with her but also sympathetic, Haenisch had chivalrously attempted to publish a defence of her conduct at the Jena congress, held in September 1911, and in it he had intimated that being a woman entitled her to special consideration. When Rosa Luxemburg heard of it she wrote immediately to the editor of the Bremen paper in which Haenisch's article was to be published, demanding that the article be suppressed. When Haenisch wrote to her asking why, she replied that in defending her as a person he had destroyed her tactical political position. 'You will have noticed that since 1898 . . . I have been continually and

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vulgarly abused especially in the south and have *never* answered with so much as a line or a word', she said and explained that she had only 'silent contempt' for such behaviour:

> [Y]ou may not even be aware of the impression that your article has made: a noble fearful plea for extenuating circumstances for someone condemned to death—enough to make anyone burst when one is in as important and favourable a tactical position as I was in Jena . . . So much for the matter in hand. My 'anger' has long been forgotten . . . So let that be an end to it!
>
> (Luxemburg, Letter to Konrad Haenisch, December 1911)[66]

As in her brave statements of position in her trials, Rosa Luxemburg neither relied on nor wished for others to fight her battles. She also neither pleaded her gender in defence nor attacked men on the grounds of theirs.

Although Rosa Luxemburg classified herself as socialist, not as feminist, Nye[67] argues that there are important lessons for socialist feminist theory to be drawn from Rosa Luxemburg's work:

> As she guides, facilitates, and directs, stands with a social movement, a Luxemburgian leader speaks for others without dictating, makes clear what their actions mean in the aggregate and how they might be organized, coordinated, and carried forward. Such politics requires open channels of communication, constant reciprocity between leaders and masses, healthy grass-roots activist groups, and institutions that make each accountable to the other.
>
> (Nye, *Philosophia,* p. 48)

These lessons for the 'Luxemburgian leader' clearly apply both to her idea of political leadership in the mass strike and to the nature and workings of Rosa Luxemburg's idea of a fully healthy democracy: a socialist democracy. As Nye notes, however, 'Like other Marxists, Luxemburg did not describe in detail what democratic institutions and practices might be like in socialism.'[68]

NOTES

1. P. Frölich, *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (Translated by Edward Fitzgerald), London: Victor Gollancz, 1940, p. 271.
2. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 446.
3. Ibid., p. 496. Levi published Rosa Luxemburg's literary remains in 1925, which included her economics lectures as the draft of her promised book on economics.
4. Ibid., p. 430.
5. See R. Sakwa, *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (second edition), London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 243–5.

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6. For the above see E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–23, Vol. 1,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, pp. 208 and 211–13. Left SRs had last been admitted to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, VTsIK, in December 1920.
7. See T.H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917–22,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 191–213. Whether or not this was Lenin's intention or due to his failing health, a series of strokes, is open to question.
8. P. Levi, 'Introduction to Trotsky's *Lessons of October*' (1924), http://www.marxists.org/archive/levi-paul/1924/lessons-october.htm, p. 7.
9. R. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism and Marxism?*, Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks: University of Michigan Press, 1967, pp. 25–80. (The 1928 text.)
10. P. Levi, 'Leaving Leninism' (1927), http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/supplem/levlenin.htm, p. 1.
11. For the above quotes see ibid., p. 2.
12. K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, p. 326.
13. Ibid., p. 327.
14. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 445.
15. Ibid., p. 446.
16. See G. Lukács, 'The Marxism of Rosa Luxemburg' (January 1921), pp. 27–45, and 'Critical Observations on Rosa Luxemburg's "Critique of the Russian Revolution"' (January 1922), pp. 272–94, both in G. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics,* London: Merlin Press, 1971.
17. G. Adler, P. Hudis and A. Laschitza (eds), *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* (Translated by George Shriver), London: Verso, 2011, p. 485.
18. R. Luxemburg, 'Order Reigns in Berlin', *Die Rote Fahne,* 14 January 1919, in R. Looker (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, pp. 305–6.
19. See discussion in Chapter 3.
20. R. Luxemburg 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds), *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 83–102.
21. For the above see Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 217–19; A.B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks: The Intellectual and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia,* London: Fontana/Collins, 1969, pp. 585–7.
22. See B. Moore Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt,* London: Macmillan, 1978, p. 313.
23. See N. Davies, 'The Missing Revolutionary War: The Polish Campaigns and the Retreat from Revolution in Soviet Russia, 1919–21', *Soviet Studies,* 1975, vol. 27, pp. 178–95.
24. See M. Balfour, *Germany: The Tides of Power,* London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 44–5. French and Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr in January 1923 over Germany's failure to pay reparations. The effect of the occupation was to greatly exacerbate the existing problems of high inflation: hyperinflation developed, and the economic output fell to only just over half of what it had been before the war.
25. Ibid.
26. Levi, 'Introduction to Trotsky's *Lessons of October*', pp. 3–4.
27. V.I. Lenin, 'From "Notes of a Publicist"', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, Appendix B (excerpt), p. 440.

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28. Ibid.
29. Philipp Scheidemann stayed in the SPD and played a leading role in Ebert's provisional government and was, for a few months, Chancellor of the Weimar Republic after Ebert became president.
30. See I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, pp. 232–95.
31. Quoted in H. Arendt, 'Rosa Luxemburg: 1871–1919', in H. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times,* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968, p. 55.
32. Ibid.
33. Quoted in Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* pp. 469–70. This was then published as a pamphlet 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?' (Berlin, 1918), which is reproduced in full, although in less elegant translation, in Looker (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* pp. 275–86.
34. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 470, and for the quote that follows.
35. Arendt, 'Rosa Luxemburg', p. 55.
36. For the above quotes, ibid. In the West, English translations were published of Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital,* in 1951, and 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions', in 1953. Before these, in English, there had only been 'The Crisis in the German Social Democracy' (the *Juniusbroschüre*), which had been published in 1918 and kept in circulation through a mimeograph, and Luxemburg's responses to Bernstein, which had been published in 1937 (ibid., p. 54, fn 20).
37. L. Trotsky, 'Hands off Rosa', in Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* Appendix C, p. 441.
38. Ibid., p. 444.
39. Ibid., p. 447.
40. Ibid., p. 450.
41. L. Trotsky, 'Luxemburg and the Fourth International', in Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* Appendix D.
42. Ibid., p. 453.
43. Ibid., p. 454, and for the quote that follows.
44. R. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 71.
45. For the deaths in consequence of Stalin's policies of forced collectivization, nationalization of industry, the Great Purges, the system of terror under the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) and also for the alternative policies and their advocates see R.H.T. O'Kane, *Paths to Democracy: Revolution and Totalitarianism,* London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 150–65.
46. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 76.
47. Levi, 'Leaving Leninism', p. 2.
48. Levi, 'Introduction to Trotsky's *Lessons of October*', p. 3.
49. For the deaths in consequence of Hitler's policies and the system of terror see O'Kane, *Paths to Democracy,* pp. 131–49.
50. R. Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet: The Crisis in the German Social Democracy', in Waters (ed.), *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* pp. 322–3.
51. R. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (Translated by Agnes Schwarzchild), London: Routledge, 2003, p. 434.
52. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1958; see especially chapter 12, section 1. See also R.H.T. O'Kane, *Terror, Force and States: The Path from Modernity,* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996, chapters 7 and 8.
53. For expansion see O'Kane, *Paths to Democracy,* pp. 170–97.

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54. R. Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973, pp. 44 and 60.
55. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 470.
56. Arendt, 'Rosa Luxemburg', p. 37.
57. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 71.
58. Ibid.
59. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 455. Dzerzhinsky was called 'Josef' by his friends. The quote is from Struthan (Karl Radek) *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Revolution und die Aufgaben der Kommunistischen Partei,* Stuttgart: Spartakus, 1919, in which he recounts a discussion with Rosa Luxemburg, in Berlin, in December 1918. Redek had arrived in Germany illegally.
60. See J. Becker, *Hitler's Children,* London: Michael Joseph, 1977, p. 283. According to the third edition of *Hitler's Children,* London: Pickwick Books, 1989, p. 266, fn 5, however, the orator denied saying it.
61. R. Luxemburg, 'Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle', in P. Le Blanc, and H.C. Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, p. 172.
62. Quoted in R. Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution,* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1982, p. 90.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 95. The SPD's setting up of the 'Women's Bureau', with a woman taking charge and given a seat on the party executive, was the consequence of the Law of Association of 1908, which legalized women's participation in political parties. The woman chosen, however, was not Clara Zetkin but Luise Zietz, who was more in line with the more reformist approach by then adopted by the party. To avoid dealing with the complaints that followed (including Zetkin threatening to resign as editor of *Gleichheit,* which Rosa Luxemburg dissuaded her from doing) the party postponed the 1910 conference and then left it to Zietz to call the conference in 1911. See R.J. Evans, *Proletarians and Politics: Socialism, Protest and the Working Class in Germany before the First World War,* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, pp. 102–3. Evans argues that from this point the SPD women's movement became more reformist: focussing on specific practical reforms.
65. See Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 310.
66. Ibid.
67. A. Nye, *Philosophia: The Thought of Rosa Luxemburg, Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt,* New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 44–9.
68. Ibid., p. 48.

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9 With the Eagles Flying Onward
To Socialist Democracy

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What Rosa Luxemburg criticized in bourgeois democracy were not the political structures and institutions designed to make democracy work in practice; what she criticized were the conditions that these formal structures concealed: 'the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom hidden under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom'. Her aim in distinguishing 'the social kernel from the political form of *bourgeois* democracy', she explained, was not in order to reject 'the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom' but, rather, 'to spur the working class into not being satisfied with the shell' and so, 'by conquering political power, to create a socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy—not to eliminate democracy altogether'.[1]

The closest that Rosa Luxemburg came to describing the democratic institutions and practices in socialist democracy was in the programme of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, SDKPiL, written in 1906.[2] Socialist democracy was not something that would happen immediately after a social democratic party came to power. It would take time: the democratic institutions and practices would need to be worked out. So the SDKPiL programme has as its immediate political goal a Constituent Assembly, with elections to it that are direct, by secret ballot and through universal suffrage. The democratic constitutional reforms would be worked out within the Constituent Assembly, to which the bourgeoisie would be required to stay loyal. During this transition time, through until those democratic reforms took effect, a workers' provisional government would hold the reins of power. But she had not stopped there.

In the context of the Polish case, Rosa Luxemburg had also laid out in the SDKPiL programme that all minorities would be represented proportionately in the Constituent Assembly. In addition to a central government, each of the separate countries would also have its own National Assembly, with freedoms for the use of their own language, system of education and own culture. Power, clearly, would respect differences and be devolved. Rosa Luxemburg also put in place local governments for towns and villages, with judges and officials to be elected. In addition, a standing army would be ended and replaced with an army of the whole people. The programme

also included full emancipation for women, equality before the law, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. It would be an open society.

Rosa Luxemburg was also aware of the importance of freedom of conscience. In a pamphlet 'Socialism and the Churches'[3], published by the SDKPiL in 1905, which is concerned with the church's aggressive stance towards social democrats, Rosa Luxemburg concludes with the following words:

> And here is the answer to all the attacks of the clergy: the Social Democracy in no way fights against religious beliefs. On the contrary, it demands complete freedom of conscience for every individual and the widest possible toleration for every faith and every opinion. But, from the moment when the priests use the pulpit as a means of political struggle against the working classes, the workers must fight against the enemies of their rights and liberation. For he who defends the exploiters and who helps to prolong this present regime of misery, he is the mortal enemy of the proletariat, whether he be in a cassock or in the uniform of the police.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'Socialism and the Churches', p. 25)

The problem with using the SDKPiL programme as a guide to the kinds of democratic institutions and practices that Rosa Luxemburg had in mind for socialist democracy is that this was in 1906, when Poland had never had a bourgeois democracy, and, as has become clear, it is crucial to her thought that people must be experienced in active democratic participation if socialist democracy is to be achieved. Active mass participation is central to Rosa Luxemburg's conception of socialist democracy:

> Socialist democracy must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses; it must be under their direct influence, subjected to the control of complete public activity, it must arise out of the growing, political training of the mass of the people.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 78)

Although political institutions and structures—regular elections, universal suffrage, debating chambers and so on—are necessary for socialist democracy, with the 'active participation' of people throughout society both in democratic procedures and in the formation of policy, it is the nature of the society with social equality and freedom at its heart that is crucial. The society in which such democracy could thrive would be one where the capitalist mode of production—with its system of wage labour, through which the bourgeoisie exploits the masses, and the owners of the means of production's control over political power to serve their own interests, not those of the wider population—had been removed.

In her reaction to the Bolsheviks disbanding of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918, Rosa Luxemburg had vividly defended 'bourgeois

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parliaments', arguing: 'The living fluid of popular mood continuously flows around representative bodies, penetrates them, guides them.'[4] Her argument concerned the value of those representative bodies for the masses to gain experience in participation, and she had gone on, much as in the SDKPiL programme of 1906, to outline press freedom, the right of association and the right of assembly as 'the most important democratic guarantees of a public life and of the political activities of the labouring masses' and then to argue: '[I]t is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assembly, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable.'[5]

In the Spartacus League Programme,[6] first published in *Rote Fahne* on 14 December 1918, Rosa Luxemburg had re-affirmed that the 'mass of the proletariat' 'must itself, through its own activity, nurse socialism, step by step, to life'. And she had added, 'The essence of socialist society is that the great working mass ceases to be a ruled mass and instead lives and controls its own political and economic life in conscious and free self-determination.'[7]

The programme, however, had continued:

> Thus from the highest offices of the State down to the smallest municipality, the proletarian mass must replace the outdated organs of bourgeois class rule—the federal councils, parliaments, municipal councils—with their own class organs: the workers' and soldiers' councils. Further, the proletarian mass must fill all posts, supervise all functions and measure all the State's requirements against their own class interests and against the tasks of socialism. And only in a constant, active interrelation between the masses and their organs, the workers' and soldiers' councils, can the masses' activity fill the state with the socialist spirit.
>
> (Luxemburg, The Spartacus League Programme, *Rote Fahne*, 14 December 1918)[8]

This passage in the Spartacus League Programme does not, though, constitute evidence that Rosa Luxemburg had changed her mind and accepted the Bolsheviks' prescribed model for revolution. Rather, it reflects the particular political situation in Germany at the time.[9] By 14 December 1918, when the Spartacus League Programme first appeared in *Rote Fahne* under the title 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?', the provisional government under Ebert, the RdV (Council of People's Representatives), had been formed, and so, too, had the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Unlike in Russia, where, after the February Revolution, the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' (and Soldiers') Deputies operated as a system of dual power, in Germany the Executive Council of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils had, at the Circus Busch meeting, ratified the provisional government. As Radek recorded in his *Diary* on 14 December:

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> It was a very tempting suggestion to oppose the conception of a Constituent [Assembly] with the slogan of the Councils, but the congress of Councils had itself opted for the Constituent [Assembly]. This fact could not be overcome. Rosa and Liebknecht admitted it, and Jogiches emphasized it continually.
>
> (Radek's entry in his *Diary* on 14 December 1918)[10]

The RdV, in which the Social Democratic Party, SPD, and the Independent Social Democratic Party, USPD, had equal power, held authority until elections to the Constituent Assembly took place, which were scheduled for January 1919; and, in return for sharing equal power in the RdV, the USPD had withdrawn from their most radical positions.[11] The Spartacus Group, which was within the USPD when the RdV formed, had, therefore, recognized only the Executive Council as the government, and, also in reaction, the Spartacus Group had then dropped the name 'International Group' and, at a meeting held on 11 November 1918, had officially become the Spartacus League (Spartakusbund). But at that meeting Rosa Luxemburg had argued for the Spartacus League to stay within the USPD's organizational framework.[12]

Furthermore, at that founding congress of the Communist Party of Germany, KPD, at the end of December, Rosa Luxemburg had supported the KPD executive's proposal to participate in the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly.[13] In her speech at the congress, Rosa Luxemburg had re-affirmed her position against centralism, against revolution by formula, directed from above:

> Socialism cannot be made and will not be made by order, not even by the best and most capable Socialist government. It must be made by the masses, through every proletarian individual. . . . And what is the form of the struggle for Socialism? It is the strike.
>
> (Luxemburg, speech at the KPD founding congress, 30 December 1918)[14]

In her article 'The Elections to the National Assembly', published in *Rote Fahne* on 23 December 1918, Rosa Luxemburg had also set out her argument for participating in the forthcoming elections, scheduled for January 1919, in order not simply to establish an assembly but to ensure its vibrancy and guarantee that it represented workers' interests. Democracy was not something that existed in the institutions but in the society around it. Ongoing concerted political action to ensure this was essential:

> Our participation in the elections is necessary not in order to collaborate with the bourgeoisie and its shield-bearers in making laws, but to cast out the bourgeoisie and its shield-bearers from the temple, to storm the fortress of the counter-revolution, and to raise above it the victorious banner of the proletarian revolution. . . . The vital factor is the

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> proletarian mass, the real bearer of the revolution and its socialist tasks. It, the mass, shall decide on the fate and the outcome of the National Assembly. What happens in, what becomes of, the National Assembly depends upon its own revolutionary activity. The greatest importance therefore attaches to the action outside. . . . But even the elections themselves and the action of the revolutionary representatives of the mass inside parliament must serve the cause of the revolution. To denounce ruthlessly and loudly all the tricks and dodges of the esteemed assembly, to expose its counter-revolutionary work to the masses at every step, to call upon the masses to decide, to intervene—this is the task of the socialists' participation in the National Assembly.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Elections to the National Assembly', *Rote Fahne,* 23 December 1918)[15]

The actions of the masses, through their concerted political action outside parliament, were the pulsating blood to keep democracy alive and to ensure that the assembly served the interests of the masses. As she had expressed it in 'The Russian Revolution', 'the living fluid of the popular mood continuously flows around representative bodies, penetrates them, guides them'.[16] As the above quote from 'The Elections to the National Assembly' also makes clear, it was the duty of socialist representatives inside parliament, too, to serve the interests of the masses and call on the masses to ensure that not bourgeois democracy, which served the interests of only the bourgeoisie, but social democracy, which served the interests of the masses, be kept alive.

A week after Rosa Luxemburg's article 'The Elections to the National Assembly' was published in *Rote Fahne,* however, the KPD founding congress had rejected the executive's proposal, which Rosa Luxemburg had supported, to participate in the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly.[17]

The statement in the Spartacus League Programme, on 14 December 1918, that '[t]he proletarian mass must replace the outdated organs of bourgeois rule' is not then an argument against the holding of elections to a Constituent Assembly to write a new constitution any more than it is an argument for having such a Constituent Assembly being on its own enough to count as democracy.[18] It is an argument about the crucial importance of 'the living spirit':[19] the continuing activity of the masses in the building of socialist democracy. Just as she had argued about the mass strike in 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', back in 1906, the construction of the socialist democracy would take time, and, just as she had argued in 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', back in 1904, mistakes would be made along the way and people would learn from their mistakes.[20]

The kind of active participation that the population would have in socialist democracy is active involvement in decision-making, with power flowing not from the top down but from the bottom up. The problem is how to keep this coming together in concerted political action as active political

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participation that continues to be both lively and strong. Although it is clear that plural parties, essential in bourgeois democracy, would continue in the transition (the dictatorship of the proletariat), whether one of the forms taken in the 'right of association' would include that of plural political parties in fully fledged socialist democracy, and if so of what kinds, is not made clear: but a pluralist, mass participatory democracy it would be.[21]

Exactly as Nye discerned, because Rosa Luxemburg's 'Marxist materialism ruled out in principle ideals that are not generated in actual economic and historical processes: a workers' democracy would have to emerge in the course of revolution.'[22] Just as there is no prescribed model to be imposed by the leadership for the staging of revolution, so there is no blueprint for socialist democracy. As Rosa Luxemburg was fully aware, lessons are learnt not only through studying theory but also from studying practice.

LESSONS FROM PRACTICE: THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

Since the end of the Second World War, revolutions have mostly taken forms unanticipated by Rosa Luxemburg. There have been communist revolutions, as, for example, in the cases of China and Vietnam, but they have been fought by guerrilla armies in countries with large peasant populations and have adopted centralized single-party states. There have also been non-communist revolutions. In Iran, a revolution, in 1979, established an Islamic Republic, and since that time religion has become a more prominent political force both within other countries and also beyond national boundaries. Revolutions that have aimed for democracy have generally been non-violent and sought variants of liberal democracy: as, for example, in the cases of the countries in Eastern Europe in 1989 and then those, in the twenty-first century, that followed from the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. Other cases of significant change, such as the ending of Apartheid in South Africa, have similarly sought forms of liberal democracy that focussed on universal suffrage and competitive elections along with careful constitutional design.

Although it ended with liberal democracy, the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979 stands out for having sought to achieve a pluralist and democratic form of socialism.[23] Nicaragua in 1979 was too poor and too agricultural a country for the post-revolutionary events to constitute a 'test case' for Rosa Luxemburg's ideas on socialist democracy, and it remains so. The case does, however, offer some valuable lessons, not least in drawing a contrast with the approach taken by the Bolsheviks after their October Revolution in Russia in 1917.

In July 1979 the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown in a civil war by a guerrilla army, the Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN, with the support of plural groups within society. The FSLN, which first formed in 1961, underwent considerable changes over time and in 1978 responded to

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spontaneous uprisings by providing leadership, uniting its three tendencies in agreement about its strategy and programme. The three tendencies, the factionalism that developed in 1975, were the original GPP (Prolonged Popular War, which had favoured rural guerrilla warfare), the TP (Proletarian Tendency, which favoured urban guerrilla warfare) and the Terceristas (Third Way, which supported allegiance with 'bourgeois' opposition). The FSLN programme was social democratic, directed at the needs of the 'poor majority'. They promised to 'eliminate the injustices of the living and working conditions suffered by the working class' through legislation, social support and education, including literacy programmes for all, together with land redistribution to aid the peasantry.[24]

Of the groups that gave the FSLN support, the United People's Movement, MPU, was particularly important and not least through organizing the resistance from early 1979. The MPU was a broad alliance of popular organizations which formed in 1978 and included political parties of the left, trade unions, neighbourhood groups, women's groups and students' groups. In February 1979, the MPU expanded to become the National Patriotic Front, FPN, to include the 'Group of Twelve', which was a group of prominent and highly respectable business, professional and church figures, and also to incorporate some bourgeois parties, including the independent liberals and workers' organizations.[25]

In early 1978, after the assassination of the editor of the newspaper *La Prensa,* which regularly published material in condemnation of the regime, followed by a general strike that lasted two weeks, the Broad Opposition Front, FAO, formed and gave their support to the FSLN. The FAO consisted mainly of business groups, the most important of them the High Council of Private Enterprise, COSEP. More strikes and protests then followed. In January 1979 a further general strike broke out, after which full-scale civil war between the National Guard and the FSLN finally led to the end of the Somoza dictatorship.

On coming to power, in July 1979, the post-revolutionary government promised elections; they were held in 1984 and have continued to be held regularly since, and with genuine government alteration: that is, with the party in government also losing elections and being replaced after accepting defeat. The new government's vision of democracy, however, had been more than electoral democracy. In 1983 Sergio Ramírez, one of the five-member Government of National Reconstruction (the Junta) from 1979 to 1984, and vice-president from 1984 to 1989, explained the vision as follows:

> For us democracy is not merely a formal model but rather a constant process capable of resolving the fundamental problems of development and capable of giving the people who vote and participate the real possibility of transforming their conditions of life—a democracy that establishes justice and does away with exploitation.
>
> (Ramírez, member of the Government of National Reconstruction, 1983)[26]

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It is a statement that would have met with Rosa Luxemburg's approval, and it was not just rhetoric. Furthermore, Ramírez was a Group of Twelve member of the government. The FSLN, working together with other groups, including bourgeois/middle-class groups, was intent on maintaining the plural nature of the mass action through which the revolution had occurred: to keep alive, that is, what Rosa Luxemburg saw as 'the living spirit' necessary for democracy.

In August 1979, one month after the revolutionary overthrow, the Fundamental Statute of the Republic of Nicaragua was passed. Its declared aim was 'national unity', and it formally established the Government of National Reconstruction: only one of its members, Daniel Ortega, was from the FSLN. The other members were, in addition to Ramírez from the Group of Twelve, Alfonso Robelo, member of the FAO and leader of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement, MDN; Moisés Hassan of the MPU and FPN; and Violeta Chamorro, widow of the assassinated editor of *La Prensa*. The Statute also formally established a co-legislative body, the Council of State (inaugurated in 1980), which was made up of representatives of all the groups that had participated in support of the revolution—not only political parties but also mass organizations, including workers' associations, the women's group, professional organizations and national business organizations: of the forty-seven seats only twelve were allotted to political parties.[27]

Grass-roots organizations were crucial to the Sandinistas' vision of an active participatory democracy with strong bases for decision-making at local and regional as well as national levels.[28] The political participation of ordinary citizens also took place through the *consultas populares*, where important policy issues were debated and citizens were also given questionnaires in order to inform policies under consideration.[29] In addition, the plural mass organizations were of practical importance for the literacy campaign, which quickly reduced illiteracy from 50.35 per cent to 12.9 per cent and won Nicaragua the 1980 UNESCO literacy award. Literacy is a crucial facilitator for political participation. Similar campaigns through the relevant group organizations were also central to achieving other goals such as health improvements for the population.[30]

Facing Difficulties

The problem was that, while growth in the number of mass organizations was encouraged because of the value put on participation and also for its practical benefits to social democracy, the workings of the system of representation began to be undermined by the unwieldy nature of the system. The system slowed down the state's capacity to respond; there was a lack of internal democracy within some of the organizations, largely due to the speed with which they were set up; and there were conflicts of interest between the mass organizations and some of the bourgeoisie, which sharpened as the system developed. Sandinista-linked organizations grew

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particularly rapidly, and sections of the bourgeoisie felt their interests threatened. For example, there were 133 trade unions in 1979, which by 1983 had grown to 1,130, of which 1,023 were linked to the FSLN.[31]

In line with Rosa Luxemburg's position in respect of the revisionists in Germany, in Nicaragua members of the bourgeoisie gave their support to liberal democracy over social democracy.[32] In April 1980 Robelo and Chamorro resigned from the Junta: Chamorro for health reasons, Robelo over changes to the membership of the Council of State that increased the presence of mass organizations.[33] Two others from the bourgeoisie, however, replaced them: Arturo Cruz, president of the Central Bank, and Rafael Córdova Rivas, a wealthy lawyer and member of the Democratic Conservative Party. In November 1980, after Robelo's MDN held a rally that was greatly outnumbered by Sandinistas, who attacked the MDN offices, eleven representatives of conservative organizations, including COSEP (High Council of Private Enterprise) and MDN, registered their protest by resigning from the Council of State. A few days later a plot to overthrow the government was foiled during which the COSEP vice-president was killed by the police.[34] In March 1981 the ruling Junta, still retaining bourgeois support, was reduced to three: Ortega, Ramirez and the lawyer-businessman Córdova.

Business groups were further angered by the Agrarian Reform Law of July 1981, and this added to their concern about the postponement of elections to 1984.[35] Unlike the Bolsheviks' land policies, however, these agrarian reforms affected only large estates and did not give incentives for peasant land seizures, and the reforms were not couched in class terms aimed at class conflict.[36] In September 1981 new legislation was introduced which prohibited damage to the economy or incitement to inflict damage, but, unlike in Russia under the Bolsheviks, where the death penalty had accompanied similar legislation and had been applied, in Nicaragua the maximum sentence permitted under the law was three years' imprisonment and the maximum sentence actually passed was seven months.[37]

Negotiations over the 'ground rules' of the elections began in 1982, and the bourgeois parties succeeded in achieving the shift from an emphasis on the direct participation of plural groups to indirect representation through political parties. Under the new constitution the new National Assembly was to be made up only of political party representatives: mass organizations were no longer to have formal representation in the assembly.[38] The elections that took place in 1984 therefore turned the political system into a liberal democracy. The election was won by the FSLN and decisively so, with 67 per cent of the votes. In the subsequent election, held in 1990, which they lost, the FSLN conceded to the opposition. The FSLN regained power through winning the elections in 2007.

The 1984 elections were held against the background of what became known as the 'Contra War'. After the revolution, the National Guards had fled to Honduras and formed a counter-revolutionary army, the Nicaraguan

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Democratic Front, FDN, which was backed by the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA. In February 1982, with a budget of US$19 million, the CIA began covert action. Battles on the borders of Nicaragua and Honduras started the following month, the first serious attempt to invade being made in March 1983. Robelo, who had resigned from the government in 1980 and whose MDN supporters had held rallies against the government, had gone on to develop counter-revolutionary forces. Robelo had left the country in 1982 and joined his forces, in Costa Rica, with the Sandinista Revolutionary Front, FRS, which had been formed by Eden Pastora, a member of the FSLN-Terceristas who had been deputy Minister of Defence and the head of the militias but had resigned his post in April 1981. In 1985 Robelo moved his forces to Honduras to join with the FDN, the major 'contra' group.[39] The war continued through to 1988, finally ended by a peace agreement in early 1989; the war left Nicaragua with a severely damaged economy.[40]

Drawing Lessons

As Rosa Luxemburg had argued in her debate with Eduard Bernstein, the practice of Nicaragua has clearly demonstrated that the ideas of democracy held by bourgeois and middle-class sections of the population conflict with those of social democracy. The case of Nicaragua also showed, however, that the growth of the pluralist organizations created practical problems for running a socialist democracy, and the evidence has also highlighted that interests in society are far wider and more complex than those relating to industry. As acknowledged, Nicaragua was too poor and agricultural a country to serve as a test case of Rosa Luxemburg's idea of socialist democracy in practice, and the pressures brought by peasants' demands for land are, therefore, unsurprising. But the groups involved had included not only rural groups but also women's groups, neighbourhood groups, students' groups and nationalities.

The Miskito Indians in the Zelaya region, which bordered Honduras, tried to gain local self-government and special seats on the Junta in late 1980 to early 1981 and took great exception to the literacy campaign. They were successful in ending the literacy campaign, but events in the region led to many moving to Honduras, and, continuing their campaign for autonomy, some later joined the counter-revolutionary forces.[41] Although material issues were highly relevant, these groups clearly signify that class is not the only cleavage in society, and conflicts of interest remain to be negotiated in socialist democracy even if given a one-class society.

While highlighting some of the practical problems to be faced when seeking to build a socialist democracy, not least the complexity of the demands made by the various mass groups, the case of Nicaragua highlights important lessons when compared with the Russian Revolution of 1917, and they provide support for Rosa Luxemburg's position. Russia in 1917, too, had

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been poor and agricultural and had been similarly faced with opposition by sections of the bourgeoisie and nationalities. Both countries had also been faced with war and counter-revolutionary forces aided by foreign countries: Russia with the continuation of the First World War and, when ended, soon with the outbreak of civil war; Nicaragua with the threat of civil war that remained restricted to the country's borders and took on the form of foreign war. In spite of the long duration of the Contra War, the Nicaraguan government managed to avoid the mistakes identified by Rosa Luxemburg in respect of the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution.

Rather than dissolving their equivalent of the Constituent Assembly and instituting centralism, as the Bolsheviks had done, the FSLN had instituted elections and respected their outcome. In contrast to the Bolsheviks' suffrage law, the FSLN had introduced universal suffrage. As explained in Chapter 6, Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of the suffrage law was that in limiting suffrage to those who labour, the law wrongly thereby excluded the middle class and also, given the economic upheaval of the time, also excluded the unemployed and those between jobs, from all classes. Importantly, although the Nicaraguan government faced difficulties, they had kept the support of the middle class after their revolution and had done so not only through the introduction of true universal suffrage, the holding of elections for a representative parliament and respect for the outcome of elections, but also through support for democratic rights, not least being freedom of association and freedom of the press. As Rosa Luxemburg had argued in 'The Russian Revolution':

> . . . the destruction of the most important democratic 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 . . . it is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable.
>
> (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', pp. 66–7)

The Nicaraguan government had also avoided Rosa Luxemburg's criticism of the Bolsheviks in respect of what Rosa Luxemburg viewed as the 'nationalities question' and the equivalent of the Bolsheviks' slogan of the right to self-determination that was then made so crucial to their negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and from which, she argued, 'arose the terror and the suppression of democracy'.[42] In Nicaragua promises of self-determination were not made at the time of the revolution, but indigenous languages were respected once objections were raised to the literacy campaign, which had, initially, been conducted only in Spanish. The revolution did, however, generate demands for autonomy, and failure to address those demands had led to the Miskito Indians joining with counter-revolutionary forces in Honduras.

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Over time, however, policies and initiatives sensitive to minority ethnic interests through careful consultation with people—ordinary working people and not just local (bourgeois) representatives—succeeded in returning support for the government.[43]

There were also other mistakes made by the new Bolshevik government that the post-revolutionary government in Nicaragua avoided. The FSLN had not allowed peasants to seize the land and, rather, had introduced only measured land reforms. When opposition among the bourgeoisie had developed over economic policies, the Nicaraguan post-revolutionary government had negotiated with the bourgeois opposition. Importantly, in contrast to the Bolsheviks' approach to controlling attacks made on the economy, the Nicaraguan government had avoided terror.[44] The Statute on Rights and Guarantees for the Citizens of Nicaragua, introduced in August 1979, was upheld: it guaranteed freedom of expression and information, the right to strike, the rights to organize politically and to stand for election, and it also administered justice according to strict guidelines and abolished the death penalty. Rather than the summary justice inflicted by the Cheka in Russia, those arrested in Nicaragua for inflicting damage on the economy could receive penalties only of a maximum of three years.

Given the material conditions in Nicaragua and given, also, that the country had once been a colony and continued as a producer of primary goods for the international market, Rosa Luxemburg would have expected not a socialist but a bourgeois revolution.[45] In this the outcome showed her to be right, but the outcome also went further. She would not simply have approved the retention of 'the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom' in the political system with its mass participation; she would also have approved the moves to remove 'the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom' in the social and economic spheres: the literacy campaigns, the health campaigns and the moves to reconstruct the housing and infrastructure destroyed by the war.[46] For the immediate future, too, she would have approved the outcome of the 1984 election: a socialist government with a clear majority of seats.

In respect of the Sandinistas' handling of the 'nationalities question', however, the post-revolutionary government had had to learn the lesson that Rosa Luxemburg had made clear in the SDKPiL programme of 1906, that language and cultural differences must be respected and that strong local as well as regional government must be a part of socialist democracy. It is fair, nevertheless, to note that Rosa Luxemburg did not follow through on the implications of language differences and cultural differences, especially where separated by region, constituting a cleavage not just separate from class cleavage but sometimes one that is stronger. To identify language difference as a problem for the idea of an international proletariat is not, however, to argue against Rosa Luxemburg's antipathy to nationalism, the issue on which the SDKPiL differed from the Polish Socialist Party, PPS. The rise of Nazism and fascism has illustrated only too well the political

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uses to which nationalism can be put. But it is to draw attention again to Marx's pragmatism on the issue of nationalism.

As explained in Chapter 2, in respect of the 'Polish Question', Marx had recognized the injustice that the Polish workers would feel in having their wishes for an independent Poland ignored when the rights of other nationalities were being upheld.[47] This was not Rosa Luxemburg's view, but, as Arendt[48] has commented, Rosa Luxemburg had talents that she regarded too lightly. Rosa Luxemburg could speak read and write in Polish, Russian and German; spoke French fluently; and was accomplished in English and Italian, too, and, for that reason perhaps, paid too little attention to the implications of the fact that the workers of the world, on whom she pinned so much expectation, were overwhelmingly restricted to just one of the multitude of languages. Language is not simply one more cleavage; it is a barrier both to communication and to concerted action.

Although the role played by the United States fits Rosa Luxemburg's analysis of war and imperialism, the differences between US behaviour under the Republican President Ronald Reagan, who held office over the years of the Contra War, and under the Democratic President Jimmy Carter, who preceded him, are notable. In 1978 Carter had withdrawn aid from Somoza's government in protest at human rights abuses. In February 1988 the US Congress had rejected Reagan's request for more funds for the contras, and there were also further checks on the US government's behaviour from outside the United States. For example, the International Court of Justice at The Hague ruled, in June 1986, that the United States had been in breach of international law in interfering in the internal affairs of Nicaragua.[49]

The experience in Nicaragua demonstrated that capitalist countries do not always act the same and that differences between countries can be important. When the United States withdrew aid from Nicaragua a wide variety of other countries stepped in with help: West Germany, Sweden, Spain, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Libya and Cuba. Many of these countries and others too were already supplying loans and emergency aid, and Cuba also sent doctors and nurses, gave help with the literacy campaign and provided technicians to assist with the economic reconstruction.[50] Governments giving aid is not, however, the same as what Rosa Luxemburg had envisaged: the workers of the world uniting.

Balancing Socialism and Democracy

Although it raises questions about the practical difficulties of constructing socialist democracy, the case of Nicaragua does illustrate Rosa Luxemburg's view of the crucial importance of class relations in society setting the possibilities for a socialist democracy. As Levi's argument against the Bolsheviks had put it, 'there are absolutely *no* state forms which can cancel out the existing

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class contradictions; since the form of the state is indeed the expression and the result of the class contradictions and not their cause'.[51] As Marx had it in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', 'Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it'.[52] Post-revolutionary Nicaragua also illustrated Levi's argument about the advantages of a coalition, as opposed to a single-party system:

> If there were state forms which could prove the cancelling out of those class contradictions: if there were, then it would be incomprehensible why one could not also accomplish such witchcraft with a coalition government. Yes, we confess: the pretence of a class solidarity where class contradictions exist—historically seen—then this delusion is much more acceptable in the form of the coalition government than in the form of the soviet government in the Russian model. When the illusion of class solidarity is destroyed in the coalition government and the contradictions become apparent again, then the coalition separates out into its constituent parts, and the parties which were previously paralysed in the coalition once again take up their natural functions.
>
> (Levi, 'Leaving Leninism' (1927), p. 2)

In Nicaragua these 'parties' had separated out by the time of the 1984 election, and the election had proved a means to avoid the terror that occurred in the civil war that followed the October Revolution in Russia.[53]

CONCLUSION

This view of society as the basis of the state and not vice versa is central to Rosa Luxemburg's position: it is the reason why, for her, there is no contradiction between being both for revolution and for democracy: for it is social revolution and social democracy that are her aims. Democracy is not a set of institutions, structures and policies imposed by government on society; democracy is not passive but active, and democracy is kept alive through the activity that flows through society. The form that society takes, its material conditions at its stage of history, sets the limits on the kind of democracy that can be achieved, but, whether bourgeois/liberal or socialist, democracy can never rest. Democracy is dynamic, not static, and must be kept alive and growing through concerted political action: not simply mass participation but mass action as its 'living spirit'. This is why there is no single model that can be formulated for democracy and why socialist democracy is not something that can be set up in one go but will take time and will be continuously open to ideas.

In bourgeois democracy, the concerted action for workers' rights and better economic conditions takes the form of social democratic parties and trade-union organizations, but of themselves they are not enough.

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Workers must be actively involved, whether it be participating in a mass strike, leafleting for a party or casting a vote in an election, or reading about or taking part in debates and discussions on political, social and economic affairs. This is why, in bourgeois/liberal democracies, workers' parties must be not just vote-getting but revolutionary parties. It is not enough that they organize on behalf of workers, for that is the way to stifle democracy, to sap it of life. In arguing for the importance of the German SPD being a revolutionary party Rosa Luxemburg was not arguing that its main purpose was to seek to engage in violent revolution but, rather, that it be ever responsive to mass action. Mass action as a series of such events would be the revolution. This was why it was the job of trade unions to respond to strikes and why, therefore, she had become so exasperated by the German trade unions. The owners of the means of production would not simply hand over their power without a struggle, and socialist society would take time to build and, crucially, would do so in response to the mass action.

So, too, socialist democracy is not something that is done by government on behalf of the mass of workers but vice versa: it is the activity of the masses that gives life to socialist democracy. For the activity of the masses to take effect, the right material conditions are required: conditions in which the working class is no longer subordinated to the owners of the capitalist means of production through the wage system and threat of unemployment; conditions in which poverty, ill health and long hours of work no longer sap energy and enthusiasm; conditions in which learning and experience, having ceased to be narrow, are vibrant; conditions in which people are no longer made to fight in wars. As Rosa Luxemburg had written in the Spartacus League Programme, 'The essence of socialist society is that the great working mass ceases to be a ruled mass and instead lives and controls its own political and economic life in conscious and free self-determination.'[54] In such a society, the greatest political freedoms are, through one's own reasoning, to think, to form groups and to engage in concerted political action.

NOTES

1. R. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', in R. Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?* Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan Press, 1967, p. 77, for the above quotes.
2. See P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 229–33. This was discussed in Chapter 4.
3. R. Luxemburg, 'Socialism and the Churches', 1905, London: Merlin Press, 1972.
4. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 60.
5. Ibid., pp. 66–7.
6. R. Luxemburg, 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?' Spartacus League Pamphlet, Berlin, 1918, in R. Looker (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* London: Jonathan Cape, 1972, pp. 275–86.

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7. Ibid., p. 277.
8. Ibid., pp. 277–8.
9. The account that follows of Germany at the end of 1918 is covered, in more detail, in Chapter 7.
10. Quoted in Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 468.
11. Ibid., p. 441.
12. Ibid., p. 451.
13. Ibid., p. 474. See also Chapter 7.
14. See ibid., p. 473. For long excerpts from her speech see P. Le Blanc and H.C. Scott (eds), *Socialism or Barbarism: The Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: Pluto Press, 2010, pp. 240–60.
15. R. Luxemburg, 'The Elections to the National Assembly', *Die Rote Fahne,* 23 December 1918, in Looker (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg: Selected Political Writings,* pp. 288–9.
16. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 60.
17. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg,* p. 474.
18. As Luxemburg argues in 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?, p. 278: 'It is a pathetic delusion to believe that the capitalists would submit willingly to a verdict, arrived at by a parliament, by a National Assembly, to implement socialism, and that they would calmly forgo their possessions, profit and prerogative of exploitation. All ruling classes have fought with savage desperation to the bitter end for their prerogatives.'
19. R. Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', in Le Blanc and Scott (eds) *Socialism or Barbarism*, p. 93.
20. R. Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions', in M.-A. Waters (ed.) *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks,* New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994, p. 182; Luxemburg, 'Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy', p. 102.
21. See N. Geras, *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg,* London: NLB, 1976, pp. 188–93.
22. A. Nye, *Philosophia: The Thought of Rosa Luxemburg, Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt,* New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 48.
23. See P.J. Williams, 'Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Popular and Electoral Democracy in Nicaragua', *Comparative Politics,* 1994, vol. 26, pp. 169–85.
24. See H. Smith, *Nicaragua: Self-Determination and Survival,* London: Pluto Press, 1993, p. 163, for the quotations from the FSLN programme.
25. For the above paragraph see Williams, 'Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule', pp. 125–8.
26. Quoted in Smith, *Nicaragua,* p. 142.
27. Williams, 'Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule', p. 177.
28. For detailed discussion see I.A. Luciak, *The Sandinista Legacy: Lessons from a Political Economy in Transition,* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995, pp. 21–30.
29. Williams, 'Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule', p. 174.
30. For the above see Smith, *Nicaragua*, pp. 191 and 185.
31. See ibid., p. 147.
32. See D. Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution,* New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 111–23.
33. See Luciak, *The Sandinista Legacy,* pp. 22–3. Violeta Chamorro became the president following the elections in 1990.
34. For the above see J. Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America,* London: Verso, 1988, pp. 273–5; Luciak, *The Sandinista Legacy*, p. 22. The plot was fully substantiated.

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35. See R.H.T. O'Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror: The Role of Violence in Political Change,* Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991, pp. 180–2.
36. Ibid., p. 182. Some members of the National Directorate of the FSLN did, though, make anti-bourgeois statements: see Gilbert, *Sandinistas,* p. 116.
37. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1982,* London: Longman, p. 31291.
38. Williams, 'Dual Transitions from Authoritarian Rule', p. 178.
39. Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus,* p. 276.
40. See Smith, *Nicaragua,* p. 177. The total economic damage, both direct and indirect, that the war caused is estimated at just under US$18 billion.
41. For discussion of how the government recognized their ethnic prejudice and adjusted their policies accordingly see A. Rooper and H. Smith, 'From Nationalism to Autonomy: The Ethnic Question in the Nicaraguan Revolution', *Race and Class,* 1986, vol. 27, pp. 1–20, where the nationalities in Nicaragua are also discussed more generally.
42. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 56.
43. See Rooper and Smith, 'From Nationalism to Autonomy', p. 17.
44. For fuller details on the moves to ensure the avoidance of terror and for expansion on what follows see O'Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror,* pp. 169–89.
45. Rosa Luxemburg would have viewed the participation of the United States in the Contra War of 1983–9 as the use of militarism to ensure the continuation of the accumulation of capital.
46. Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', p. 77.
47. See K. Marx, *The International Workingmen's Association, Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council* (1866), http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1866/08/instructions.htm.
48. H. Arendt, 'Rosa Luxemburg: 1871–1919', in H. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times,* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968, p. 42.
49. *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1986,* London: Longman, p. 34548. Important roles were also played by non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.
50. Ibid., 1980, p. 30317.
51. Paul Levi, 'Leaving Leninism' (1927), http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/supplem/levlenin.htm, p. 2.
52. K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works,* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, p. 326.
53. See O'Kane, *The Revolutionary Reign of Terror,* pp. 91–95, for details and estimates of victims.
54. Luxemburg, 'What Does the Spartakusbund Want?', p. 277.

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