

Spring 2022

## The Spark of Revolution: Lenin and Luxemburg on Spontaneity and the Revolution of 1905

Maria Julia Hernandez Saez  
*Bard College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2022](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2022)



Part of the [European History Commons](#), [Intellectual History Commons](#), and the [Political Theory Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

Hernandez Saez, Maria Julia, "The Spark of Revolution: Lenin and Luxemburg on Spontaneity and the Revolution of 1905" (2022). *Senior Projects Spring 2022*. 166.

[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2022/166](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2022/166)

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Projects Spring 2022 by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

**The Spark of Revolution**

Lenin and Luxemburg on Spontaneity and the Revolution of 1905

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature *and* Social Studies  
of Bard College

by  
María Julia Hernández Sáez

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2022



## **Dedication**

Al gran Pepo, que tu amor por la patria germine en libertad.



## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the Russian and Eurasian Studies Program professors. Olga, Marina, and Oleg, thank you for the patience, affection, and generosity you have shown me these four years. The openness with which you share your knowledge and culture makes me feel as though I've found a second home.

Thank you to my Senior Project Advisor Sean McMeekin for giving me the direction and guidance I needed for this project.

Thank you to my mother for supporting my academic career and my interests, and for reading everything I send her. Without her, nothing close to this would exist.

Thank you to Bard College for making me romanticize the present. Thank you to the birds that wake me up and the crickets that sing me to sleep. Thank you to the friends that help carry my heart when I'm near them.

Thank you to the Pre-Post-Physical world we are living in.



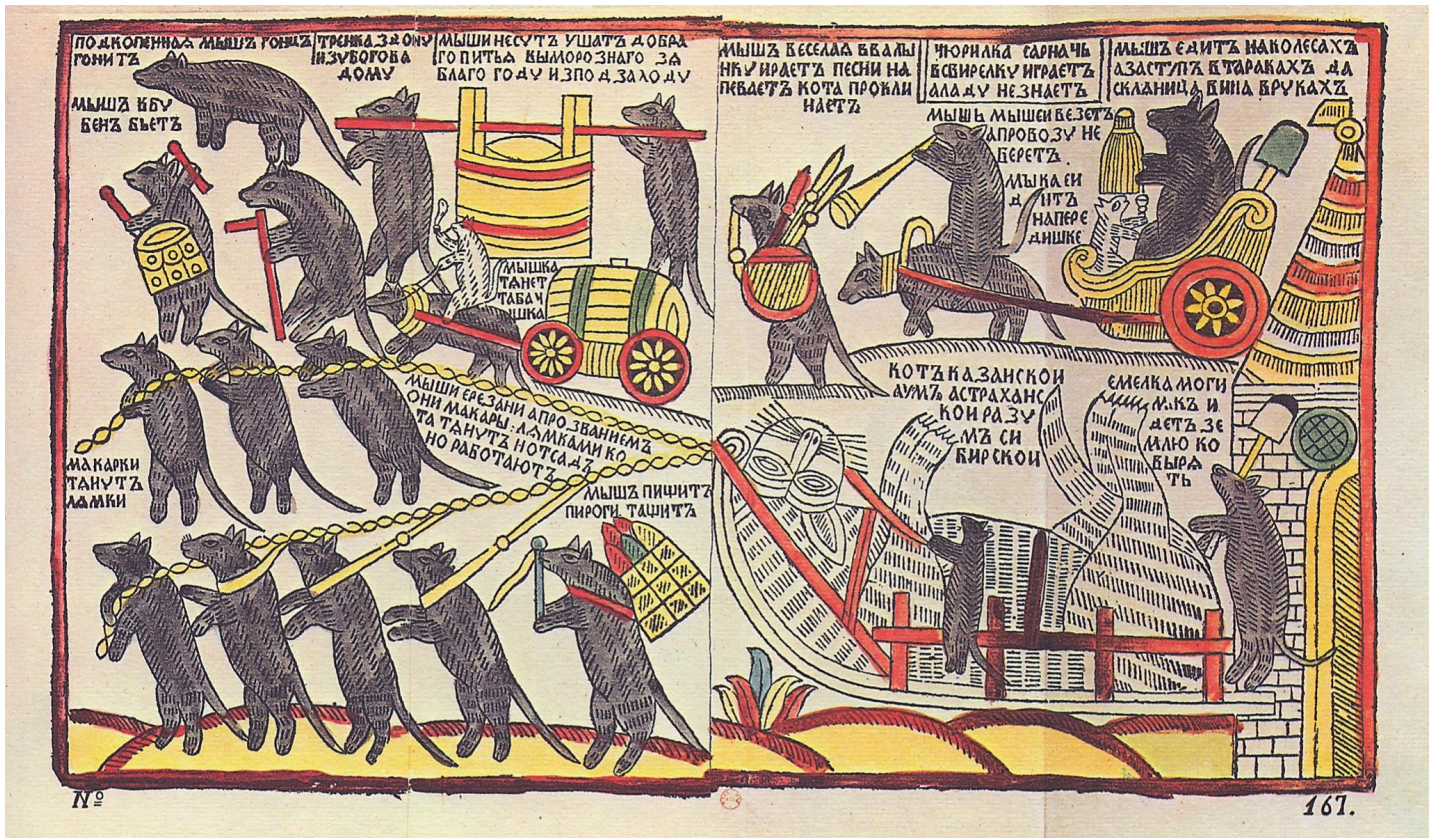
**Table of Contents**

Introduction	10
Chapter I	15
The Ally that Didn't Know its Place: Spontaneity in <i>What is to be Done?</i>	
Chapter II	41
The Building of Mass Character: Spontaneity in <i>Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy</i>	
Chapter III	58
Fighting for Democracy or Rehearsing for Socialism?: Case Study of 1905	
Conclusion	75
Who Leads Who?: The Relationship between the Party and the Masses	
Bibliography	83
Appendix 1	87





“Mice Burying the Cat” (circa 1725)



“The Cat of Kazan, the Mind of Astrakhan, the Wisdom of Siberia”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Artist Unknown. “Мыши kota погребают” (“Mice Burying the Cat”), Impression of the 1760’s, Collection of M. P. Pogodin. Web. National Library of Russia. accessed April 30, 2022, [https://primo.nl.ru/permalink/f/oo3rn7/07NLR\\_LMS010114122](https://primo.nl.ru/permalink/f/oo3rn7/07NLR_LMS010114122)

## Introduction

The uprising in the Summer of 2019 was simultaneously long overdue and sudden for Puerto Rican politics and society. Just as Tsar Nicholas II irritated the Russian masses to a point of no return in the Revolution of 1905, the then governor of Puerto Rico Ricardo Rosselló unintentionally led the Puerto Rican public into mass protests demanding his resignation. The fuse was lit when over 800 pages of text messages between important political figures in government were anonymously released. Most notoriously among them was Roselló. One of the most inflammatory subjects dealt with in these conversations was in the aftermath of Hurricane María. The official response to the catastrophe was marred with avoidance and corruption, and the texts contained a shocking amount of apathy and disdain for the suffering of the population. One of the most infamous quotes from the chat came from Roselló's ex-Director of Finances, Sobrino. When discussing the accumulation of bodies at the morgues due to the natural disaster and the staff shortage, he joked, "Now that we're on the subject, don't we have a corpse to feed our crows?"<sup>2</sup> The governor and his circle of advisors faced unprecedented backlash, unleashing mass protests for weeks, and Ricardo Roselló left the island; he announced his resignation on July 24th.

This spontaneous implosion of protests made me wonder why, while such rampant injustice and corruption has been happening for decades upon decades, around a third of the Puerto Rican population reacted at once, moving as one organism. Many believed this coordination would result in a political transformation never before seen; however, while the movement succeeded in replacing corrupt officials, it did not result in genuine political change. Many members from the governor's party, especially from his own cabinet, replaced many of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Mazzei, "Burlas, insultos y groserías: el escándalo de los chats del gobernador de Puerto Rico desata una crisis política," "Ahora que estamos en ese tema, ¿no tenemos algún cadáver para alimentar a nuestros cuervos?"

positions left empty. This begs the question, what combination, if any, of spontaneity and central organizing could lead to a truly revolutionary national movement?

The events of 2019 left a thirst for justice and for change, a thirst that has not yet been satisfied; however, in an interesting turn of events, the results of the 2020 National Elections in Puerto Rico showed an unprecedented shift away from the two party system, and over 30% of the votes went to third party candidates. This electoral result could be understood as a result of the mass protests, and the exploration of nontraditional methodologies, with the masses seeking a more direct voice in politics, in a way attempting to reinvigorate democracy. The spontaneous action from all kinds of Puerto Ricans, combined with the fact that the political power stayed in the same hands, made me think of the Revolution of 1905, and the way it was regarded by some as the precedent for the Revolution of 1917, and by others as a failed revolution. Lenin referred to the revolution as the “dress rehearsal,” stating “Without the ‘dress rehearsal’ of 1905, the victory of the October Revolution in 1917 would have been impossible.”<sup>3</sup> The events of 1905 gain pertinence not only for the events to later occur in Russia, but of international importance within the history of mass organizing and mass protests.

Debates on how to organize a successful revolution and on what determines a successful revolution have a long history. I chose to focus on trying to understand how spontaneity was understood within the development of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP), and how socialist thinkers of the time approached gaining mass participation in revolutionary struggles. When thinking of spontaneity, the early 20th century debates between Vladimir I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg during the Second International come to mind. These debates centered around different aspects of organizing, without focusing on spontaneity directly.

---

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, “Left-Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder,” in *V. I. Lenin Collected Works*, ed. and trans. Julius Katzer, vol. 31, April-December 1920 (Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1977), 27.

Although this thesis centers the theoretical debates regarding spontaneity, it is essential to also explore the events surrounding these theoretical contemplations and resolutions. Focusing on the writing from the period from *What is to be Done?* in 1903 to the Russian Revolution of 1905, which in reality began towards the end of 1904 and bled even into 1907, there are four simultaneous planes in which the writings of Luxemburg and Lenin existed and with which they interacted. The broadest is the international sphere, through the Second International, with their ideas being discussed along the issues of the day between the Social Democratic Workers parties of Europe. The second plane to consider is that of the individual parties that Luxemburg and Lenin were a part of. For Luxemburg this was the Polish Social Democratic Party and the Spartacus League within the German Social Democratic Workers Party (SDP), while Lenin was operating exclusively from within the Russian Social-Democratic Workers party.

But beyond this, the third plane is the country of residence of each thinker. This was especially significant for Lenin since, having moved to Western Europe in 1900 after his exile, wrote *What is to be Done?* from Zurich, Germany. This meant that, although he never shifted focus from Russian politics, he did not have his feet on Russian soil, and the political and ideological currents that influenced his thought, as well as the events that affected his day to day, were mostly those of Germany and the European countries he was able to visit during this time. For Luxemburg, native to Russian-controlled Poland, her founding of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) meant that her connection to the subsequent Polish Workers Party remained strong and, through this connection with the Russian Empire, she was considered the expert in Russian politics within the German Social Democratic Party.

Attempting to reinvigorate Social Democracy from the disintegration of the First International, the growing Social Democratic parties in Europe had the task of both appealing to their national working masses and collaborating internationally to develop an international Social-Democratic program. Wanting to work within a united line of theory and action became both increasingly difficult and increasingly important, in order to uphold the Marxist theory that understood all nations to have a linear development towards Socialism. With foundational debates, such as Revisionism, Centralization, the General Strike, and the National Question, writings created in the years 1902-1906 resulted in important transformations of Marxism in both theory and practice. Because these were such critical years for Social Democracy in Europe, the thinkers of the time were continually updating their theory, and in some ways trying to dissimulate these changes to not make their theory look inconsistent.

As one of the central tasks of each national movement was to attain mass participation from the working masses, the issue of the spontaneity of the masses became a central concern. The way masses organized to act in unison without a set organizational precedent indicated that it was an element of their behavior that needed to be taken into account. Spontaneity became understood as both an organizational trait and a kind of uniting driving force of the masses. This spontaneity of the masses could be attributed to the way mass action occurred in the first place, usually as a reaction to a shared suffering or oppression. It was essential for the Movements of the Second International to understand the origins and tendencies of mass action since their theory depended on it. In this project I understand spontaneity as the way masses take up action independently or in conjunction with the political organizations attempting to organize them into a movement.

In my project I seek to identify and analyze the moments Lenin and Luxemburg discussed spontaneity. I focus my first chapter on Lenin's *What is to be Done?* and his treatment of spontaneity as an organizational element. In my second chapter I focus on Luxemburg's *Organizational Questions in the Russian Social Democracy*, her response to Lenin's pamphlet. I wish to identify the ways they agree and the ways they disagree. Both believing in a centralist model for party leadership, I posit that the central disagreement between Lenin and Luxemburg in their texts before the Revolution of 1905 revolved around spontaneity, his exclusion of it and her defense of it. The Russian Revolution of 1905 led to both thinkers modifying their theory, to reflect a kind of new reality this historical event established. The spontaneous revolution had repercussions for all Social Democratic movements of the time. I seek to analyze the impacts on the way both Lenin and Luxemburg understood spontaneity to function in mass action. Through this analyzing the character of the masses and the way they behave, and the evolving relationship that Marxist thought has tried to maintain with the behavior of the masses.

## Chapter I

### The Ally that Didn't Know its Place: Spontaneity in *What is to be Done?*

Lenin was an important figure in the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party since its inception, and his recognition as a prominent Marxist activist dated back to 1893, before the founding of the party. At the end of 1895, he was arrested for sedition for taking part in organizing the “Union for the Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class,” which unified the Marxist groups of Saint Petersburg,<sup>4</sup> and after 15 months of imprisonment he was exiled to Shushenskoye in Eastern Siberia until 1900. Lenin then moved around Western Europe, continuing his work as a Marxist activist. When he wrote *Chto Delat'?* (*What is to be Done?*) in 1902, the party was going through a significant transformation; the turn of the century was a period marked by both hope and struggle.

By 1900, the Russian Empire had established itself as a major European military power, while having a mixed record in terms of victories and defeats during the century. In addition, political transformation across Europe made their way to Russia in extreme ways. In 1855 Alexander II became the Tsar and ushered in military, economic, and political reforms, among the most significant being the emancipation of serfdom in 1861, affording him the nickname of “Tsar-Liberator.” With it came redistribution of land and new unprecedented levels of political freedom for Russians. Interestingly enough, these reforms were also accompanied by the increase of political restlessness and assassination attempts against the Tsar, the first one being in 1866. In March 1st, 1881, members of the organization *Narodnaya Volya* (“People’s Will”) succeeded. *Narodnaya Volya*, an organization of Agrarian Populist founded in 1879, composed

<sup>4</sup> “Vladimir Lenin,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Lenin>.



of *Narodniks*, whose central influence was Sergei Nechaev, an anarchist proponent of Populism and Radical Terrorism. Although not the first Tsar in history to be murdered, this moment marked the entrance of waves of revolutionary violence that had been sweeping through Europe into Russia. Tsarist rule was not defeated through this act, nevertheless the assassination did demonstrate the influence that popular organizing could have on the political destiny of the empire. This meant that the formation of political organizations would be both seen as more of a possibility, and they were also surveilled in a more sophisticated manner—such as the creation of the Okhrana under Tsar Alexander III—, with both technological advances and a heightened awareness of the threat to autocratic power. It was within this context that Social Democracy reached the Russian Empire.

One of the central pieces of Social-Democratic writing in Russia was Lenin's 1902 pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, in which he presented the political program of the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party. In trying to understand the transitional moment in which Russian Social-Democracy found itself during the writing of *What is to be Done?*, the conclusion of Lenin's pamphlet is most helpful. However far from objective, Lenin delineated three periods of the growth and development of Russian Social-Democracy, which gives the reader a glimpse of how he understood the past, present, and future of the movement. Firstly, the years 1884-1894 were considered by Lenin as a good marker of its first period, during which the theory of Social-Democracy began to be consolidated and organized within a movement with few members, still lacking a working-class movement to back it up. He describes this period as the “embryonic stage”<sup>5</sup> of the party's development.

---

<sup>5</sup> Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, “What is to be Done?” in *Lenin on Politics and Revolution: Selected Writings*, ed. James E. Connor, (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 77.

The second period Lenin delineates is from 1894-1898, which marked the appearance of Social-Democracy as a social movement and political party. He also observes that the intelligentsia was increasingly moving away from Narodnism (Populism, a form of agrarian socialism focused on the Russian peasantry) and towards focusing on the industrial working-masses, while the workers were increasingly enthusiastic in strike action. This also marked a break from *Narodnaya Volya* by the revolutionary youth that had been enthralled by their “terrorist leaders”,<sup>6</sup> such as Nechayev, and a deeper engagement in Marxist theory. This, according to Lenin, allowed them to go into the working-class movement without wavering on Marxist theory as their foundation. It is in this period that Lenin became a central political player in Russian Socialism, and the party was officially founded in 1898. Interestingly, Lenin declares the official foundation of the party as the last action of the second period.

The third period, starting in 1897, was marked by a lack of action. He called it a “period of disunity, dissolution, and vacillation.”<sup>7</sup> This coincides with the period of time that Lenin spent in Siberian exile, and he describes the reality of the party leadership in the following passage: “it was only the leaders who wandered about separately and drew back; the movement itself continued to grow.”<sup>8</sup> With him being one of those leaders that “drew back” as a result of the political persecution of its leadership, Lenin declares that, consequently, the party’s then-emerging leadership was lacking Marxist theoretical foundations and ready to make concessions to “Criticism” and “Economism.” These concepts are used by Lenin in reference to Eduard Bernstein’s Revisionism, a German Social Democrat who sought to understand and revise Marxist theory from a more strictly economic perspective and point out economic

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 77.

limitations within it. Bernstein based the need for revising Marxist theory on what he considered to be Marx's wrong prediction that revolution was inevitable. Marx based the inevitability of revolution on his prediction that the economic conditions of the working class would worsen. However, Germany's economic reality during the late 19th century was that the working class was becoming wealthier and becoming part of a growing middle class. Lenin uses the term "Criticism" to refer to Bernstein's Reformism and the great debates it brought to both the Second International and Russian Socialism. What he deemed "Economism" was part of this "Criticism," and Lenin defined it as the placing of economic concerns over political ones. He understood the "Economism" strain of thought as a disintegration of revolutionary theory and a theoretical crisis in Marxism, also naming "terrorists"—such as Nechaev with the group *Narodnaya Volya*—as prove of this theoretical disintegration. In strong opposition to "Economism," Lenin writes that "Social-Democracy was degraded to the level of trade-unionism".<sup>9</sup> Here Lenin refers to the state of the broader European Social-Democratic movement, and what he understood to be a turn towards the untrue and un-revolutionary practice Marxist theory, seeking economic improvement rather than social revolution.

Lenin did not predetermine when the third period was to end. However, characterizing it as having a weakening leadership and organizational program, he expressed his excitement for the quick resolution of the third period and start of the fourth: "we firmly believe that the fourth period will lead to the consolidation of militant Marxism, that Russian Social-Democracy will emerge from the crisis in the full flower of manhood, that the opportunist rearguard will be "replaced" by the genuine vanguard of the most revolutionary class."<sup>10</sup> The upcoming fourth period was to represent, for Lenin, the consolidation of his ideals on party organization and

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 78.

leadership, in a way instrumentalizing theory to consolidate power. This retelling of the history of the party that he wrote in the place for a conclusion is undoubtedly marred by Lenin's own personal experience—like his being in exile and his aspirations for and within the party—, his view on what the “correct” Social-Democratic theory was, and what the correct process for the growth of the party should be. Even so, it sets the basis for what he understood the reality of the Social-Democracy in Russia to be during the writing of *What is to be Done?*.

The central argument that Lenin develops throughout *What is to be Done?* is that Social-Democracy, a movement devoted to the idea that the emancipation of the working class would only be achieved through revolutionary means, was born out of the minds of bourgeois intellectuals. According to Lenin, Social-Democracy emerged as a “natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the proletariat on its own had only ever sought more rights within the system through the trade-unionist struggle. This distinction, of Social Democracy historically developing parallel (and not in relation) to working-class movements, he believed to be indicative of the different levels of political consciousnesses that these groups were innately capable of, with “trade-union consciousness” being the extent of what the working class could reach on its own, and “social-democratic consciousness” being what the intellectual bourgeois class had been able to reach. This distinction becomes the foundation and the justification of the structure and program that Lenin proposes for the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party.

With a forceful start, the pamphlet's epigraph presents the complex arguments and debates happening during this moment and the position that Lenin has taken on these issues: “Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 40.

diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations; a party becomes stronger by purging itself” (*From a Letter of Lassalle to Marx, of June 24, 1852*).<sup>12</sup> This quote becomes a summary of what Lenin was to present in the following pages in three major ways: in its encouragement of party struggle and rejection of factionalism, in its support of clear theoretical demarcations and the insinuation of a “correct path” for the development of a party organism, and in its encouragement of purging and willingness to reject positions that would differ as a way of resolving these party struggles. Thus, Lassalle’s brief statement seems to represent more of what Lenin believed than any writing of Marx himself, with its rigid belief of an unequivocal “correct path” and its encouragement of purging as a solution to theoretical debate.

This position, although very easily perceived as severe, came from the stringent political reality Lenin was formed in. He came from a comfortable and educated, yet politically stigmatized family. His brother was hanged for his involvement with *Narodnaya Volya* in plotting an assassination attempt against Tsar Alexander III and his father, an inspector of schools, was threatened with early retirement for his support of the spread of public education.<sup>13</sup> The risk inherent in revolutionary activity meant that, for Lenin, political organizing had a need for precision. Thus theoretical struggles within the party were, for Lenin, of utmost importance for not only the development, but the survival of the party. The act of delaying or minimizing theoretical concerns was reason enough to be characterized as opportunistic by Lenin. He believed that this deprioritization of theoretical concerns was a conscious diversion from revolutionary Marxist theory that would sacrifice the masses reaching “Social-Democratic consciousness,” the eventual revolution, and thus the emancipation of the working classes. There

---

<sup>12</sup> Appendix A: Cover of V. I. Lenin’s *What is to be Done?* Personal archive. Lenin V. I. (Обложка книги В. И. Ленина “Что дѣлать?” 1902. собственный архив. Ленин В. И.).

<sup>13</sup> Adam B. Ulam, “The Family” in *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual, Personal and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 19.

is, however, a tension between Lenin's encouragement of theoretical struggle within the party as a way of spurting its growth, and his simultaneous subversion of the purpose of discussion, believing that there could only be one correct resolution to this struggle. Additionally, when discussing both external and internal forces that threaten the party with deviation from Marxist theory Lenin writes: "We are surrounded on all sides by enemies, and we have to advance almost constantly under their fire."<sup>14</sup> With the phrase "all sides" referring to both external and internal threats, including in these "enemies" the members of the party that succumb to "criticism" and deviate from Marxist theory. In declaring them enemies, he presents his position on fighting against this tendency and the people that represent it, in a way signaling towards his willingness to purge the party of these members in the fight against "criticism." The purging of party members as a response to theoretical struggle would also contradict the purpose of open debate inside the party.

Lenin wrote *What is to be Done?* during the heyday of the Second International (1889-1914), a period of great international debate about Reformism. At the same time, internal debates within Russian Revolutionary circles were heating up. Socialist Revolutionaries had to compete with Russia's history of Political Terrorism—for instance *Nadodniki* and Anarchists such as Nechaev—and its increasing attractiveness in the face of political turmoil and economic hardship, for what was to be the revolutionary practice to end autocracy. Hence, Lenin outlined three justifications for the positioning of theory—and by theory he meant his interpretation of Marxist theory—as the fundamental concern for Russian Social-Democracy in *What is to be Done?*. The first of these is the party's age, as young and still in its beginning states. Theoretical diversions from the "correct path", in Lenin's view like that of Reformism, could threaten its

---

<sup>14</sup> Lenin, "What is to be Done?," ed. James E. Connor, 33.

formation and alter the character of the party. The second reason is the international character of the Social-Democratic Movement, and its need to resist and combat national chauvinism, the nationalistic belief in Russia's supremacy. Thus, Lenin argues that a "reserve of theoretical forces and political (as well as revolutionary) experience is required to carry out this task,"<sup>15</sup> thus necessitating a traditional Marxist theoretical basis. In this quote, Lenin makes an interesting distinction between political and revolutionary experience. He understood political experience as the political actions taken within the established governmental structure, being composed of official acts supported by the emerging spontaneous mass energy. Conversely, he understood revolutionary experience as the unofficial political acts and organizing that the party must realize in secret. The third and final reason Lenin presents in his pamphlet is the Russian-specific task of emancipating Russia from the yoke of autocracy: "*the role of vanguard fighter can be fulfilled only by a party that is guided by the most advanced theory.*"<sup>16</sup> These principles, according to Lenin, justify the supremacy of traditional Marxist theory in guiding practice, and of the need for a quick resolving of factionalism in order to reach homogeneous theoretical consensus.

In these debates on what the correct revolutionary practice should be, Lenin delineated spontaneity as a key factor greatly effective in organizing masses, while acting outside of any theoretical framework. To him, the factions of the party that were concerned with "Criticism" and "Terrorism" were "prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a *theoretical* basis for their *slavish cringing to spontaneity.*"<sup>17</sup> As a result, these factions encouraged a way of mass organizing that bypassed theory and resulted in political acts with unpredictable and perhaps even uncontrollable effects. With the understanding of theory as

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 41.

establishing what are supposed to be unshakeable foundations for the revolutionary process, the element of spontaneity in mass struggle was seen by Lenin as potentially dangerous in its capacity to overtake the revolutionary process and divert it from its “correct” and intended path. Spontaneity represented not the possibility of unexpected growth or of a successful eruption of the revolutionary process, but rather an “*embryonic form*”<sup>18</sup> of the political consciousness necessary, a dangerous element of political backwardness.

Within this interpretation, Lenin discussed the industrial strikes of the 1890s in Russia, which reached their “peak in the spring of 1896 when 40,000 workers downed their tools in Saint Petersburg.”<sup>19</sup> These he saw as merely trade union struggles, representing great progress from revolts of the 1870’s, since, differently from acts of opposition, these strikes represented the emergence of class antagonism and a level of political organization aiming towards a common goal. However, they still lacked the class consciousness to consider revolution the only means of emancipation in a system that was built on class divide and against the working class. Because of their level of consciousness, these strikes “remained a purely spontaneous movement”,<sup>20</sup> instead of constituting a Social-Democratic struggle. In this way, Lenin called the prioritization of industrial strikes as the party’s main political acts a “subservience to spontaneity.”<sup>21</sup> He believed that without a theoretical foundation these spontaneous outbursts would not amount to a revolutionary process, thus it would prevent the movement from maturing and preclude the party from achieving revolution. While not opposed to strikes, Lenin encouraged the diversification of the party’s activities to go beyond them.

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>19</sup> Ian D. Thatcher, “The First Histories of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 1904-06.” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 4 (2007): 744. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25479136>.

<sup>20</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 42.



Spontaneity did not mean lack of organization; allowing events to take their own course was itself a way of organizing, one Lenin did not approve of. Lenin's main way of defining spontaneity was through thinking of examples of what spontaneous organizing looked like. Protests and strikes were both viewed as spontaneous occurrences by Lenin: "if we are to speak of the "spontaneous element" then, of course, it is this strike movement which, first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous".<sup>22</sup> However, he argued that, when compared to the revolts, the strikes of the 1890's "might even be described as "conscious,".. they mark the progress which the working-class movement made in that period".<sup>23</sup> In a strike, workers could decide to sabotage the machine they worked with and interrupt the factory's work in order to harm the employer's source of income, expose a perceived injustice, and put pressure on the employer and/or state to remedy this injustice.<sup>24</sup> The act of breaking the machine to disrupt work could have emerged spontaneously from the worker's outrage, rather than from a strategy led by any party or organization. This exposes that for Lenin spontaneity represented a broad range of political behavior and a way of organizing. Working as a mass way of organizing from individualistic instincts, Lenin defined spontaneity to mean a kind of general tendency of political organizing naturally occurring amongst masses. This went in direct contrast with traditions of direct action, such as "anarcho-syndicalism," created and propelled by Bakunin as a "philosophy of direct industrial action that came to dominate the labor movements in France and Italy."<sup>25</sup>

The way people could be mobilized through outrage, injustice, and suffering to change their circumstances was an undeniably strong force that caught the attention of Socialists. This

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>25</sup> Sean McMeekin, "The Old Regime, and Its Enemies" in *The Russian Revolution: A New History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 17.

unifying force allowed the movement to become a mass working-class movement, representing what was for Lenin an “enormous progress”<sup>26</sup> for the party, in his analysis of the increase of membership in the 1890’s as compared to the 1870’s. This was accompanied by the formal founding of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party in 1898, partly resulting from a crackdown on the Bund (General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia), which was four times bigger in size than the RSDLP.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, Lenin believed that this progress was marred by the theoretical deviations from Marxism that spontaneous organizing inevitably represented. More broadly, the spontaneous element in political organizing was a topic of wide debate during the Second International. These debates were ignited by Bernstein’s Revisionism, and were centered around how strictly Social Democracy was to follow Marxist theory, fragmenting parties into factions and leading to debates amongst party representatives from different nations.

For instance, Lenin writes about the French Socialists and the controversy regarding Socialists participating in government. He writes: “The democratically more highly developed political conditions in France have permitted them to put “Bernsteinism into practice” immediately, with all its consequences.”<sup>28</sup> These consequences are regarding the French Socialist Alexandre Millerand being allowed by the French Workers’ Party (POF) to take a position in the Chamber of Deputies in 1898, which sparked debate about the participation of socialists in bourgeois governments. Millerand’s “evolutionary” wing believed that “The instrument for supplanting capitalism...could never be revolutionary violence but only democracy embodied in the French Republic.”<sup>29</sup> The more radical wing of the POF viewed Millerand’s joining the

---

<sup>26</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 40.

<sup>27</sup> McMeekin, “The Old Regime, and Its Enemies,” 22.

<sup>28</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” Ed. James E. Connor, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Julius Braunthal, “Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism” in *History of the International, Volume 1: 1864-1914*, trans. Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers), 256.

bourgeois cabinet as a “blatant betrayal of the principles of the proletarian class struggle,”<sup>30</sup> issued a manifesto and called for a congress, meeting in December of 1899, to discuss the matter. The congress reached no clear decision, and resulted in a split between two groups of thought, now referred to as Evolutionary Socialism and Revolutionary Socialism. Lenin deemed his widely controversial participation as an “excellent example of practical Bernsteinism.”<sup>31</sup> The tensions and discussion during the Congresses of the Second International increased and inspired the body of work that treated topics such as spontaneity.

With his gaze on the reality of the Russian party, Lenin considered the party’s increased emphasis on spontaneous organizing a direct consequence of persecution of the party leadership. The older generation of Russian Social-Democrats were stripped of their leaders by gendarmes (with five out of their nine party delegates being arrested after the First Party Congress), and with them so was the depth of theoretical foundations needed for the development of political consciousness, as “increasing numbers of “young” [Economists] of Russian Social-Democracy appeared on the scene.”<sup>32</sup> Consequently, “The overwhelming of political consciousness by spontaneity...also took place spontaneously.”<sup>33</sup> Lenin writes that the main effect of this was the new generation’s acceptance of the “Bourgeois” popular sayings emerging in Russia at the time that relegated the political struggle to spontaneity, such as “the workers for the workers,”<sup>34</sup> “[strike funds] are more valuable to the movement than a hundred other organizations,”<sup>35</sup> and “We must concentrate, not on the ‘cream’ of the workers, but on the ‘average’ mass worker.”<sup>36</sup> A key distinction between spontaneity and theory for Lenin is that spontaneity is driven by

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>31</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 43.

economic factors that make the worker focus on their immediate concerns and becomes an individualistic struggle, while theory inspires in the working classes a political consciousness that allows them to see the bigger picture.

With its ability to contribute unpredictable growth and energy to a revolutionary movement, spontaneity was understood by some of Lenin's contemporaries in the Second International, such as Luxemburg, as a key element necessary for revolutionary struggle. Lenin reacted to this with a stern rejection of this tendency, with the understanding that spontaneity did more to hurt than contribute to the movement. He saw spontaneity as a direct threat to the positioning of theory as the movement's central guiding force. In addition, spontaneity, which traditions like anarcho-syndicalism, direct action, and union organizing encouraged, presented a diversion from the depth and advancement of the movement that theory meant for Lenin, thus the development of political consciousness was directly harmed by it. He stated that masses driven by spontaneity "Fight, knowing that they are fighting, not for the sake of some future generation, but for themselves and their children,"<sup>37</sup> focusing on immediate economic concerns while setting aside the greater revolutionary struggle. With this taking-over of spontaneity, the theoretical foundations that present the path for the development of political consciousness is blurred, and the growth necessary for the working class masses to attain Social-Democratic consciousness is stunted. For Lenin, achieving revolution would require the workers to follow the party leadership and organize around it, as its leaders were to "“go among all classes of the population” as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organizers.”<sup>38</sup> This way, through the education and expertise on revolutionary activity that the party leadership and Social Democratic intelligentsia was to provide, the workers would be able to wage a successful revolution.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 55.

However, instead of focusing on the eventual revolutionary struggle, through spontaneity the workers' energies are diverted towards the lesser trade-unionist struggle that seeks immediate relief instead of the total transformation that Social-Democracy necessitates.

To further his point that Social-Democratic consciousness emerged from the intelligentsia instead of the working classes, Lenin cited Karl Kautsky, a leading theorist of the German Social-Democratic Party alongside Rosa Luxemburg. Presenting the German Social-Democratic Party as a counterpart and ally in this dispute is a purposeful choice, considering the German party's size (as the biggest and most organized in the world), state of discussion and division among the leadership during this period. As "Lenin sought the backing of Karl Kautsky,"<sup>39</sup> he cited Kautsky with the following quote: "Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge... both [modern technology and modern socialism] arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the *bourgeois intelligentsia*."<sup>40</sup> In virtual repetition to what he has already argued, his use of the German thinker as legitimizing his theory functions as a declaration of allegiance to one of the German party's wings.<sup>41</sup> In this appeal to authority, the use of Kautsky's statement seems to be the argumentative tactic that Lenin considers to be the strongest, since soon after it he declares a kind of "call to arms" against spontaneity: "the task of Social-Democracy, is *to combat spontaneity, to divert* the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary

---

<sup>39</sup> Solomon M. Schwarz, "Lenin's Theory of Trade Unions, 'Spontaneity,' and 'Consciousness'" in *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers' Movement and the Formation of the Bolshevism and Menshevism*, trans. Gertrude Vakar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 327.

<sup>40</sup> Lenin, "What is to be Done?," Ed. James E. Connor, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Not coincidentally, this was not the wing to which Luxemburg belonged. This direct address to the German party is perhaps what compelled Luxemburg to respond to the pamphlet in her work "Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy" in 1904.

Social-Democracy.”<sup>42</sup> Although Lenin has admitted that Social-Democracy emerges from the bourgeois intelligentsia, he presents a clear division between the Capitalist bourgeois and the Social-Democratic bourgeois intelligentsia. This perhaps contradicts the inescapable dichotomy understood by Marxist theory of the bourgeois and the working class as opposed forces, and exposes the reality of a much more complex picture.

However, Lenin does mention August Bebel, German theoretician and central figure in both the SDP and the Second International, in a kind of alleviation of this complex picture. He uses Bebel as an example for how the program he proposed would not necessarily exclude proletariat leadership. Bebel was famously of working-class origin and became a leading theoretician in the development of Social Democracy. “On the ladders and scaffolding of this general organisational structure there would soon develop and come to the fore...Russian Bebels from among our workers, who would take their place at the head of the mobilised army and rouse the whole people to settle accounts with the shame and the curse of Russia.”<sup>43</sup> Lenin uses the seminal figure of Bebel to prove the validity of his organizational program, that people of working-class origin could climb up the ranks and become leaders of the movement, rather than the Social Democratic Party becoming yet another bourgeois institution.

Lenin’s position against spontaneity was not absolute. Rather, he explained that the movement’s infancy was an important reason for why spontaneity presented such a big threat. This “subservience to spontaneity”<sup>44</sup> would stunt the infant movement’s growth, not just because it would divert the masses’ energies away from theory, but because the leadership were not

---

<sup>42</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 45-46.

<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Lenin, “The “Plan” for an All-Russia Political Newspaper: What Type of Organization do we Require?” in *What Is to Be Done?* (Marxists Internet Archive), 109, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/download/what-itd.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

experienced and extensive enough to handle such an uncontrollable and unprecedented growth, such as that of Russia's revolutionary movement in the 1890's. He explained that there was an upsurge of the masses that "spread with uninterrupted continuity".<sup>45</sup> This moment in the movement's history presented challenges that theory was not prepared to handle: "Revolutionaries, however, *lagged behind* this upsurge, both in their "theories" and in their activity; they failed to establish a constant and continuous organization capable of *leading* the whole movement..."<sup>46</sup> Spontaneity is a quality inherent in the masses and mass movements, thus, are able to emerge without theoretical foundations or clear leadership. However, this character relegates it to function merely within the scope of the bourgeois state structure, which allows only for trade-unionism, the workers self-organizing to improve their economic conditions. Because of this, the tasks and goals that are able to emerge from a mass movement are spontaneously filled with spontaneity. They are inherently more short-sighted and less encompassing than what a movement structured and led by Social-Democratic thinkers is capable of imagining and setting as a task to achieve.

A tool that Lenin discussed to present the effects of spontaneity in revolutionary struggle is "exposure literature." This was any piece of writing working towards exposing an employer's or state figure's exploitation of workers in order to excite outrage and put pressure on these figures in the seeking of justice, which could include pamphlets, novels, newspapers, among others. Lenin described this as both important in the political actions of the organization, but as limiting and short-sighted, a kind of declaration of war against employers. These declarations, however, while being a highly empowering and effective tool, were easily taken up by spontaneity and focused on trade-unionist goals rather than Social-Democratic ones. For Lenin,

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 47.

when Social-Democrats focused predominantly on generating “exposure literature,” instead of political education and the development of political consciousness, it missed the central goals of Social-Democratic struggle: “Our business as Social-Democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation.”<sup>47</sup> Although these goals include struggle for reforms and economic improvements as part of its activities, the struggle should maintain the achievement of a Social-Democratic revolution as its central goal, and not subordinate it to the trade-unionist economic struggle that “exposure literature” tended to focus on. The solution to this rigidity is, according to Lenin, to focus on these exposures going beyond the economic struggle and maintaining Social-Democracy at its center.<sup>48</sup> It was not only economic struggle that diverted the energy of the masses from Social-Democracy. Terrorism, which had been prevalent in the Russian empire during the last decades of the 19th century, was also a prevalent practice that, through spontaneity, would bring the working masses further away from Social-Democracy. Thus, both calls for terror and calls for economic agitation were distracting from comprehensive calls for political agitation that needed to be developed.<sup>49</sup>

This raised for Lenin the question, which actions are centered around and contribute to the development and growth of Social-Democratic political consciousness, and which remain trade-unionist in nature? This question and juxtaposition between “political consciousness” and “working-class consciousness” had an answer for Lenin: “Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other.”<sup>50</sup> This

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>49</sup> Is his critique of Terrorism inconsistent with the practices of the Bolshevik party during the beginning of the 20th century?

<sup>50</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 50.



meant that the workers had to develop their political consciousness to go beyond their own interests and immediate concerns, instead focusing on broader ideological concerns that the party needed for them to focus on. With this shifted focus that leadership necessitated according to Lenin, the quote above also conveys that such leaders had to free from the immediate concerns that enslaved the majority of the working class, and in a way struggle less than the majority in order to be able to shift their focus from the economic to the political struggle, insinuating that they had to come from a privileged position. Although this quote can be, at first glance, striking for its sternness and rigidity based on the Social-Democratic perspective, it is important in the tension it surfaces. Both of striking clarity, which could be associated and confused with honesty, and of a “propagandist” nature, the statement presents the way that Social-Democracy was understood as the only alternative, a bifurcation that was created by the bourgeois Capitalist system. Lenin seeks to take control of this bifurcation out of Bourgeois hands, but establishes that the only way of achieving it reinforces and replicates the extremes present in the Capitalist system. Thus, the entrenchment of this understanding of an inescapable binary, one that if ignored only lands a person on the side of Capitalism, is both of limiting and necessary rigidity.

Lenin also argues that Social-Democratic study circles intrinsically limited workers from developing a Social-democratic political consciousness. By dedicating themselves entirely to demands of an economic nature, they work towards “economic exposures” instead of political ones, and demand of their trade-union secretaries (as well as of their employers) an improvement of their economic realities instead of a change in the systems of oppression.<sup>51</sup> For Lenin, the workers in study circles were to be initially guided by leaders with a political consciousness that went beyond the economic struggle. This perhaps exposes Lenin’s view against the openness of

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 54.

study circles and an anti-democratic tendency with the belief that truly useful political thought is not naturally or usually initiated in workers' spaces such as study circles. He explains that in the earlier period, it was reasonable and legitimate to "devote ourselves exclusively to activities among the workers and to severely condemn any deviation from this course. The entire task then was to consolidate our position in the working class."<sup>52</sup> But Lenin believed that the "gigantic progress our movement has made from (approximately) 1894 to 1901"<sup>53</sup> in terms of the development of its leadership meant that the party had now the ability to spread Social-Democracy throughout Russia. Although the party's membership was not very significant, around 8,000 in an empire of 150 million,<sup>54</sup> Lenin speaks to the increased level of organization that the leadership developed that made the party organ ready to attempt to amass a working-class movement. This readiness made of utmost importance the dissemination of "nation-wide exposures" that centered on political rather than economic issues: "we Social-Democrats will organize these nation-wide exposures; all questions raised by the agitation will be explained in a consistently Social-Democratic spirit, without any concessions to deliberate or undeliberate distortions of Marxism."<sup>55</sup> While the spontaneous growth of the movement served to spread these exposures, it also required much more from the party organism, composed of the Socialist intelligentsia that Lenin believed should be central in organizing the struggle.

Lenin outlined all of the elements that he considered necessary revolutionary activity for the party to conduct inseparably and simultaneously. The following were: the assault on the government, the revolutionary training of the proletariat, the safeguarding of the political

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>54</sup> McMeekin, 22.

<sup>55</sup> Lenin, "What is to be Done?," ed. James E. Connor, 58.

independence of the party, the guidance of the economic struggle of the working class and “the utilization of all its spontaneous conflicts with its exploiters which rouse and bring into our camp increasing numbers of the proletariat....”<sup>56</sup> This last element Lenin believed to be measured as equally important to the other four types of activity that the party was to conduct. Thus, he argued not against the protests and strikes that were organized spontaneously, but against the prioritization of spontaneous organizing over the other political activities such as publications and study circles.

Although this lack of freedom and the need for overcoming Autocracy were a significant challenge for Russian Social-Democracy, Lenin envisioned Russian autocracy as an opportunity, which afforded them the potential of leading all of Social-Democracy in international revolutionary struggle: “the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat.”<sup>57</sup> With the toppling of autocracy (a comparatively backward political system), this passage presents Russia’s geographic position between Europe and Asia as increasing its potential for being the vanguard of revolution, and able to spread revolution to the West and to the East. Through the lens of international Socialist revolution, a country whose influence could extend across continents and oceans would increase the possibility of this vision and the act of positioning Russia as such had great implications for its role within the Second International.

Europe shared a general view of the Russian Empire as backwards, however Lenin had a view of Russia as holding a kind of untapped potential. Connected to this perceived

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 38.

backwardness, Lenin elaborated the concept of “primitiveness” to describe tendencies in the party leadership that he considered to be limiting the development of the party:

the term “primitiveness” embraces something more than lack of training; it denotes a narrow scope of revolutionary work generally, failure to understand that a good organization of revolutionaries cannot be built on the basis of such narrow activity, and lastly—and this is the main thing—attempts to justify this narrowness and to elevate it to a special “theory,” that is, subservience to spontaneity on this question too.<sup>58</sup>

As explored above, Lenin understood the “narrow scope of revolutionary work” as those actions focusing on economic concerns or “terrorist” acts rather than political concerns. This criticism of “primitiveness” presents not only the idea that revolutionary work should seek to be more varied, but it also, once again, criticizes those that Lenin understood to have preached “spontaneity” as the central element of organizing the masses, presenting it as a “primitive” trait.

In addition to the prioritizing of theoretical unity as necessary for developing the workers’ “trade-union consciousness” into “Social-Democratic consciousness,” another definitive factor to the organization of the party is the level of political freedom in the country where the party is trying to organize. To establish this distinction, he uses the examples of the Russian case, as his goal is to develop the Russian party’s program, and the case of the German Social Democratic Workers Party. While Russia was a Tsarist regime and political freedom was virtually nonexistent at the time of his writing, Germany had an electoral system where competition between parties allowed and facilitated the mass growth of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), with it receiving the most votes in the 1891 elections.<sup>59</sup> This electoral success was representative of the level of political freedom in Germany.

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>59</sup> German Socialists had not always enjoyed such freedoms. In 1878, Socialist organizing was criminalized under the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists, however, after great political struggle, this freedom was regained. It is also important to mention that this triumph in the freedom of organizing and political action in Germany would not last long after this writing, with the tragic fate of Luxemburg serving as a key example for the degeneration of the country’s political freedom.

In Tsarist Russia, political organizing required secrecy for its survival, and the movement's growth both strengthened it and put it at risk. In a country with political freedom, it is easy to distinguish between a trade union and a political organization.<sup>60</sup> However, in Russia, where it was not legal for workers to organize until 1906 and even then they lacked political power, trade unions represented the extent to which workers were legally allowed to organize politically. This meant that the way the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party was to organize had to be dramatically different from how the SPD organized. Using Germany as an example of how a democratic political theater functions, Lenin writes: "Since the entire political arena is as open to the public view as is a theater stage to the audience this acceptance or non-acceptance, support or opposition, is known to all from the press and from public meetings."<sup>61</sup> Comparing the crowd's reactions to an actor to an electoral parliamentary system, this example is illuminating on the form of mass democratic practice that he imagined. The key difference for the Russian party was their need for secrecy, especially in the way it operated and who its leadership was. However, for Lenin, secrecy did not mean a closing up of the party, or a crippling limitation: "The more secret such an organization is, the stronger and more widespread will be the confidence in the Party."<sup>62</sup> The lack of political freedom and the illegality of conspiring meant that secrecy in organizing was seen as positive for Russian Revolutionaries, and workers were more likely to trust organizing done in well-kept secret.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Lenin, "What is to be Done?," ed. James E. Connor, 64.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>63</sup> How much of his view was shaped by the assumed political backwardness of Russia and how much was intrinsically and irrevocably anti-democratic? Having presented Russia as having the potential to export Socialist Revolution internationally, would this needed anti-democratic practices of secrecy be modified or eliminated for politically open nations? Relatedly, what happens after this centralization of the secret functions of an organization is no longer necessary in Russia? This is the question that was not at all pertinent in 1902 in the year Lenin writes, but becomes the main reason why the deep centralization present in all stages of the Soviet Union, and that Gorbachev tried to address with *Glasnost*' is not justified by Lenin's proposition.

This meant that more was required from the party leadership. Their role went beyond merely taking up the leadership of a spontaneous movement, to encompass conspiring against the state and maintaining secrecy, while trying to grow a mass movement: “what is to a great extent automatic in a politically free country must in Russia be done deliberately and systematically by our organizations.”<sup>64</sup> Balancing the need of secrecy and the need of mass support was an arduous but necessary task: “To accomplish this it is not enough to attach a “vanguard” label to rearguard theory and practice.”<sup>65</sup> It was precisely this difficulty that served as the main justification for Lenin’s belief that the party leadership should be composed of what he called “Professional Revolutionaries.” Lenin defined them as ““wise men,”... irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men.”<sup>66</sup> These Professional Revolutionaries were to lead the party with a Social-Democratic consciousness. With the understanding that workers were too busy toiling away in the factories to be the Social-Democratic Party’s leadership, the Professional Revolutionaries were to dedicate their lives to Revolution, having the time to develop their theoretical foundation: “specialization necessarily presupposes centralization, and in turn imperatively calls for it.”<sup>67</sup> The role of Professional Revolutionary would allow the party’s planning to remain secret while continuing the trade unionist struggle, growing the movement, and directing all efforts to have Social-Democratic guidance.

The role of Professional Revolutionaries was understood by critics such as Luxemburg as anti-democratic, a measure to limit the role of the working class within the party, and continue the workers’ subservience to a foreign source of political power. In response to the notion that the Russian Social-Democratic Party exhibits “anti-democratic tendencies” in its organizational

---

<sup>64</sup> Lenin, “What is to be Done?,” ed. James E. Connor, 71.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

program, Lenin writes that “[Professional Revolutionaries] have a lively sense of their *responsibility*, knowing as they do from experience that an organization of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an unworthy member”.<sup>68</sup> He continues discussing what he considers to be a Russian and international historical tradition amongst revolutionary circles, where public opinion “sternly and ruthlessly punishes every departure from the duties of comradeship (and “democratism,” real and not toy democratism, certainly forms a component part of the conception of comradeship)”.<sup>69</sup> With note-worthy indignation to this questioning of his methods as “anti-democratic,” he tackles the question with uncharacteristic imprecision and ambiguity, compared to the strikingly definitive voice he uses throughout the rest of the pamphlet: “Reflect somewhat over the real meaning of the high-sounding phrases... and you will realize that “broad democracy” in Party organization, amidst the gloom of the autocracy and the domination of gendarmerie, is nothing more than a *useless and harmful toy*.”<sup>70</sup>

Lenin bases his proposal for an anti-democratic form of party leadership on his perception of social tradition instead of historical fact, both leaving unexplained and taking for granted his definition of central concepts he uses, such as “comradeship” or “democratism,” which he addresses with a somewhat derogatory tone. Moreover, there is a switch in tone. Whereas his writing up to this point his writing was positioned in the offensive, bringing up examples of the problems and shortcomings that he detects in factions of Socialism (both in Russia and abroad), as well as criticisms against what he believes to his model of Social-Democracy in order to sternly tear them apart and expose their inaccuracies, in this

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 76.

passage, which comes right before the conclusion, Lenin takes up a defensive position. This leads to a notably unscientific argumentation and an unsatisfying response to a burning question.

Given all of this, it is still pertinent to try to define what Lenin understood democracy—and conversely anti-democracy—to be. The key to this lies in his use and establishing of “comradeship” as a kind of ideological basis and guide of how Professional Revolutionaries were to behave, exercise political activity, and utilize their power within the party. The need for secrecy in organizing limited the use of democratic methods in electing party leadership, thus the concept of “comradeship” comes into play. As it relies on trust, “comradeship” is not based on traditionally democratic processes, such as elections and therefore is not verifiable by the masses. As he does not elaborate a working definition of “comradeship,” what he means by it can only be extrapolated from what it is not in his writing. Describing a general sense of justice and commitment to the cause, Lenin’s definition of “comradeship” remains theoretically and practically insufficient, with all that is used to describe it being too malleable and subjective to amount to a theoretical base of the political values that the leadership was to uphold in his proposal for the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party. With his concluding statement “we may meet the question, What is to be done?, with the brief reply: Put an End to the Third Period”<sup>71</sup> he indicates his belief that this piece of writing is to mark the end of the third period of Russian Social-Democracy, and simultaneously be the political program for its fourth period. In Lenin’s view, the party was ready for this transition, believing that stagnation or the delaying of progress (the getting closer to Social Revolution) would cripple this readiness and ultimately sacrifice it.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 78.



Can there be set goals for a movement without believing in the existence of a “correct path” that cannot be diverted from? It is clear that spontaneous organizing and sticking to a “correct path” for the party were not compatible from Lenin’s perspective, and there are clear reasons for this. With the power that spontaneity represented for political action, with its great capacity to both ignite activity and growth for the movement, it is hard to position and limit the spontaneous element of organizing as one equally sized type of activity to all the others, to quantify how spontaneity was to be managed and contrasted with theory. Furthermore, it becomes very hard to imagine how Professional Revolutionaries were to guide the spontaneous element in mass organizing, as Lenin envisioned, instead of Professional Revolutionaries themselves reacting to spontaneously organized phenomena with a theoretical foundation. This, however, positions the Professional Revolutionaries in a reactive role to the spontaneous activity of the masses, and organizing a political program around it (if even possible), rendering action as spontaneous. Thus, it is also difficult to position the spontaneous element as central in political organizing without it taking over as the sole organizational element and relegating the movement to its unreliability and unpredictability.

## Chapter II

### **The Building of Mass Character: Spontaneity in *Organizational Questions of the Russian***

#### ***Social Democracy***

Rosa Luxemburg, born in 1871, was raised in Russian-dominated Poland within a Jewish household. By the age of eighteen, in 1889, she had fled Poland to avoid arrest due to her revolutionary activity within the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL). From this point on she would have influence on more than one party simultaneously. Acting as an Emigre leader for the SDKPiL (later SDKP) since 1897, she became a naturalized German citizen and member of the German Social Democratic Worker Party (SDP) in 1898. Additionally, the SDKP acted as an autonomous wing of the RSDLP, thus becoming influential in three distinct Social Democratic movements simultaneously. This unique combination meant that her theory and practice were put to the test on three different fronts, and her leadership methods varied between parties. There are three distinct theoretical matters in which Luxemburg proved to consistently and vocally disagree with Lenin: Party Unity, Centralism, and the Nationality Question. These matters would continue to fuel their disagreements up until the end of her life in 1919, when she was murdered by troops at the wake of the failed German Revolution from 1918-1919.

Rosa Luxemburg wrote *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy* in 1904, in response to Lenin's *What is to be Done?* This text grew to be recognized internationally as a seminal critique of centralization or "vanguardism" in Social Democratic parties as going against the theoretical tenets of Social Democracy, and the necessity of protecting the spontaneity of the masses. In it she focuses on the ways that the working masses, the proletariat, must be positioned at the center of any Social Democratic movement. She vehemently opposes

Lenin's view of the need to protect the movement from the workers themselves, to distance them from the positions of power, and the need for intellectuals to educate them in the Social Democratic struggle for them to achieve Social Democratic consciousness. This rejection went beyond the Russian case for Luxemburg. She understood that no movement could accelerate the process towards a Social Democratic revolution, that the Marxist formulation applied to all countries, even with a refined understanding of their socio-political situation. To Luxemburg, Lenin's proposed party program did not represent or abide by the ideals of Social Democracy, because it positioned the Russian Empire as an exception from the rest of the European Social Democratic movements. She understood the Russian Social Democratic movement not as an exception, but rather representative of an early stage of Social Democracy. It was the embodiment of the political immaturity of the Russian society, a repetition of the authoritarian modes of leadership that had grown to define in the eyes of many the Russian identity. His disdain towards spontaneity as an organizational element encapsulated for Luxemburg this immaturity.

But Luxemburg does not blame this immaturity solely on the lack of political freedom in the Russian political tradition. The immaturity of Russia's Social Democratic movement was in large part due to the tension inherent within Social Democracy: "[a Social Democratic Revolution] will can only be satisfied beyond the limits of the existing system... [however] the mass can only acquire and strengthen this will in the course of the day-to-day struggle against the existing social order-that is, within the limits of capitalist society."<sup>72</sup> The movement having to work within the system to transcend it means that each national movement must constantly face difficulties that increase with the growth of the movement, "It follows that this movement can

---

<sup>72</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, "Leninism vs. Marxism" in *The Russian Revolution and Leninism vs. Marxism?*, ed. Bertram D. Wolfe (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 105. The pamphlet "Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy" was re-titled to "Leninism vs. Marxism" by Wolfe for his translation.

best advance by tacking betwixt and between the two dangers by which it is constantly being threatened. One is the loss of its mass character; the other, the abandonment of its goal.”<sup>73</sup> According to Luxemburg these difficulties could not be resolved by a fixed party program to engineer all necessary actions towards achieving revolution. This was contrary to the Marxist dialectical process, and attempted to override it: “it is illusory, and contrary to historic experience, to hope to fix, once for always, the direction of the revolutionary socialist struggle with the aid of formal means, which are expected to secure the labor movement against all possibilities of opportunist digression.”<sup>74</sup> This would not lead, in Luxemburg’s opinion, to a transformative Social Revolution, but rather a new form of oppressive governance over the proletariat.

This led Luxemburg to describe Lenin’s pamphlet as “a methodical exposition of the ideas of the ultracentralist tendency in the Russian movement.”<sup>75</sup> Within this brief statement she presents not only her opinion of Lenin’s political program, but also her judgment of the Russian movement as reflecting the political tendencies of the Russian empire. It also reveals the fact that the movement has not reached, in Lenin’s terms, the level of political consciousness necessary to overcome the political limitations of their lack of political freedom. This statement is particularly interesting when understanding it as a form of Leninist criticism of the intellectuals in Russia, including Lenin himself. Since the Russian movement at the beginning of the 20th century was, as admitted by Lenin, a mostly intellectual movement in need of expanding through the working masses, this quote criticizes the intellectuals of such a movement in the same way that Lenin criticizes the working masses in Russia as lacking a political consciousness developed enough to conduct a social revolution, and in need of the centralized vanguard of Professional

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>75</sup> Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions in Russian Social Democracy,” ed. Waters, 116.

Revolutionaries to achieve it. Thus, Luxemburg believes that Lenin's "ultracentralist" model is proof of the lagging political maturity of not just the working masses of the Russian Empire, but of the intellectual class in Russia, Lenin being one of them. This immaturity is not a direct result of their lack of political freedom, but of Lenin's belief that a Social Democratic Revolution could be advanced without political freedom, skipping steps in the Marxist dialectic of class struggle.

Luxemburg described Lenin's central committee of Professional Revolutionaries as "a separate corps, [of] all the active revolutionists, as distinguished from the unorganized, though revolutionary, mass surrounding this elite."<sup>76</sup> She argued that this structure established or deepened a distance between the Professional Revolutionaries (members of the Central Committee) and the working masses (the proletariat). She translates this distance as the following: "The Central Committee would be the only thinking element in the party. All other groupings would be its executive limbs."<sup>77</sup> According to Luxemburg, this distance separating thought (and organizing) from the proletariat and relegating it to executive action is incompatible with the mission of the Social Democratic Movement, "The fact is that the social democracy is not *joined* to the organization of the proletariat. It is itself the proletariat."<sup>78</sup> For Luxemburg this would not result in developing the political consciousness of the masses. At the pre-revolutionary stage (in which the Russian movement was located), "Its mission is to represent, within the boundaries of the national state, the class interests of the proletariat, and to oppose those common interests to all local and group interests."<sup>79</sup> For Luxemburg, the objective of the Marxist organizational structure was not open to interpretation based on National concerns, rather it applied to all movements at any stage. However, the purpose of the Social Democratic

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 116.

Movement in the Third Stage that Lenin outlines in his pamphlet is radically and misguidedly getting ahead of itself. For her, the central mission to a growing and forming Social Democratic Party is “the co-ordination and unification of the movement and not its rigid submission to a set of regulations,”<sup>80</sup> directly contradicting Lenin’s vision of a single correct path that must be followed in order to reach Revolutionary readiness.

In response to the distance that Lenin’s structure imposed between the leaders of the movement and the working masses, Luxemburg draws a, now notable and controversial, comparison between Blanquism and Leninism, emerging from *What is to be Done?*. Blanquism emerged during the First International (1864-1881) from the political thought of Louis Auguste Blanqui, who believed that Socialist Revolution should be carried out by a small and highly organized circle of conspirators, who would then use the acquired power of the state to introduce Socialism to the masses. Blanqui was a Revolutionary and contemporary of Marx and Engel. However, he fell outside the umbrella of Marxism because he did not propose a mass movement or believe in the stages of the Revolutionary process. As Engels explained in 1874,

Blanqui is essentially a political revolutionist. He is a socialist only through sentiment, through his sympathy with the sufferings of the people, but he has neither a socialist theory nor any definite practical suggestions for social remedies. In his political activity he was mainly a “man of action,” believing that a small and well organized minority, who would attempt a political stroke of force at the opportune moment, could carry the mass of the people with them by a few successes at the start and thus make a victorious revolution.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> Luxemburg, “Leninism vs. Marxism,” ed. Wolfe, 95.

<sup>81</sup> Frederick Engels, “The Program of the Blanquist Fugitives from the Paris Commune,” *Der Volksstaat*, 1874, Marxist.org.

The fact that Blanqui was not considered a Socialist by his contemporaries led to many interpreting Luxemburg's comparing Lenin to Blanqui as her calling Lenin's program un-Marxist. There is a long history within Socialist circles of using Blanquism as an insult to mean un-Socialist, un-Marxist, and generally to accuse someone of not prioritizing the interests of the proletariat.

The main connection Luxemburg makes between Lenin and Blanqui is their shared view of the masses not as active participants of the Revolution, but as "executive limbs,"<sup>82</sup> and there lies her main intention in bringing up Blanqui in her critique of Lenin's program. She saw Lenin as being in danger of distancing the young Russian Social-Democratic movement away from Marxist mass struggle, and pushing it towards the conspiratorial revolutionary tactics of Blanqui. Although the circle of Professional Revolutionaries that Lenin proposes for the Central Committee has been equated to the circle of conspirators that Blanqui acted in, there is a key distinction to be made between the role of a Professional Revolutionary, as understood by Lenin, and of a conspirator as understood by Blanqui. As Damian Winczewski explains, "Blanquists are those who promote revolutionary uprisings in situations of relative class-war quietude."<sup>83</sup>

At the basis of Blanqui's theory was the idea that Revolution would not be achieved through a strict following of theory or heightened class struggle, but rather action taken spontaneously by a small conspiratorial circle completely independent and disconnected from the masses. This is very different from Lenin's view of a single correct path that must be followed towards Revolution, and it embraces the spontaneity in a way Lenin opposed: "[he] generally did not believe in people's ability to act under the influence of spontaneous impulses, without any

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>83</sup> Damian Winczewski, "Did Rosa Luxemburg Accuse Lenin of Blanquism? A Different Interpretation," *Science & Society* 83, no. 4 (October 2019): 540.

guidelines from some superior organization to party.”<sup>84</sup> For Lenin, spontaneity was to be avoided not just by the masses but by the Professional Revolutionaries themselves. In addition, one of the main goals of the movement proposed by Lenin was to increase class struggle among masses, rather than act independently from it. However similar her description of Blanquists<sup>85</sup> was to what Lenin described as the role of the proletariat in the Revolution, she makes an important distinction between Lenin’s thinking and that of Blanqui. After all, Lenin’s party program, with its hesitance to spontaneity and its fear of Opportunism, was an attempt to structure and organize a mass movement while retaining control of its trajectory, something antithetical to the core idea of Blanquism.

While Luxemburg presents the similarities between Leninism and Blanquism clearly, she positions and defines Lenin, the political figure, as a direct result of Russian society and politics, and his centralism as a result of this. Her interpretation of the centralism of the Russian movement goes beyond a comparison to Blanquism. She did not equate the two types of centralisms, as she still understood Lenin to be attempting a Social Democratic centralism, however flawed: “social democratic centralism is different from Blanquist centralism.”<sup>86</sup> She tied her interpretation to the historical realities of Russia that she, from her personal experience, understood so closely. This connection is perhaps why her criticism of *What is to Be Done?* is of such stern and direct character. She, both in revolutionary and in personal terms, sought to connect (and in a way return) to the Russian movement. This is reflected in the later discourse between the RSDLP and the Polish Social Democratic Party (SDKP) regarding the National Question. While Luxemburg sought to unite the SDKP to a section within the RSDLP, she was

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 541.

<sup>85</sup> Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions in Russian Social Democracy,” ed. Waters, 117.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 119.



against including the National Question on the Party program, and ultimately refused for the SDKP to join the RSDLP unless the section was removed.

Luxemburg's central concerns are two disconnects, the disconnect between the masses and the party, and the disconnect of the Russian movement from the socio-economic conditions of the country. She thus presents Blanquism in her critique of Lenin's pamphlet not because she understood his program to be Blanquist, but because at the time the Russian movement, largely due to its small size, functioned more as a circle of conspirators than a mass movement, and its mass actions, as criticized by Lenin, targeted economic rather than political concerns, following Bernstein's Reformism. She presents Blanquism as a kind of warning to Lenin that the growing disconnect between the party and the masses that his program necessitates could lead to the movement becoming a select party of conspirators using the masses as a tool, rather than a total social revolution with the masses at its forefront. This distance is perhaps the aspect of Lenin's theory that Luxemburg condemns the most. He structured the party with this distance in mind, using it purposefully as a tool to limit the spontaneity that is inherent in mass participation and action.

Luxemburg saw opportunism as unavoidable in a mass movement. Rather than eliminating it, she sought to restrain it and limit its effectiveness through the natural protection that the inherent spontaneous action of the masses afforded a mass movement. Luxemburg defined opportunism as the following, "On the question of organization, or any other question, opportunism knows only one principle: the absence of principle. opportunism chooses its means of action with the aim of suiting the given circumstances at hand, provided these means appear to lead toward the ends in view."<sup>87</sup> In her criticism she included a description of what she, from

---

<sup>87</sup> Luxemburg, "Leninism vs. Marxism," ed. Wolfe, 100.

*What is to be Done?* understood was Lenin's definition of opportunism: "If, like Lenin, we define opportunism as the tendency that paralyzes the independent revolutionary movement of the working class and transforms it into an instrument of ambitious bourgeois intellectuals, we must also recognize that in the initial stage of a labor movement this end is more easily attained as a result of rigorous centralization rather than by decentralization."<sup>88</sup> While she does agree that the overtaking of a movement by Bourgeois intellectuals is a case of opportunism, Luxemburg argues that Lenin's proposed centralization would assist, rather than eliminate, the taking over of the movement by opportunist bourgeois intellectuals.

The newness of the Russian movement renders it more vulnerable to be easily taken over through Centralization. To Luxemburg, a young movement must focus on growing and acquiring a mass character rather than focusing on Centralizing the little political power it has acquired. For this reason she argues that Lenin's approach to the threat of opportunism in a young Social Democratic movement would facilitate rather than impede opportunism:

In general, it is rigorous, despotic centralism that is preferred by opportunist intellectuals at a time when the revolutionary elements among the workers still lack cohesion and the movement is groping its way, as is the case now in Russia. In a later phase, under a parliamentary regime and in connection with a strong labor party, the opportunist tendencies of the intellectuals express themselves in an inclination toward "decentralization."<sup>89</sup>

In *What is to be Done?* Lenin argued, in simplified terms, that a young movement in a politically unfree country was in need of strong guidance to survive, Luxemburg argued that the newness of the party did not result in a threat to its survival, but rather a threat to the purity of its Social-Democratic character. She highlights Lenin's claim of the intellectual opposition to centralization as a mark of opportunistic tendencies, establishing that while this might apply to a

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 101-102.

mature movement like Germany's, whose vast political power is most threatened by internal divisions, a young movement like Russia's is most threatened by the limitations and restraints centralization would impose on its growth.

Luxemburg presents Lenin's favoring of centralization as a restrictive structure that will limit the freedom and intellectual maturing of the party. Describing this restrictive centralization as the most vulnerable organizational structure for opportunists to take over, Luxemburg favors the independent political actions and spontaneous organizing of the proletariat, as a natural antidote to opportunism. "There is no more effective guarantee," she writes, "against opportunist intrigue and personal ambition than the independent revolutionary action of the proletariat, as a result of which the workers acquire the sense of political responsibility and self-reliance."<sup>90</sup> In other words, Luxemburg presents spontaneity as the most natural and effective protection against opportunism that there could be, and thus characterizes Lenin's disdain towards it as an opportunistic view in itself. In not so indirect terms, she describes Lenin's organizational structure of a central committee of Professional Revolutionaries—later agreed by both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as to be called "Democratic Centralism" at a Unity Conference in 1906—as the taking over of proletariat forces by opportunistic intellectuals: "*Nothing will more surely enslave a young labor movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic strait jacket, which will immobilize the movement and turn it into an automaton manipulated by a Central Committee [emphasis by the author]*"<sup>91</sup>

Luxemburg was not herself an unconditional advocate of the spontaneity of the masses. She writes, "it is important to point out that the glorification of the supposed genius of proletarians in the matter of socialist organization and a general distrust of intellectuals as such

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 102.

are not necessarily signs of “revolutionary Marxist” mentality. It is very easy to demonstrate that such arguments are themselves an expression of opportunism.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, the glorification of mass action could be a sign of opportunistic manipulation rather than true support of the masses. Her criticism of Lenin’s party program did not stem from a rejection of intellectuals as leaders, or of the attempt at channeling the growing political consciousness of the Russian masses towards Social Democracy. She did not reject the view that the masses had to be directed by a vanguard, or that theory should be positioned at the center of all Marxist movements. Describing social democratic centralism, she states: “It can only be the concentrated will of the individuals and groups representative of the most class-conscious, militant, advanced sections of the working class. It is, so to speak, the ‘self-centralism’ of the advanced sectors of the proletariat.”<sup>93</sup> She rather rejected Lenin’s attempt at controlling and stifling the spontaneity of the masses, rather than directing them, through his implementation of Professional Revolutionaries from outside the working masses. In Luxemburg’s view, if the working masses were to derail Social Democratic progress through their spontaneous action, this meant that they were not ready for a Social Democratic Revolution, that they had not advanced enough in the dialectic, and no party program could engineer the necessary readiness.

She further explains the immaturity of the Russian movement through her depiction of a Social Democratic centralism founded in Marxist theory rather than Russia’s political conditions. Luxemburg believes her depiction was, for lack of a better term, more purely Marxist and democratic. She outlines the conditions necessary for this Social Democratic centralism in the following:

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>93</sup> Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions in Russian Social Democracy,” ed. Waters, 119.

The indispensable conditions for the realization of social democratic centralism are: (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... These conditions are not fully formed in Russia. The first—a proletarian vanguard, conscious of its class interests and capable of self-direction in political activity—is only now emerging in Russia. All efforts of socialist agitation and organization should aim to hasten the formation of such a vanguard. The second condition can be had only under a regime of political liberty.<sup>94</sup>

Luxemburg's criticism was not directed at the immaturity of Lenin's movement, both young and small compared to its German counterpart, since she believed that all movements could only mature through action. She rather believed that no amount of leadership—no matter how organized, how theoretically focused and politically matured it was—would allow the movement to skip ahead to the readiness for a transformative social revolution. At the center of Luxemburg's thought rests the idea that there is no cure for the backwardness of the Russian movement or the threat of opportunism that the movement faced at the time, other than time and the freedom for spontaneous mass actions that are, in Luxemburg's view, the key to the development of the proletariat's social democratic consciousness. Without spontaneity there is no growth: "It is a mistake to believe that it is possible to substitute "provisionally" the absolute power of a Central Committee (acting somehow by "tacit delegation") for the yet unrealizable rule of the majority of conscious workers in the party, and in this way replace the open control of the working masses over the party organs with the reverse control by the Central Committee over the revolutionary proletariat."<sup>95</sup> According to Luxemburg, the central mission to a growing and

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>95</sup> Luxemburg, "Leninism vs. Marxism," ed. Wolfe, 91.

forming Social Democratic Party is “the co-ordination and unification of the movement and not its rigid submission to a set of regulations.”<sup>96</sup>

Luxemburg analyzes the history of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party in response to Lenin’s historical interpretations in *What is to be Done?*. From this she reaches a conclusion that in some ways agrees with Lenin’s, while simultaneously reaching the opposite conclusion: “The most important and most fruitful changes on its tactical policy during the last ten years have not been the inventions of several leaders and even less so of any central organizational organs. They have always been the spontaneous product of the movement in ferment.”<sup>97</sup> Lenin addresses this period in his pamphlet with both gratitude and disdain. He agrees with Luxemburg that, for the past decade, the masses had been the ones to lead the actions of the party. However, this is precisely what he criticizes, believing that a more advanced and further developed party must move beyond this, and his call for Centralism is at the center of this acknowledgement. With a conscious separation of Lenin’s theory from the party’s practice, he does not write of the fourth period as infinite, but rather a necessary push towards becoming a party perhaps as advanced as the German Social Democratic Party, and figuring out how to do this without the political freedom enjoyed in Germany, or the political consciousness of the masses either. Thus, this Centralism would perhaps be eradicated eventually and naturally, with the growing political consciousness of the masses and their increasing readiness to take the reins as a proletariat majority instead of a dictatorship. Similarly, political spaces of the highest rank would be filled with members of increasingly proletariat origin.

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 95.

Luxemburg's famous last sentence in the pamphlet is an ode to spontaneity without naming it directly, stating: "Historically, the errors committed by a truly revolutionary movement are infinitely more fruitful than the infallibility of the cleverest Central Committee."<sup>98</sup> The process of making mistakes—in particular mistakes that would stray from Social Democracy like making concessions or getting swayed by opportunism—and learning from them was inherent in the Marxist dialectic for Luxemburg. Limiting the ability to make mistakes, for both the intellectuals and the masses, meant the stifling of progress towards Social Democracy, and in some cases the diversion from it. As she argues, "The working class demands the right to make its mistakes and learn in the dialectic of history,"<sup>99</sup> she reveals just how important spontaneity is for the flexibility and exploration it provides to a movement. Even when spontaneous action results in mistakes, those mistakes remain more useful and illuminating than any intricate party program could ever be created to engineer progress towards Social Revolution.

Luxemburg addresses Lenin's denouncement of opportunism as a genuine and imminent threat, and one that all Social Democratic parties should ponder and take action against. She is also open to the idea of changing the structure and form of organization of the party in order for the threat of opportunism to be lowered, and the proletarian character of the party to be protected. However, Luxemburg believed in a party structure that was strikingly different, and often in total opposition, to what Lenin proposed in *What is to be Done?*. The closest she got to describing what an effective party dynamic would be is in the following statement: "If the party possesses the gift of political mobility, completed by unflinching loyalty to principles and concern for unity, we can rest assured that any defects in the party constitution will be corrected

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 108.

in practice.”<sup>100</sup> This integrates the critical following of a party constitution along with the prioritizing of the capacity for mass mobilization and the principle of party unity. In both the party members’ capacity to think critically and the party’s mass character, spontaneity is indispensable. Contrary to Lenin, Luxemburg positioned spontaneity as the most effective protection against Opportunism. The deep engagement that she dedicated to Lenin’s pamphlet reflects the importance and attention that Luxemburg paid to these concerns. However, the aversion that she directs towards Lenin’s excessive centralization throughout *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy* was firm in its opposition to Lenin’s proposed solutions. With an attentive focus to the political effects of centralization, Luxemburg concludes that Lenin’s view that centralization as a defense against Opportunism—and spontaneity as making the movement more vulnerable to it Opportunism—was miopic and shortsighted. She proposes to go about the historical realities of Russia at the time within a Marxist framework, acknowledging the conditions of the Russian movement as young and small.

Luxemburg described Russia as politically backwards, on which she agreed with Lenin. However, she also considered Russia in need of experiencing constitutionalism/parliamentarism in order to develop a Social Democratic consciousness. She did not believe Russia was the exception that Lenin claimed the empire to be, in that these primary steps in the political evolution of the proletariat towards parliamentarism could be skipped, not under any pretenses or because of any struggles. She understood the inherent spontaneity of the proletariat, and of proletariat political organizing as a essential, not only to maintain the Social Democratic and Revolutionary character of the movement, but also to protect the party from the opportunism that, as she agreed with Lenin, was a prevalent threat to Social Democratic parties all over

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 95.



Europe. Her contrasted characterization of spontaneity as a strength instead of a weakness, as a close friend instead of an uninvited guest, of the Social Revolution positions Lenin as wanting to, rather than protect the party and the movement through centralization, take control of the party and retain this power in only his hands, in only his theoretical interpretation and the path he designated for it.

For these reasons I believe that, although it was seldom mentioned in her response, the element of Spontaneity is the central driver of what Luxemburg describes as the defining characteristics and necessities of Social Democracy. In addition to being an inherent characteristic of mass action and participation, she believed spontaneity had a corrective capacity. Without an embrace of spontaneity, there is no mass participation, and thus no Social Democracy for Luxemburg, but another loop of the repetitive patterns of oppressive bourgeois governments. She believed in a centralized leadership, however she felt this leadership must serve to facilitate mass action, for she believed for them to have an inherent revolutionary spirit.

As previously stated, political freedom was a precondition for the existence of a mass Social Democratic movement. Luxemburg identified this as one of, if not the central point for why Lenin's party program in *What is to be Done?* exposed a lack of understanding of the political conditions in Russia and a lack of understanding of the core spirit of Social Democracy. She argued that Lenin was getting ahead of himself, trying to skip steps in the Marxist ladder, Additionally, that his idea that an ultra-centralist model, disdainful of spontaneity, would support mass growth was a contradiction in terms, the equivalent of a motionless movement. However, with the Revolution of 1905, which Luxemburg greatly predicted in her response, the conditions of expanded political freedom were achieved by a spontaneous mass movement. This marked a

substantial change in the view of the Russian Social-Democratic movement, and their readiness for Revolution.

## Chapter III

### Fighting for Democracy or Rehearsing for Socialism?: Case Study of 1905

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was seminal for the evolution of the political structures of power in Russia, the growth of the workers movement, and ultimately the Russian Revolution of 1917, through which Vladimir I. Lenin finally took over the government. Sometimes referred to as the dress rehearsal of a revolution, other times deemed the first Russian Revolution, the spontaneous outburst of the working masses allowed (and in some ways forced) the Russian Social Democratic Revolutionaries to test their theory through practice. After years of theoretical debates, both Lenin and Luxemburg predicted that a democratic revolution, one striving to bring about more political freedom rather than total transformation, was imminent in Russia. This prediction was fulfilled, however not in the ways either Luxemburg or Lenin expected.

At its core, the Revolution of 1905 was born out of the frustration and subjugation of the working masses, the disastrous military defeat of the Japanese War of 1905, and the longing for a greater degree of political freedom. Representing a significant transformation of Russian society, some of their demands included an eight-hour work day, for factory inspectors to be from the working class, state insurance, the end of the Russo-Japanese War, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of unions and strikes, freedom of conscience and inviolability of person and abode, free universal public education, and broad participation of the people in administration.<sup>101</sup> A lot of these demands had already been realized in Western European countries, from which the most prominent Social Democratic parties were formed. This “democratic revolution” was a way for Russia to catch up with the other industrialized

---

<sup>101</sup> Solomon M. Schwartz, “The Shidlovskii Commission” in *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers’ Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 126.

European nations, since in the Marxist conception, a total social revolution was unachievable without the correct political and economic conditions, which Russia lacked.

In Lenin's conception of the organizational structure of the party, membership would be limited to Professional Revolutionaries, and the party would bring other organizations under its wing.<sup>102</sup> With already increasing tensions in the RSDLP, at the outset of the Revolution of 1905 this restriction in membership became more of a point of contention, and the "organizational question"<sup>103</sup> became one of the key factors in the Bolshevik-Menshevik split. Ironically, although Lenin knew a revolution was coming, the Bolshevik faction of the party remained distracted from the mass worker struggle unfolding first in Saint Petersburg and then all over Russia. Besides the prioritizing of factionalism over the mass struggle, Lenin, the seminal figure of the Bolshevik faction, remained in Geneva, Switzerland until the end of October, through some of the central events of the Revolution, and finally returned to Saint Petersburg by November 8th of 1905. For this reason, he was dependent on correspondence from the leaders of the Bolshevik faction, known at the time as the Petersburg Committee.

The Revolution of 1905 started the previous year with mass unrest and factory strikes. As L. Martov, future leader of the Mensheviks explained, the masses were already in motion and the leaders had to act.<sup>104</sup> The split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks overtook the central activity of the Bolshevik faction during the end of 1904 and the beginning of 1905. They were, thus, caught unprepared by Bloody Sunday on January 9th, a massive march in front of the Winter Palace. The Menshevik and Bolshevik factions disagreed on, among other things, the kind of relationship the party was to have with other mass organizations, the masses themselves, and how leadership would be structured within the party, otherwise known as the "organizational

---

<sup>102</sup> Lenin, *Lenin on Politics and Revolution*, "What is to be Done?," 45-46.

<sup>103</sup> Schwartz, "The Organizational Problems of Social-Democracy," 196.

<sup>104</sup> Schwartz, "On the Eve of 1905," 35.

question.” Solomon A. Schwartz described one of the key distinctions as the following: “a basic principle of Menshevism, namely, that the forces of Social-Democracy should be maximally ‘utilized’ to promote a mass movement far exceeding the party—in contrast to the Bolshevik principle of maximally ‘utilizing’ every manifestation of the mass movement to strengthen the Party organization.”<sup>105</sup> This difference, between creating a movement beyond the party vs. making a growing mass movement a subordinate of the party structure, is key for understanding the ways each thinker understood spontaneity. Lenin and the Bolsheviks he spoke for saw spontaneity as a tool to be controlled, rather than the motor behind the movement.

Luxemburg understood the function of the party to be different. She agreed with Lenin that the party was “the advanced guard of the class,” and should thus be centrally organized under strict party discipline. But consistently with her arguments on *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, she believed in the spontaneity of the masses as the life-force of the movement. In *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, Paul Frolich describes Luxemburg as being more influenced by the historical process as a whole, deriving her political conclusions from it, while Lenin was “more concentrated on the aim before him,”<sup>106</sup> seeking the necessary political means to achieve a specific aim. Frolich further explains: “For her the decisive factor was the mass: for him it was the party, and he aimed at forging into the spear-head of the movement as a whole.”<sup>107</sup> Luxemburg thus understood that the structure of the party was to serve the spontaneity of the masses with first theoretical grounding to channel the masses’ energies, to incorporate them within the party.

---

<sup>105</sup> Schwartz, “The Shidlovskii Commission,” 128.

<sup>106</sup> Paul Frolich, “Full-Dress Rehearsal, 1905” in *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 108.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

The main way this played out was in the virtual inaction of the Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP during the beginning of the revolution, when leaders (from Western Europe at the time) were focused on the theoretical distinctions of the party's organization rather than getting involved in the mass struggle. This is because they believed that compromising what they understood to be pillars of Social Democracy to the masses meant deforming the movement. But the debate was not limited to proletariat organizing; this being what they deemed a "democratic revolution," both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were striving for greater political freedom, and within these categories there was a myriad of perspectives. While the Bolsheviks refused to collaborate with the liberal bourgeois and the priest Gapon during the beginning of this period, the Mensheviks elaborated a plan to work with these groups, which had a more far-reaching connection to the masses. The editorial board of *Iskra* ("policy-making center of Menshevism"<sup>108</sup>) in November 1904 published the "Letter to the Party Organizations," where they explained:

But we should be making a fatal mistake if we set ourselves the goal of *forcing* the zemstvos or other organs of the bourgeois opposition, through energetic measures of *intimidation* and under the influence of *panic*, to give us *now* a formal promise to present our demands to the government. Such a tactic would compromise Social-Democracy because it would turn our whole political campaign into a lever for reaction.<sup>109</sup>

The Mensheviks believed from the onset that a certain degree of collaboration with Bourgeois elements was necessary, and that a complete refusal to do so would result in the Party losing the unique opportunity for growth that the Revolutionary waves made possible. This would be a way of exposing proletariat masses previously indifferent to Social Democracy: "But within the limits of fighting absolutism, especially in the present phase, our attitude to the liberal bourgeoisie is

---

<sup>108</sup> Schwartz, "On the Eve of 1905," 36.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

defined by the task of infusing it with a bit more courage and moving it to join in the demands that the proletariat, led by Social-Democracy, will put forward.”<sup>110</sup>

Lenin had to determine what this practice of revolution revealed not only with his past theory, but with fellow members of the Petersburg Committee. For *Novaya Zhizn*, the Bolshevik faction’s first legal daily newspaper founded in October of 1905, Lenin submitted the article “Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies (A Letter to the Editors.)” Here, he revealed that he still believed in the central theory he wrote in *What is to be Done?*

It seems to be that it would not be expedient for the Soviet as a whole to join any one party.... Should such a struggle [the political struggle] be conducted only by Social-Democrats or only under the Social-Democratic flag? I would say no; I am still of the opinion which I expressed in *What is to be Done?*—namely, that it is not expedient to limit the composition of trade unions, and consequently participation in the economic struggle, to members of the Social-Democratic Party alone.<sup>111</sup>

However, the tense moment in history did not allow for an interpretation that left the Bolsheviks outside of the revolution. The Bolshevik leaders in Saint Petersburg rejected the article “with violent opposition”<sup>112</sup> and Lenin agreed not to publish it on *Novaya Zhizn*.

Partly because historical reality necessitated it, and partly due to the pressures from within the party, Lenin made a sharp turn, retreating from some of his stances in *What is to be Done?*. This change meant that he had to let go of the party structure he had so vehemently defended. As Paul Frolich described in *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*, the experience of 1905 forced Lenin to see the validity in what he had previously referred to as “Luxemburg’s idea of the organisation as a process,”<sup>113</sup> with the organizing of the masses being the central force of the movement, rather than the Party organism, as he had outlined in *What is to be Done?*. In

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>111</sup> Schwartz, 190-191, from Lenin’s “Our Tasks and the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies (A Letter to the Editors),” written in Stockholm, November 1905. It was published for the first time in *Pravda* on November 5th, 1940.

<sup>112</sup> Schwartz, “The Soviet of the Workers’ Deputies,” 190.

<sup>113</sup> Frolich, 106.

addition to letting go of his “ultracentralist” model, the Party adopted a program that prioritized party unity over factional disputes. “Under pressure from the greatly increased membership of the party,” Frolich points out, Lenin “even agreed to the re-establishment of unity, though in the process the majority passed once again into the hands of the opportunists, to whose decisions he then submitted in a number of very important matters indeed.”<sup>114</sup> He demonstrated a willingness to make the concessions he had been so adamantly against, and for which the Menshevik-Bolshevik split started during the first months of the struggle in late 1904. The organization of the Party was to be directly and inevitably influenced by the spontaneous organizing of the masses. Lenin at the same time tried to pass off the changes made to his theory as a natural evolution rather than a turn, trying to hide the fact that he had compromised key parts of his theory.

Menshevik leaders, by contrast, wanted to develop the party in order to approximate Western European parties such as SDP. Pavel Axelrod, a Menshevik leader, gave a speech at the Party’s (“Unification”) Congress in Stockholm in Spring, 1906, in which he stated: “we [planned to] turn a social arena previously inaccessible to us into a political grade school for the masses, in which they would gain experience and exercise their forces for a purely proletarian class struggle and for uniting into a political organization of a type approaching that of the wholly proletarian parties of the West.”<sup>115</sup> Meanwhile in Germany, Luxemburg admired the uncompromising stance the Bolsheviks had taken in regards to the party being positioned above the Trade Unions, a vivid debate at the time in the German party. Her position was that the solution to the National Question was for the Polish Party to become a sector within the Russian Party, the increasing divisions between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks meant that they had to take a side. With the

---

<sup>114</sup> Frolich, 106.

<sup>115</sup> Schwartz, “On the Eve of 1905,” 39.



ongoing internal debates in the SDP in regards to Parliamentarism, Trade Unionism, and what became the limiting of the party's activity to be within the parliamentary government, Luxemburg's experiences as a leader of the German party influenced her leadership of the SDKPL to side with the Bolsheviks in the RSDLP. Accusing the more moderate wing of the SDP, led by Karl Kautsky, of Opportunism and of being taken over by the Trade Unionist struggle, however different the realities of Russia and Germany, the Bolshevik speech rang resonant to Luxemburg. It could be said that during the revolutionary struggle of 1905 Luxemburg felt closer to the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, than to the competing factions in the SPD that she felt were supporting a kind of stagnation. Thus, in her piece *The Mass Strike*, Luxemburg describes the events happening in Russia, and the way the RSDLP was trying to organize the masses, as a lesson for the German Social Democrats.

As a response to the ongoing Revolutionary struggle and mass uprisings, Lenin wrote "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution" in the Summer of 1905, where he presented his understanding of the events and what he believed was the necessary actions the Party was to undertake. The central question Lenin explored in his pamphlet is what he delineated as two tactics emerging from the revolutionary struggle beginning at the end of 1904 and climaxing in 1905. He defined tactics as "the Party's political conduct, or the character, direction, and methods of its political activity."<sup>116</sup> The first tactic he described goes as follows: "Since it is led by the Social-Democratic Party, the revolutionary proletariat demands complete transfer of power to a constituent assembly, and for this purpose strives to achieve not only universal suffrage and complete freedom to conduct agitation, but also the immediate overthrow of the tsarist government and its replacement by a provisional revolutionary government."<sup>117</sup> The

---

<sup>116</sup> Vladimir I. Lenin, "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," in *Lenin on Politics and Revolution: Selected Writings*, ed. James E. Connor (New York: Pegasus, 1968), 83.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

second tactic he defines as “striving to effect as peaceful a deal as possible between the Tsar and the revolutionary people, a deal, moreover, that would give a maximum of power to itself, the bourgeoisie, and a minimum to the revolutionary people—the proletariat and the peasantry.”<sup>118</sup> From his description of both tactics, it is clear that Lenin declared the former tactic to be the rightful one for Social-Democracy.

From these two tactics emerge the central question Lenin focuses on in his pamphlet, the construction and direction of the provisional revolutionary government. Lenin argues that, for the formation of the provisional revolutionary government, the proletariat must focus on understanding the significance of the provisional revolutionary government for the ongoing revolution, the revolution’s attitude towards the provisional revolutionary government, the conditions of Social-Democratic participation in such government, and the mechanisms for pressure from “below” (from the Social-Democratic masses) will be applied to the government in the event that there are no Social-Democrats in the government.<sup>119</sup> Even with the existence of the revolutionary government, Lenin considered it essential for Social-Democracy to maintain its independence from the Bourgeois parties, since a complete socialist revolution must be “irreconcilably opposed to all the bourgeois parties.”<sup>120</sup>

While the central goal of the “democratic revolution” was to replace the Tsarist autocracy with a democratic republic, the working masses could not forget that the establishment of a republic advanced their struggle in as much as it afforded them new freedoms but not the liberation only a total social revolution would afford them. The proletariat and the bourgeoisie must not remain allied beyond the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government, and must remain vigilant during the struggle: “the proletariat, which is in the van of the struggle for

---

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

democracy and heads the struggle, must not for a single moment forget the new antagonisms inherent in bourgeois democracy, or the new struggle.”<sup>121</sup> Within the central question of the establishment of the provisional revolutionary government, the first task was for “the Party to spread among the working class the conviction that a provisional revolutionary government is necessary. The working class must be made aware of this necessity,”<sup>122</sup> while the Party works to bring to the forefront the question of the overthrow of the tsarist government.

In contrast with his previous remarks before and at the very beginning of the revolution, Lenin argued now, in the Summer of 1905, that the Russian movement is still far from approaching a transformative social revolution. Because of Russia’s limited objective material conditions, as well as “The degree of Russia’s economic development (an objective condition) and the degree of class-consciousness and organization of the broad masses of the proletariat (a subjective condition inseparably bound up with the objective condition) make the immediate and complete emancipation of the working class impossible.”<sup>123</sup> Instead, they must focus on the bourgeoisie struggle at hand, and collaborate with the bourgeoisie to advance the establishment of a democratic government. He declares that “a socialist revolution is out of the question unless the masses become class-conscious and organized, trained and educated in an open class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie.”<sup>124</sup> He deems striving for socialist revolution directly from the struggles of 1905 to be “absurd and semianarchist ideas,”<sup>125</sup> admitting “we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress.”<sup>126</sup> Lenin adds “it is *permissible* in principle for Social-Democrats to participate in a provisional revolutionary

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 108.

government (during the period of a democratic revolution, the period of struggle for a republic)”<sup>127</sup> to “dissociate” from the anarchists and the tail-enders.<sup>128</sup> This passage is a great contrast from *What is to be Done?*, as Lenin now presents participation in a bourgeois government as preferable to association with anarchists, who he describes as those who believe the socialist revolution could be achieved presently, and tail-enders, those who follow the spontaneous trends rather than lead the movement. Interestingly, the haste with which Lenin characterizes the anarchists is similar to the criticisms Luxemburg presented against his *What is to be Done?* Party program. Lenin himself had great changes in his understanding of the role of the party due to the ongoing spontaneous struggle, taking longer than the Menshevik faction to react to the action of the masses, following in a similar way to his characterization of the tail-enders.

Lenin did not however concede all of the stances taken at the beginning of the struggle. He still emphasized the independence of the movement and a necessary distancing from the bourgeoisie as characteristic of Bolshevism and of his uncompromising theoretical commitment. “either we, together with the people, must strive to carry out the revolution and win complete victory over tsarism *despite* the inconsistent, self-seeking, and cowardly bourgeoisie, or else we do not accept this ‘despite’ and are afraid that the bourgeoisie may ‘recoil’ from the revolution; in the second case we are betraying the proletariat and the people to the bourgeoisie”<sup>129</sup> Lenin maintained that it was important to focus on what would happen after the struggle dissipated, that

---

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 88. Tail-enders comes from the term “*Khvostism* (“tailism,” from Russian *khvost*, “a tail”), which meant that instead of directing, leading, pushing, and injecting your own purposes into the workers you see merely to serve them and their purposes, hence “dragging at their tail.” A kindred offense was “slavish kowtowing before spontaneity.” from Betram D. Wolfe’s article “Rosa Luxemburg and V. I. Lenin: The Opposite Poles of Revolutionary Socialism” in *The Antioch Review*, vol. 21, no. 2 of Summer 1961. In an ironic turn, the Bolshevik faction had a delayed reaction to the revolutionary struggle, at first not perceiving the full magnitude of the revolutionary process and, from the leaders’ exile in Western Europe, focusing on the theoretical underpinnings that eventually divided the Party into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 105

the revolutionary energy must not be allowed to die out, but rather turn its struggle from against Autocracy towards the pressuring the bourgeois provisional government. Thus it was important for the party to focus on the actions to take in the formation of the new form of government, “The workers do not expect to make deals; they are not asking for petty concessions. What they are striving towards is ruthlessly to crush the reactionary forces, that is, to set up a *revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry*,”<sup>130</sup> considering the establishment of a provisional revolutionary government as the first and essential step in this trajectory.

Prior to 1905 Luxemburg had predicted the events of the Revolution in her 1904 pamphlet, *Organizational Questions in Russian Social-Democracy*,

Let us not forget that the revolution soon to break out in Russia will be a bourgeois and not a proletarian revolution. This modifies radically all the conditions of socialist struggle. The Russian intellectuals, too, will rapidly become imbued with bourgeois ideology. The Social Democracy is at present the only guide of the Russian proletariat. But on the day after the revolution, we shall see the bourgeoisie, and above all the bourgeois intellectuals, seek to use the masses as a steppingstone to their domination.<sup>131</sup>

She argued that a revolution disconnected from the proletariat is vulnerable to being overtaken by opportunistic bourgeois intellectuals, thus the Party must focus its activity on cultivating a reciprocity with the spontaneous masses. In addition, Luxemburg determined that a highly centralized party organism would merely facilitate this taking over, instead of, as Lenin claimed, becoming the strongest possible barrier against it. It presents revolution as a kind of natural course, but not because it is following a rigid path, but rather because the spontaneous actions of the proletariat will spontaneously lead to revolution. This aspect of her thought engages with

---

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 109. By dictatorship Lenin refers to the state in Socialist development prior to Communism where the proletariat are the ruling class, as the hierarchy is turned upside down, and become the sole holders of power until classes are dissolved.

<sup>131</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, “Organizational Questions in Russian Social Democracy,” in *Leninism vs. Marxism and The Revolution* ed. Wolfe, 102.

spontaneity in a very different way from Lenin. In contrast with the unreliability that Lenin adjudicated to spontaneity, Luxemburg understands the spontaneous element in the way the proletariat is organized as a predictable and somewhat traceable phenomenon. Luxemburg's prediction, abridged in the passage above, of an incoming revolution in Russia are not only striking because of their precision, but are also striking because the revolution resulted in the proletariat acquiring the parliamentary system that they needed to experience, according to her, in order to further their progress towards a Social Democratic Revolution.

Facing the divisions of the SDP, Luxemburg saw the events of 1905 in Russia as an inspiration to the German movement. Even though the Revolution itself was a clear sign of their lagging behind, since they needed a "democratic revolution" to achieve the level of political freedom already existing in Germany, Luxemburg saw the structure of the Russian party, with the willingness of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks at the RSDLP Fourth (Unity) Congress in Stockholm on April, 1906, to be more than the German party was capable of at the time. This tendency of Luxemburg admiring the Russian movement happened in the reverse, with Lenin admiring the German movement. As previously presented, Lenin discussed the German party in great detail in *What is to be Done?* and saw the German Social-Democratic movement as the example to follow. This mutual admiration of the mass movements of the other's parties continued even beyond the events of the 1905 Revolution. As Annette Jost presents in her article "Rosa Luxemburg y su crítica de Lenin" ("Rosa Luxemburg and her Critique of Lenin"), "Luxemburg will try to recover for the German labor movement the experiences of the spontaneous reaction of the masses in the Russia of 1905, while Lenin continues to consider as a model, until 1914, the German Social-Democracy."<sup>132</sup> This is partly because, although the SDP

---

<sup>132</sup> Annette Jost, "Rosa Luxemburg y su crítica de Lenin," trans. Pedro Madrigal, *Materiales: Rosa Luxemburgo hoy*, no. 3 (Icaria Editorial, 1977): 198.

was much bigger in size and more developed, it had, according to Luxemburg, become stuck in its collaboration with the parliamentary government and its subjugation to the Trade Unions, stifling the spontaneity of the masses that provided the revolutionary character to the movement.

In *The Mass Strike*, written in 1906, Luxemburg described the Revolution of 1905 as representing a transformative change from the general strikes (or mass strikes) of the previous years in Western Europe, and thus saw understanding the Revolution as key for the German movement to overcome its relative stagnation and subservience to Trade Unions. Her central argument was: “the mass strike is not an artificially created and sterile concept in the minds of some ossified, timid, trade-union bureaucrats, ‘not a crafty method discovered by subtle reasoning for the purpose of making the proletarian struggle more effective, *but the method of motion of the proletarian mass*, the phenomenal form of the proletarian struggle in the revolution.”<sup>133</sup> The ongoing revolutionary struggle in Russia became, in part, living proof of what she had theorized in *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, in her support for the spontaneity of the masses as the amplifying and corrective force of social democracy.

On the other hand, Luxemburg took the spontaneous experiences and equated them to a kind of social-democratic readiness of the masses that she had not previously agreed with in 1904. She posits the speed of this readiness partly on Russia’s backwardness, “the stormy revolutionary course of the Russian mass strike as well as their preponderant spontaneous, elementary character is explained on the one hand by the political backwardness of Russia, by the necessity of first overthrowing the oriental despotism, and on the other hand, by the want of organization and of discipline of the Russian proletariat.”<sup>134</sup> This had been precisely what she

---

<sup>133</sup> Waters, 153.

<sup>134</sup> Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike,” 191.

understood to stand in the way of the readiness of the Russian masses in 1904, but through analyzing the spontaneous struggle in Russia, and through comparing it to the German movement, she was now, perhaps unintentionally, backing Lenin's argument in *What is to be Done?* about the exceptionality of Russia due to its primitiveness, that she had previously disagreed with. Combined with this primitiveness, that gave the Russian masses a kind of fervor and experimentation that the Luxemburg did not see in the German masses, Luxemburg describes the material conditions of the Russian and German proletariat to be mostly comparable in their suffering and oppression. She then goes beyond this, claiming that the struggles of 1905 have afforded freedoms more advanced than those the German workers enjoyed: "Already in the great October strike of 1905 the Russian railwaymen in the then formally absolutist Russia, were, as regards the economic and social freedom of their movement, head and shoulders above the Germans,"<sup>135</sup> coming from a parliamentary constitutional state. Measuring the maturity of the revolutionary struggles of 1905, Luxemburg states: "A revolutionary period in Germany would so alter the character of the trade-union struggle and develop its potentialities to such an extent that the present guerilla warfare of the trade unions would be child's play in comparison."<sup>136</sup> Thus she understands that the struggles in Russia are perhaps the first in the history of Social Democracy to go beyond the trade unionist struggle and enter the first stages of social democratic struggle, becoming an example for all other social democratic movements, especially essential for the German movement, the biggest of the time, to study and learn from.

Luxemburg hints at what Lenin explained in *What is to be Done?* as Russia's special conditions, which he claimed would make its Social-Democratic trajectory different from that of Western Europe. She states:

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 195.



[the Revolution of 1905] appears not so much as the last successor of the old bourgeois revolutions as the forerunner of the new series of proletarian revolutions of the West. The most backward country of all, just because it has been so unpardonably late with its bourgeois revolution, shows ways and methods of further class struggle to the proletariat of Germany and the most advanced capitalist countries... it appears, when looked at in this way, to be entirely wrong to regard the Russian Revolution as a fine play<sup>137</sup>

While Luxemburg initially disagreed with this in 1904, now in 1906 she seems to have changed her mind based on the events of the Revolution. She understands this revolution as positioning Russia ahead of Germany in its revolutionary action. Differently from how she had predicted an inevitable bourgeois “democratic revolution” to occur, she states that the Revolution of 1905 went beyond that, beyond achieving the level of political freedom that parliamentarism provides, and embodies the series of social struggles led by the masses that increases the readiness and brings Social Revolution closer.

In response to German trade union leaders claiming the German proletariat is “too weak” for revolutionary class struggles and that German conditions are “not ripe enough” she states: “[they] have obviously not the least idea that the measure of the degree of ripeness of class relations in Germany and of the power of the proletariat does not lie in the statistics of German trade unionism or in election figures, but in the events of the Russian Revolution... the Russian Revolution is the reflex of the power and the maturity of the international, and therefore in the first place, of the German labor movement.”<sup>138</sup> Luxemburg now positions Russia as leading the rest of Social Democracy through this revolution, comparing the relative passivity of the more developed Western republics to the vigorous revolutionary energy that was bursting throughout Russia at the time. She states of the state of the German movement in 1906, “The distance, however, of this task [*dictatorship of the proletariat*] from the present conditions of Germany is still greater than that of the bourgeois legal order from Oriental despotism, and therefore, the task

---

<sup>137</sup> Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike,” 203.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

cannot be completed at one stroke, but must similarly be accomplished during a long period of gigantic social struggles.”<sup>139</sup> Luxemburg is not interested in skipping any steps, and still recognizes that Germany, and even more Russia have a long way to go in the path towards Social Revolution. Still, she finds inspiring in the Russian case the enlivening of the social struggles necessary to achieve this progress. She remains unwavering in her understanding that the spontaneous action of the masses was what both ignited and kept burning the revolutionary flame that was still burning at the time in Russia, up until 1907, a flame that was being repeatedly blown out by the leaders of the SDP, under the understanding that peaceful change within parliamentarism constituted changes big enough to bring the Social Revolution closer, an understanding with which Luxemburg vehemently disagreed.

The Revolution of 1905 brought Lenin and Luxemburg together through their favorable estimation of the event. Luxemburg was thereafter aligned towards the Bolsheviks, within the divisions of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party. Because Luxemburg saw the Revolution as the enactment of the spontaneous organizing of the masses, and as their marked progression in their political consciousness, through having taken the necessary step towards Parliamentarism and increased political freedom, perhaps this is why Luxemburg viewed now the Russian movement as ready for a Bolshevik understanding of Social Revolution, without the need for delays, since the masses had proven their readiness and thirst for change in the streets. However, this represented a huge jump within the Marxist trajectory. Even after the events of 1905, the economic and political conditions in Russia were rudimentary compared to its Western European counterparts, and the Revolution, while advancing the consciousness and action of the masses, presented great obstacles for the Russian Party that they had to handle while the action was occurring, often resulting in contradictions, concessions, and misunderstandings.

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 206.

Luxemburg seemed to see Russia as more active in the Social-Democratic struggle than Germany during the Revolution, and believed that the movement had jumped leaps and bounds because of it, way beyond what she had predicted in *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*. At the same time, Lenin, who had previously believed in Russia's readiness beyond its economic limitations and political immaturity in *What is to be Done?*, during his experience in 1905 expressed Russia was still far away from a transformative social revolution. In this regard, it could be argued that they exchanged their previous estimations with each other, meeting each other at the middle, with Lenin becoming more of a realist about all of the work the Russian movement still needed to go through, and Luxemburg becoming more optimistic about Russia's possibility of achieving transformative revolution, even before Germany, despite its significantly greater size.

## Conclusion

### Who Leads Who?: The Relationship between the Party and the Masses

Lenin and Luxemburg interacted both as leaders of their respective Parties and as theorists seeking to revitalize Marxism while trying to maintain its purity. In their attempts at this, fervent debates emerged between them. The fact that they agreed in their rejection of Revisionism and Opportunism led to them paying close attention to the theoretical export of the other. Out of this Lenin's *What is to be Done?* was born, as well as Luxemburg's response to it in *Organizational Questions in the Russian Social Democracy*. Lenin advocated a centralist model for the RSDLP, and for party membership to be limited to Professional Revolutionaries that would educate the working masses and help them achieve Social Democratic consciousness. This model did not allow for spontaneous action to flourish within Social Democracy. For this reason Luxemburg, who agreed on a centralist model for leadership and rejection of Opportunism and Revisionism, criticized Lenin's "ultracentralist" party program as getting in the way of the growth of Social Democracy in Russia. Seeing Russia as politically and economically backwards, Luxemburg believed in her 1904 pamphlet that the RSDLP should focus on advancing a democratic revolution and honing a connection to the working masses and their participation, rather than mere exposure through Professional Revolutionaries, to Social Democratic theory and action. However, Lenin maintained that Russia had the potential to grow along the movements of Western Europe, inspite (or perhaps due to) their lack of political freedom a so-called "primitiveness" that gave the Russian people a kind of predisposition to action.

The Revolution of 1905 would test both of their theories, and in some ways both would indirectly admit to the other being more right than they previously thought. Lenin was abroad

until the end of 1905, and during this time he demonstrated a kind of misunderstanding of the mass action happening all across the Russian Empire. During the first signs of mass struggle in late 1904, he wrote that the RSDLP should focus its efforts on remaining constant to Social Democratic theory and rejecting concessions, and that actively supporting the mass demonstrations (that were not led by Social Democrats at the time), was making concessions and was a sign of Opportunism. With this belief he focused his early efforts on rejecting the wing of the Party that wanted to participate, deepening a split that later divided the party into Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. However, he redirected this focus on Bolshevism towards focusing on the growing mass demonstrations, temporarily ending the split, with the understanding that these struggles represented the perfect opportunity to present Social Democracy to the masses. With this turn Lenin went from prioritizing an “ultracentralist” party structure, seeing spontaneity as a gateway to opportunism, to seeing the spontaneity of the masses as an opportunity.

While Lenin now saw a value in spontaneity that he previously did not, the revolution also led to Luxemburg reconceiving her view of the revolutionary process. In part because of the internal struggles of the SDP, in which she was going up against the stagnation of a “parliamentarist” and trade unionist formulation, and in part as leader of the SDKPiL, Luxemburg now saw the spontaneous struggle as achieving much more than what she had predicted. Going beyond her prediction of a Democratic revolution, she saw the Russian working masses as growing in Social Democratic consciousness at a pace faster than the Germans. Thus, she now agreed with Lenin’s theory of Russia’s “primitivism” affording it an ability to act that Western European movements, with more political freedom, had difficulty enacting.

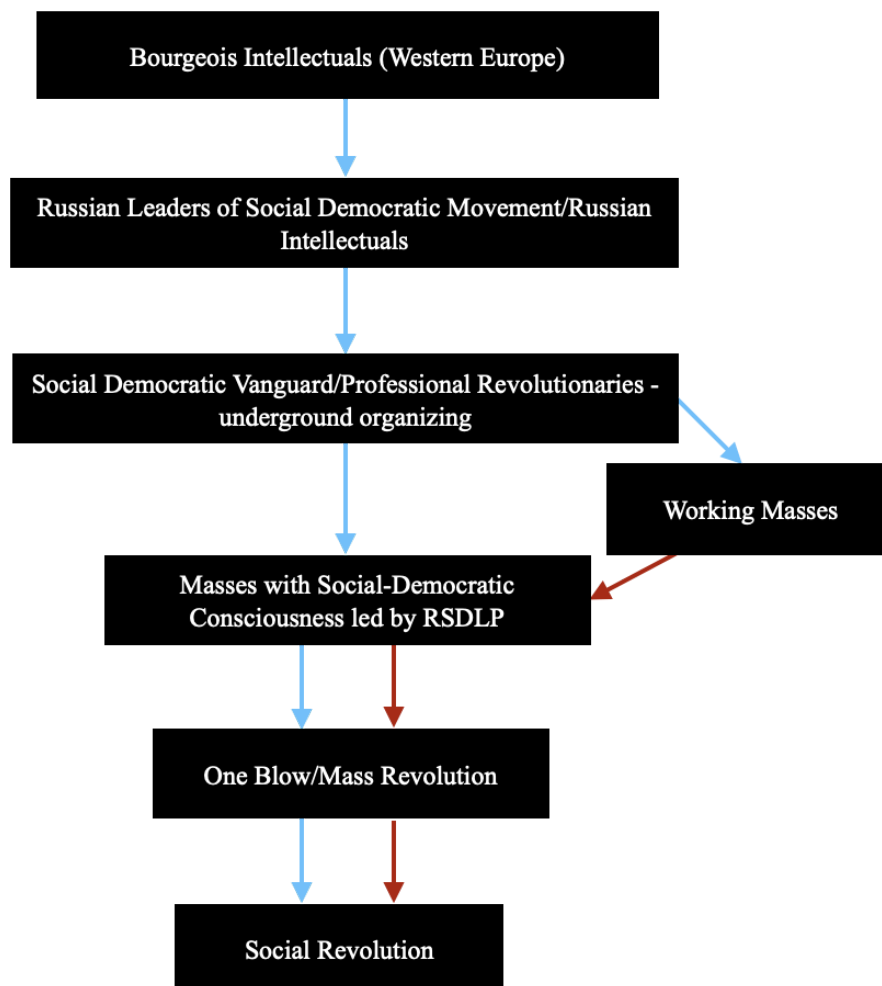
In their mutual rejection of Revisionism and Opportunism, A central element of Marxist theory that Lenin and Luxemburg agreed on was the concept of a revolutionary path, a path that

society would follow to achieve social revolution, however much they disagreed on the steps necessary to achieve this in a truly Marxist framework. To visualize the paths they proposed I have made diagrams, representing the thinkers' views before the revolution, and how they changed after the struggle, trying to pinpoint each step that they argued to be necessary in the trajectory, as well as the necessary order.

Diagram 1: Lenin's Revolutionary Path before the Revolution of 1905

→ Social Democratic Theory

→ Spontaneity

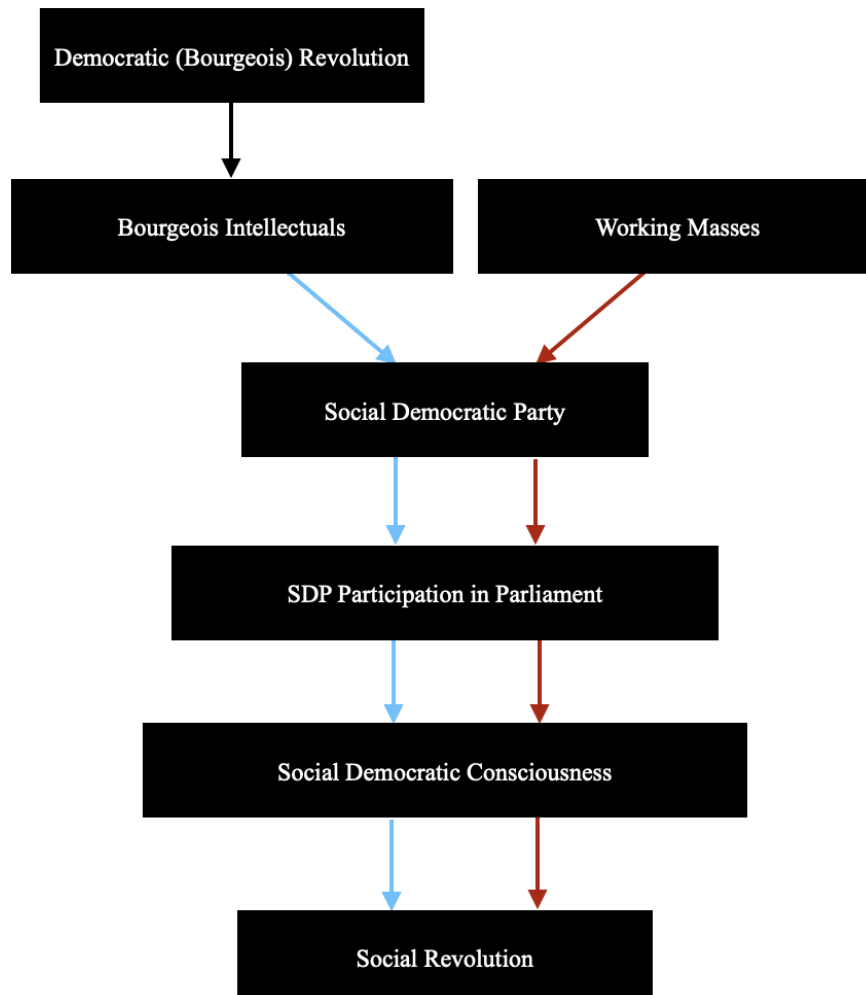


In the diagram above, the two main points of Lenin's theory in *What is to be Done?* are clear. The first is that the RSDLP does not include the working masses until they have been

taught by Professional Revolutionaries. The second, relating to this, is that the spontaneity of the masses is not welcomed until after the masses have been taken under the wing of Social Democracy. In addition, he presents a One Blow/Mass Revolution as the step before the Social Revolution, understanding that, because the masses have reached Social Democratic consciousness by the time they are allowed to enter the party, the first mass revolution will uninterruptedly lead to the transformative social revolution.

Diagram 2: Luxemburg's Revolutionary Path before the Revolution of 1905

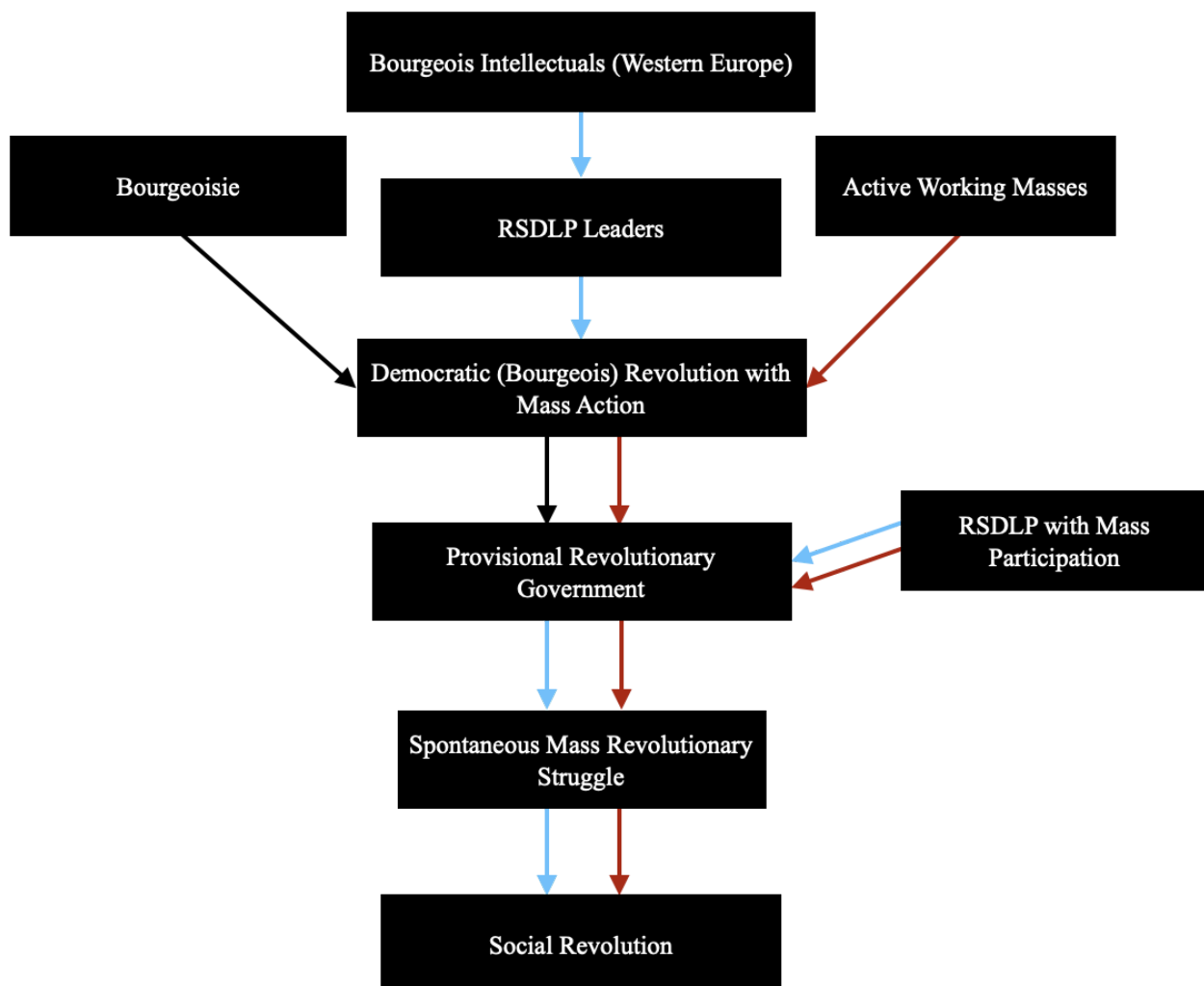
- Social Democratic Theory
- Spontaneity
- Bourgeois Tendencies



In Diagram 2, there are three main points to observe. The first, the democratic revolution is the first necessary step for the revolutionary path. The second, the working masses are included near the beginning, and their spontaneity contributes to the rest of the trajectory. The third, that the Social Democratic party's participation in the bourgeois parliament is a necessary step for the masses to be exposed to Social Democracy and for the country's readiness for revolution to be developed.

Diagram 3: Lenin's Revolutionary Path after 1905 Revolution

- Social Democratic Theory
- Spontaneity
- Bourgeois Tendencies



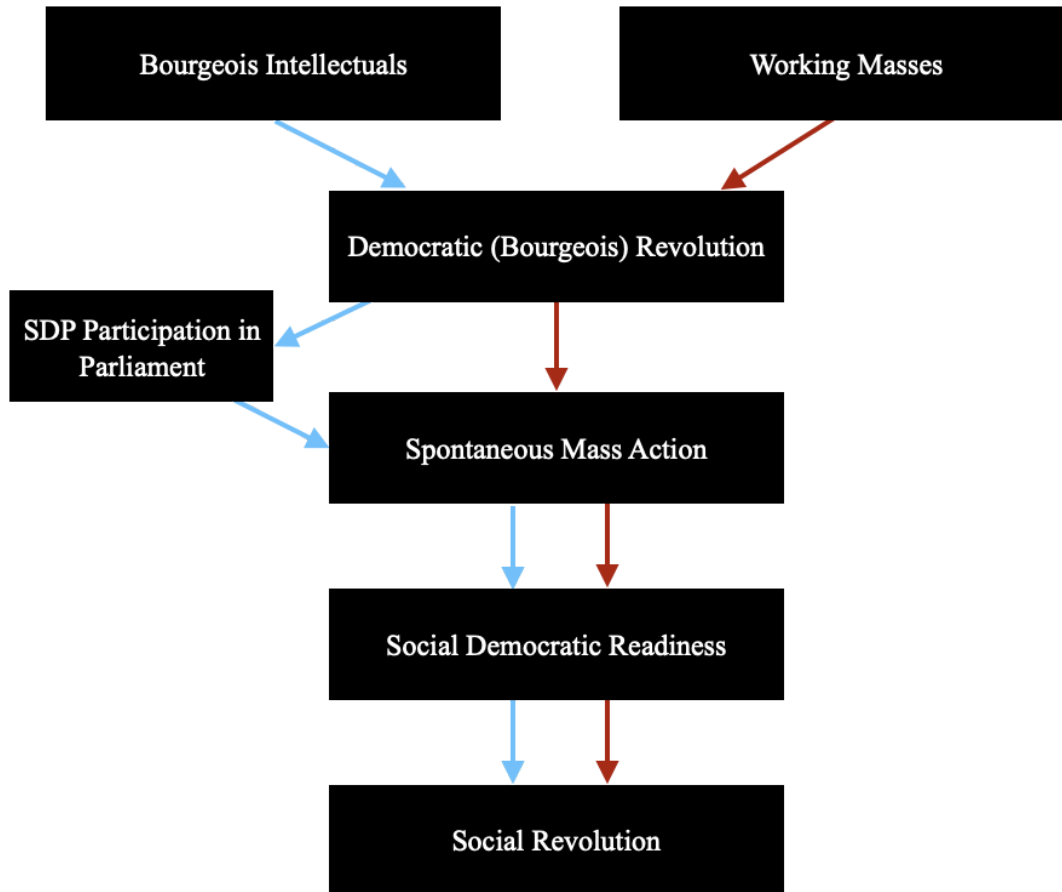


In Diagram 3, there are multiple modifications from Diagram 1 that make it closer to Luxemburg's theory. The first difference is now a bourgeois revolution, representative of the Revolution of 1905, where the bourgeoisie, the working masses, and the Professional Revolutionaries of the RSDLP participate, a collaboration that Lenin had previously believed to be an unacceptable concession. The second difference is the existence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Previously absent, now Lenin conceptualizes the role of the RSDLP as working with the masses to pressure the bourgeois government into furthering Social Democratic goals. This presents two new elements. Firstly, that participation in government is now a step in the revolutionary path, as it is in Luxemburg's theory. Secondly, that the RSDLP should work not only to educate the masses through Professional Revolutionaries, but rather the masses are a force that the Party should watch closely and, in some ways follow the spontaneous lead of the masses, as the RSDLP ultimately did in the Russian Revolution, harnessing the ongoing mass action as an opportunity. Additionally, the provisional revolutionary government is presented as functioning from the bourgeois goals and the spontaneity of the masses, thus, a kind of struggle between the bourgeois and the masses occurs through the provisional government. With the increasing exposure of the masses to Social Democracy, through the RSDLP, the bourgeois character of the government is weakened and eventually eradicated. A third difference is that now the "One Blow/Mass Revolution" has been replaced by "Spontaneous Mass Revolutionary Struggle" informed by Social Democratic theory. Instead of a directed revolution tightly led by the RSDLP with the masses merely executing action, the collaboration between the masses and the Party is now depicted as necessary to reach Social Democratic readiness. In this way, the spontaneity of the masses, now redressed as an opportunity for the Party, becomes the unavoidable element credited with furthering the movement in the revolutionary path.

Diagram 4: Luxemburg's Revolutionary Path after 1905 Revolution

→ Social Democratic Theory

→ Spontaneity



The most important difference between the diagrams of Luxemburg before and after the revolution is that now Luxemburg sees it as possible for a democratic revolution to have not only participation from the masses, but for the masses to be central in its organization, notwithstanding its goal of instituting a bourgeois government. Inspired by the Russian case of mass action deepening Social Democratic readiness even prior to achieving more political freedom, Luxemburg modified her belief in 1904 that a degree of political freedom (unprecedented in Russia) was necessary for mass class struggle to take place. She now positions the Democratic (Bourgeois) Revolution after the involvement of the masses, making their

spontaneity a contributing factor to the revolution. She also positions the masses' spontaneous action as more central than participation in government, now understanding that through struggle, rather than through participation in government, the masses can be introduced to Social Democracy. The 1905 Revolution deepened Luxemburg's view that the spontaneity of the masses was a central organizational tool for a Social Democratic movement, and understood that spontaneous mass action could come about, and develop Social Democracy from outside the leadership of a Party. For this reason, the goal of the Social Democratic Parties was to direct the spontaneous energy of the masses, with the understanding that mass spontaneous action inherently furthers the movement in the path towards social revolution. The masses correct the mistakes of the bourgeois parliamentary government, as their spontaneity protects them from opportunism. Continuous mass action continues to be the central element for achieving the Social Democratic readiness of the masses for Luxemburg.

For both thinkers, the Russian Revolution of 1905 combined the concept of bourgeois Democratic Revolution with the spontaneous struggles necessary to develop Social Democratic readiness, in a way doing two things at once, taking over the bourgeois revolution to achieve readiness. Around a decade later, the Russian Revolution of 1917 became a kind of exaggerated version of this multitasking, conducting a Social Revolution (succeeded by the establishment of a Socialist government) and deposing the remnant of the autocratic government at once. Similarly to the Russian Empire in 1905, the mass spontaneous struggles during Summer 2019 in Puerto Rico indicate that the country is at the stage of the revolutionary path that seeks to bring about a democratic revolution. Being a U.S. colony with a bi-party government formed around the issue of political status, the Puerto Rican masses proved to have the ability for action but lacked the political structures and unity necessary to stick to a path and enact change.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources:

- Anonymous. “Мыши кота погребают” (“Mice Burying the Cat”), Impression of the 1760’s, Collection of M. P. Pogodin, National Library of Russia, Accessed April 30, 2022.  
[https://primo.nlr.ru/permalink/f/oo3rn7/07NLR\\_LMS010114122](https://primo.nlr.ru/permalink/f/oo3rn7/07NLR_LMS010114122).
- Cover of V. I. Lenin’s *What is to be Done?* (“Что делать?”). 1902. Personal archive of Lenin V. I.. Accessed April 1, 2022.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin\\_book\\_1902.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin_book_1902.jpg).
- Lenin, Vladimir I. “August Bebel.” 1913. Marxists.org. Lenin Internet Archive. Accessed April 30, 2022.  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/aug/08.htm>.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. “‘Left-Wing’ Communism—an Infantile Disorder.” In *V. I. Lenin Collected Works*. Translated and edited by Julius Katzer, vol. 31, April-December 1920, 26-30. Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1977.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. *The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart (Proletary)*. September 1907, Lenin Internet Archive, 2004.  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1907/oct/20.htm>.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. “Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution.” In *Lenin on Politics and Revolution: Selected Writings*, edited by James E. Connor, 79-110. New York: Pegasus, 1968.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. “What is to be Done?.” In *Lenin on Politics and Revolution: Selected Writings*, edited by James E. Connor, 31-78. New York: Pegasus, 1968.
- Lenin, Vladimir I. (*Reply by N. Lenin to Rosa Luxemburg*) *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. September 1904, Lenin Internet Archive, 2002.  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1904/sep/15a.htm>.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. “Leninism or Marxism?.” In *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?*. Translated and edited by Bertram D. Wolfe, 81-108. Ann Arbor: The

University of Michigan Press, 1961.

Luxemburg, Rosa. "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions." In *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, edited by Mary-Alice Waters, 153-218. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970.

Secondary Sources:

Arcary, Valério. "Inventing an Internationalist Left for the New Century: Insights from Twentieth-Century German and Russian Marxism." Translated by Rosana Resende. *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 2 (2008): 80–96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27648089>.

Braunthal, Julius. "The Second International." In *History of the International, Volume 1: 1864-1914*. Translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell, 195-284. New York: Praeger, 1967.

Elliott, Charles F. "Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and the Dilemma of the Non-Revolutionary Proletariat." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 9, no. 4 (1965): 327–38. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2109232>.

Engels, Frederick. "The Program of the Blanquist Fugitives from the Paris Commune," *Der Volksstaat*, June 26, 1874, Marxist.org. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1874/06/26.htm>.

Frolich, Paul. "Full-Dress Rehearsal, 1905." In *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Work*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1969.

Gombin, Richard. *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (1979): 354–56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1879239>.

Jost, Annette. "Rosa Luxemburg y su Crítica de Lenin." *Materiales*, trans. Pedro Madrigal, no. 3 (1977): 196–222. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42641786>.

Luban, Ottokar. "Rosa Luxemburg's Concept of Spontaneity and Creativity in Proletarian Mass Movements—Theory and Practice." *International Critical Thought* 9, no. 4 (2019), 511-523. [10.1080/21598282.2019.1695362](https://doi.org/10.1080/21598282.2019.1695362).

Luban, Ottokar. "Rosa Luxemburg's Critique of Lenin's Ultra Centralistic Party Concept and of

- the Bolshevik Revolution.” *Critique, Journal of Socialist Theory* 40, no. 3 (August 2012): 357-365.
- Mazzei, Patricia. 2019. “Burlas, insultos y groserías: el escándalo de los chats del gobernador de Puerto Rico desata una crisis política (Published 2019).” *The New York Times*, July 15, 2019.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/es/2019/07/15/espanol/america-latina/rossello-puerto-rico.htm>.
- McMeekin, Sean. “The Old Regime, and Its Enemies.” In *The Russian Revolution: A New History*. 11-28. New York: Basic Books, 2017.
- Nettl, J. P. “Rosa Luxemburg—Who, What, and Why?.” In *Rosa Luxemburg*, 1-24. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.
- Schorske, Carl E. *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Schurer, H. “Some Reflections on Rosa Luxemburg and the Bolshevik Revolution.” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 40, no. 95 (1962): 356–72.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4205366>.
- Solomon M. Schwartz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers’ Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Thatcher, Ian D. “The First Histories of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, 1904-06.” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85, no. 4 (2007): 724–52.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25479136>.
- Tuchman, Barbara. W. “The Death of Jaurès, The Socialists: 1890-1914.” In *The Proud Tower*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966.
- Ulam, Adam B. “The Family.” In *The Bolsheviks: The Intellectual, Personal and Political History of the Triumph of Communism in Russia*, 1-20. New York: Collier Books, 1965.
- “Vladimir Lenin,” Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Vladimir-Lenin>.
- Wolfe, Bertram D. “Rosa Luxemburg and V. I. Lenin: The Opposite Poles of Revolutionary

Socialism.” *The Antioch Review* 21, no. 2 (1961): 209–26.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4610334>.

Winczewski, Damian. “Did Rosa Luxemburg Accuse Lenin of Blanquism? A different Interpretation.” *Science & Society* 83, no. 4 (October 2019), 536-560.

Appendix 1: Cover of V. I. Lenin's *What is to be Done?* ("Что дѣлать?") Personal archive of Lenin V. I., 1902: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin\\_book\\_1902.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lenin_book_1902.jpg):

