

Accumulation and its Discontents: The Mass Strike of 1905 and Rosa Luxemburg's Anti-
Imperialist Critique of Marx
Katarzyna Kaczówka
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First Reader: Elisheva Carlebach
Second Reader: Catherine Evtuhov

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Introduction

“If, therefore, the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches above all that the mass strike is not artificially ‘made,’ not ‘decided’ at random, not ‘propagated,’ but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability...[I]t is not by subjective criticism of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable, but only by objective investigation of the sources of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically inevitable, that the problem can be grasped or even discussed”.

¹

Rosa Luxemburg, 1906

Regardless of the specific scene of her appearance, Rosa Luxemburg’s portrayal in the historiography of early twentieth century Marxism has always been characterized by a sense of geographic, linguistic, and political liminality. Born to a Jewish family in the town of Zamość in Russian Poland in 1871, she would spend the majority of her life living and organizing worker’s movements in Berlin, first with the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and then with the further left-leaning Spartacus League. It was during her time agitating for the escalation of the 1918-1919 German Revolution with the Spartacus League that she was assassinated. Her knowledge of both Polish and Russian languages and the purported customs associated with their speakers also led to her critical role in agitating workers throughout the Russian Empire.² She was imprisoned five times for agitating strikes and other direct actions throughout these territories.

Traditions surrounding socialist organizing differed greatly between Berlin and the Russian Empire throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and these divergences remained either at tension with one another or synthesized with one another at

¹ Luxemburg, Rosa, and Helen Scott. *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg: Reform or Revolution & The Mass Strike*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket, 2008. Print, 117-118.

² Netti, J. P. *Rosa Luxemburg*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Print, 202. Luxemburg would spend at least a month out of every year between 1899 and 1904 speaking at workers’ and peasants’ councils throughout the Western part of the Russian Empire, most prominently in the region known as Galicia, in Southwest Poland.

different points in Luxemburg's body of work. Her earliest exposure to socialist organizing occurred throughout her childhood and early adulthood in Zamość and Warsaw. In this Tsarist Russian Imperial context socialist and other radical organizing remained criminalized. Because of its criminalization, any anti-Tsarist organizing throughout the Russian Empire did not occur through parliamentary channels, even if the goals of certain organizations were to establish such channels.³ Although urban centers throughout the Russian Empire remained hotbeds of debate between various political organizations (among them socialist, anarchist, nationalist, liberal-sympathetic; and many combinations thereof), all organizations shared in common a necessary clandestine nature.⁴ This clandestine nature of all political organizing imbued the political culture of all of these organizations with the quality of having to take extreme measures outside of the "civil discussions" of the public sphere.

The socialist political culture of Berlin, the city where Luxemburg would accelerate her political career after completing her doctoral dissertation in Zurich, was diametrically opposed to the clandestine character of socialist political cultures developing in the Russian Empire. Since 1863, the SPD had long been a party represented in the German Parliament. In 1897, the year of Luxemburg's arrival to the city, the SPD had over two million members and held about 20% of the seats in Parliament.⁵ Socialist political organizing thus had not only been decriminalized over thirty years before Luxemburg's arrival to the city, but its primary mode of political praxis within the city has taken on the form of liberal political participation. In other words, the party

³ Cole, George D. H. *A History of Socialist Thought*. London: MacMillan, 1969. Print, 159. The most frequent example of this sort of liberal demand would be the institution of a constitution.

⁴ The fact that this organizing was taken on in secret meant that much of the writing associated with these movements was published outside of the Russian Empire either by emigrés or during their visits to International Socialist conferences.

⁵ Weitz, Eric D. *Creating German Communism, 1890-1990: From Popular Protests to Socialist State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1997. Print, ix.

platform was designed to guide what measures of constitutional reform party leaders might endorse or attempt to push through the German Parliament. This remained distinct from the party platforms of many different political organizations developing throughout the Russian Empire, whose demands may have included the construction of a Constitution or a Parliamentary system; but had no avenue through which to express that platform besides various forms of direct action.⁶ Although the goals and the specific routes of direct action chosen between different political organizations (or even by certain figures within a given political organization) varied widely, it is safe to say that political organizations throughout the Russian Empire were far less juridicalized and liberalized in their political practices than was the SPD.

It is futile to align either Luxemburg's theoretical or political work firmly with only one of the above forms of political culture. However, her earliest organizational writings and her first formal work on political economy (her 1897 doctoral thesis "The Industrial Development of Poland") did bear indelible traces of her participation in a thriving internationalist socialist political culture which was almost uniquely local to Polish lands in the late nineteenth century. At the age of fifteen she had joined Proletariat—her first socialist political party—and had participated in the organization of a general strike.⁷ When the strike ended, four of the adult members of the party were executed. In other words, Luxemburg's first formal political engagements were already quite typical of the Russian Imperial political experience: their practices were illegal and direct, and often produced martyrs. Although there were socialist groups in Warsaw which were both antinationalist and nationalist⁸, this group is particularly typical of a relatively early tradition among antinationalist Polish socialists to explicitly organize

⁶ This direct action itself took many different forms: general strikes, assassination plots, Revolutionary Socialist organizing, etc.

⁷ Nettl, J. P. *Rosa Luxemburg*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Print, 56.

⁸ *Ibid*, 55.

across national lines throughout the empire.⁹ It is notable that explicitly internationalist socialist groups with this level of prominence or activity did not begin to appear in other parts of the Russian Empire until about twenty years later.¹⁰ Even if internationalist socialist organizations in Warsaw and other Polish cities did not produce a singular and undebated political ideology, the traditions which Luxemburg would inherit from those organizations were highly local in their conforming with a type of political culture unique to the Western portion of the Russian Empire.¹¹

After completing her doctoral work at the University of Zurich, Luxemburg moved to Berlin in 1897 to participate in the largest formally organized socialist party in the world: the Socialist Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Reasons for the continuation of her political career in Berlin rather than back in Warsaw were numerous, although chief among them was certainly the safety that a decriminalized party would offer Luxemburg. Her membership in the party—and her residence in Berlin—necessitated that she spend less of her time organizing and engaging in direct action than she had previously both in Warsaw and in Zurich.¹² This did not mean that she did not continue to agitate for direct action among the SPD: she would go on to split from Karl Kautsky for that very activity.¹³ Even as the content of her political activity was informed by the more fast-paced and direct styles of political organizing in Warsaw, its form had to begin to conform to some of the standards of the SPD. She thus began to spend most of her time writing for various socialist publications (those affiliated with the Party as well as others),

⁹ Nettl, J. P. *Rosa Luxemburg*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Print, 55. Proletariat was formed by Poles, Lithuanians, Jews, and Russians in Vilnius.

¹⁰ Cole, George D. H. *A History of Socialist Thought*. London: MacMillan, 1969. Print, 78.

¹¹ I here take the Western portion of the Empire to be the territory constituting present-day Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus; with Warsaw and Vilnius being particularly active and prescient nodes of this activity.

¹² Nettl, 70.

¹³ Luxemburg's famous 1900 essay "Reform or Revolution" would outline her qualms with the certain SPD members' focus on strictly parliamentary concerns.

attending and speaking at socialist conferences, and teaching at the SPD training center.¹⁴

However, she also continued to spend a significant portion of her time travelling throughout the Russian Empire to speak with and agitate both industrial and peasant workers. This is all to say that Luxemburg had limited first-hand exposure to the strains of revolutionary thought which were fermenting in the Western Russian Empire and which she would claim “awakened her”¹⁵ when she would return to Warsaw to participate in the Mass Strike of 1905. Although the developments in the ideologies of various political organizations in Warsaw were not homogenous throughout that time period, it is fair to say that her internationalist socialist peers had become far more fervent in the time of her absence.

After the completion of her doctoral degree at the University of Zurich, Luxemburg largely lived and wrote her works in the German language while living in a German city. Of particular note is her conflict with the leadership of the SPD during her latter years of membership in the party and during her split from the party and formation of the Spartacus League. She critiqued her old party’s effort to stage a counterrevolution in 1918 as paving the road for fascism throughout Germany.¹⁶ She would of course famously be assassinated by her former student and new leader of the party, Friedrich Ebert.¹⁷ Ebert would go on to be the first President of the German Republic. She simultaneously, however, remained critical of much of Lenin’s work, which she saw as an endorsement of the bureaucratization of the party professional. Luxemburg’s apprehensions about both her Berlin colleagues’ liberal sympathies and the emerging bureaucratization of the Bolshevik party would be reconfirmed in her experience of the Mass Strike of 1905 in Warsaw. It would also mark the moment when the

¹⁴ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. Ed. Georg Adler, Peter Hudis, and Annelies Laschitza. London: Verso, 2011. Print, 195.

¹⁵ Nettl, J. P. *Rosa Luxemburg*. New York: Schocken, 1989. Print, 204.

¹⁶ Ibid 103.

¹⁷ Ibid, 230.

mass, internationally directed action of workers would convince her both of the inevitability of the imperialist expansion of capital, as well as the according stakes of internationalist socialist organization to ensure its downfall.

The Mass Strike of 1905 is the component of the 1905 Russian Revolution which was constituted by a mass organized refusal to work in several industrial centers throughout the Empire in exchange for certain sets of economic and political demands. The other components of the Revolution which are more frequently discussed are instances of military mutiny and armed insurrection. These phenomena, particularly individual armed insurrections occurring under anarchist banners, were not always socialist in discursive rationale or in strategic content. Although the social and material conditions which fueled each city's (and, furthermore, each individual worker's) participation in the strike likely differed in focus, the participating cities' demands all shared a rejection of Tsarist rule, an opposition to the Russo-Japanese War, and certain economic demands. These economic demands were often related to both of aforementioned elements, as the poor and unjust working conditions were exacerbated by the war effort in major cities.¹⁸

I argue that what I refer to as internationalist class struggle appeared in two distinct but related forms in Luxemburg's work, and that they are roughly separated by the turning point of 1905.¹⁹ The first appeared in both her 1897 doctoral thesis, "The Industrial Development of Poland" and in her early pamphlets and speeches between roughly 1898 and 1904. This form of internationalism was one which centrally cites historical precedence or necessity as the reason for necessarily organizing across national boundaries. This was an internationalism which does

¹⁸ Blobaum, Robert. *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995. Print, 20.

¹⁹ Broadly, these terms encompass theories and practices of expressing solidarity between workers among different national or cultural groups based on their unity as members of a common class (urban worker, peasant worker, etc.)

not yet enact a head-on critique of Marx's own political economy; one which presumed that the labor required for the expansion of industrial capitalism only occurs in the local metropolitan geography. For example: "Russian and Polish workers organizing together will lead to the abdication of the Tsar and the eventual demise of Russian-Polish capital".²⁰ This was an internationalism which only recognizes the workers of industrialized nations as being candidates for international solidarity. Although as a Marxist it is implicit that the ultimate end of such proletarian victories is revolution and international socialism, such macrohistorical victories were deferred to the periphery of Luxemburg's writing in her thesis.

I argue that Luxemburg's 1913 vision of internationalist class struggle took on a different form. That form is expressed in the anti-imperialist critique which began to emerge in her writings 1905 and onwards; and which was most fully expressed in the theory of imperialism which she develops in the text of *Accumulation*. This change in form was one in which organizing across national boundaries wasn't simply motivated by historical contingency, but by systematic and universal necessity. This universal necessity was made clear in the third section of *Accumulation*, where Luxemburg outlined the impossibility of a 'pure' capitalist system (consisting of only metropolitan industrial workers and capitalists) to engage in expanded reproduction.²¹ Luxemburg's conclusion, then, was that capitalism has a tendency to create and maintain 'non-capitalist' areas—the newly dependent objects of the empire—outside of the metropole. Of course, in this process, these seemingly non-capitalist or peripheral societies were revealed to be the very fulcrum upon which capitalist society pivots; in fact the defining feature of capitalist society. Capitalism's universality, then, lay not in its movement of all workers into a single pre-determined historical path. Instead, it was universal only in its entanglement of all

²⁰ This phraseology is repeated in Chapter 2.5 of Luxemburg's "Industrial Development of Poland".

²¹ Luxemburg, Rosa, and Agnes Schwarzschild. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge and Paul, 1963. Print, 358.

matter into some sort of relation to it, whether it was one of exploitation, social reproduction, or parasitic profit. This critique of Marx's political economy thus also entails a vision of the movement of history through revolution in which the workers of the so-called periphery actually hold the most revolutionary force of all workers. This change in form was both inspired by the material organizing which occurred in the Strike of 1905 and was crafted to fuel more organizing like that strike. I will thus redefine her 1913 *Accumulation of Capital* (the text in which she most explicitly theorizes imperialism via the text of Marx) as an object not only created for revolution in the future-tense, but as one created by the Revolution of its past.

Among historians of Marxism *Accumulation* is largely viewed as an act of conversation with and adding-on-to the ideas of 'Great Men' (Marx).²² It is not uncommon for historians to describe Luxemburg as exemplary in her blurring of the distinction between theoretician and revolutionary.²³ However, this intermediary position between Luxemburg's theory and her praxis as expressed in the text of *Accumulation* does even more work in debunking the myth of *Accumulation*—or canonical Marxist works generally—as being birthed by an elite group of thinkers across space and time inside of an ahistorical vacuum. I argue that *Accumulation's* writing was deeply contingent on what she would describe as the organic revolutionary labor of the masses throughout the Russian Empire.

This intervention will take place first with respect to the warped legacy of Luxemburg and erasure of the Strike within and without the work of Gyorg Lukacs. This reading of Luxemburg occurred most prominently in his *History & Class Consciousness*; a work in which her name appeared 111 times. Lukacs argued in *History* that the reification of the consciousness of individual workers—their ideological belief that they are fundamentally atomized individuals

²² Miller, James. *History and Human Existence - From Marx to Merleau-Ponty*. Berkeley: University of California Press, c1979, 252.

²³ *Ibid*, 254.

rather than a commonly exploited class—was what necessitated a disciplined, top-down relation between the proletariat and the party professional.²⁴ Lukacs thus selectively misread Luxemburg’s “Mass Strike” essay as being the very basis for his claim that mass-led movements can only be made by elite party professionals. In actuality Luxemburg used the Strike as evidence to argue the very opposite: that the party professional was herself formed through a lateral relation with working people in the moment of direct action.²⁵

The adoption of Lukacs’s visceral misreading of Luxemburg among early critical theorists is precisely what has led both to Western critical theory’s preoccupation with Marxian traditions that are focused on cultural critique rather than political organizing and the mobilization of mass movements.²⁶ Lukacs’s resultant focus on the alienation of the worker, and not on the historically evidenced ways in which workers acted directly to end their exploitation, was inherited by the remaining major continental Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century: Bloch, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer.²⁷ The irony is that this inherited misreading takes as its urtext the very essay in which Luxemburg first argued that the Mass Strike of 1905 was proof of the necessary spontaneous energy of the masses to organize against the inevitable imperialist expansion of capital. With this turn in Marxian critical theory away from issues of exploitation and mass-created movements came also a further separation of European Marxism from the concerns of many anti-colonial thinkers who would take up Marxian methods contemporaneously to establish their critiques. Here the list is long, but I turn to DuBois in the

²⁴ Lukács, György. *History and Class Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971. Print, 41-42.

²⁵ Ibid, 41. “The Party must ensure that ‘in every phase and every aspect of the struggle the total sum of the available [spontaneous] power of the proletariat that has already been unleashed should be mobilised and that it should be expressed in the fighting stance of the Party.’”

²⁶ Harootunian, Harry D. *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism*. New York: Columbia UP, 2015. Print.

²⁷ Jay, Martin. *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept From Lukacs to Habermas*. Berkeley: U of California, 1984. Print, 150.

U.S., C.L.R. James in Trinidad and Great Britain, and the Césaires in Martinique as particularly prominent examples of such thinkers. I will not perform an explicit reading of Luxemburg's work alongside theirs. However, my tracing of the influence of the internationalist, mass action of the Strike on Luxemburg's critique of political economy thus aims to denaturalize the notion that European Marxists were no longer beholden to concern themselves with the issue of exploitation, especially the continuing exploitation of the Global South. *Accumulation* makes a strong and early claim that this exploitation ought to in fact be the center of Marxist thought and practice.²⁸

I will also argue against the work of Robert Blobaum, who narrates Warsaw participation in the Strike as evidence of an organic and revolutionary nationalism which would result both in Polish workers' inevitable striving towards a liberal nation-state. Over 400,000 Warsaw workers participated in the mass general strike in January of 1905. Although various nationalist political organizations existed throughout Warsaw in 1905, the demands of these 400,000 participants were formulated almost exclusively in conjunction with three socialist organizations: the PPS, the SDKPiL, and the Bund. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, all three of these organizations (even the PPS) invested their public political messaging to workers with internationalist slogans which called for solidarity and collaboration between various nations of workers. Furthermore, it was precisely the slogans of the masses which first spurred the idea of

²⁸ I describe this as early especially because it is published four years before Lenin's more widely circulated *Imperialism*. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the differences between Luxemburg's and Lenin's theories of imperialism. However, it is important to note that *Accumulation* is written during a time when the existence of a nation-state does not yet seem to be an inescapable fact of political life, while Lenin's *Imperialism* is written right as this form of governance seemed to be emerging as inevitable during World War I. This latter fact would influence Lenin's decision to formulate *Imperialism* in part as evidence of the need to build national cadres in the emerging Soviet Union.

the inevitability of imperialism's expansion—and thus the necessity of international revolution—in Luxemburg's work.²⁹

These primary, local historiographic interventions of course also carry with them certain general claims both about how historians theorize history and how many Marxian theorists conceive of the history of their respective fields. I use the Mass Strike of 1905 and *Accumulation* as a case study to demonstrate the importance of considering social history and intellectual history as immanent to and mutually constitutive of one another. Here I am inspired by the work of Susan Buck-Morss in *Hegel & Haiti*. Buck-Morss demonstrates the myriad ways in which Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic was itself produced by the revolutionary labor of formerly enslaved black people in the Haitian Revolution. In the case of Hegel, of course, the dialectical relationship between theory/theoretician and the labor of anticolonial revolution is precisely what strengthens the rationale of colonialism writ-large.³⁰ Just like the Master of his so-called abstract theory, Hegel deludes himself into believing himself to be a sovereign subject and his intellectual work the direct and sole product thereof. Both the text of *Phenomenology* and the delusion of its sovereign production is funded by the expropriated intellectual labor of the Haitian Revolutionary masses.

In my iteration of this argument as it concerns Luxemburg's imbrication in the social movements of her time, I do not attempt to hint that there is some sort of natural or even socially intuitive propensity towards radical internationalist organizing among peoples inhabiting former Russian Imperial lands. I argue instead that the theory of imperialism developed in *Accumulation* was not the product of a single or unique writer conversing with the 'Great Books' of Marxian thought. Rather, the ferment from which it sprung was the very moment of mass social

²⁹ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 65.

³⁰ See Hegel's geographical determinism throughout his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.

revolution which revealed to Luxemburg both the contradictions and non-linear development of industrial capitalism and the contradictions of Marx's text which continued to obfuscate the full dimensions of that development.

Chapter One: Luxemburg's "Industrial Development of Poland"

Section I: The Publication of "Industrial Development" and Its Historical Moment

Luxemburg first formulated an argument concerning industrial capitalism's creation of "peripheral" economic areas in her 1897 doctoral thesis, "The Industrial Development of Poland".³¹ Luxemburg argues in her doctoral thesis that there is a historical distinction between

³¹ Although Luxemburg defended the thesis at the University of Zurich in 1897, it was more widely published by the relatively prestigious publishing house Duncker & Humblot in 1898. For context, other

those forms of statecraft which work at the behest of capital (Western European empires) and those forms of statecraft which use industrial capital for their own ends. This latter form of statecraft was exemplified by the entwinement of Russian governmental efforts at expansion into China with continued protectionist policies afforded by the Russian state to its urban industrialists.³² This phenomenon signifies that Russian capital is not “strong enough” on its own to enter into the Chinese market. Luxemburg in later years would describe the parasitic relation between the Russian state and Russian capital as an example of a society which has not yet created an imperialist relation with its emerging markets; but which is perhaps on the brink of doing so.³³

Luxemburg’s choice of an empirical method in the construction of “Industrial Development” was guided by her own battles with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) preceding and continuing beyond 1898. This nominally socialist party had formed in 1892, and—although a member of the Second International—was united in its position that international socialist revolution had to be postponed until the reunification and independence of Poland had been achieved. Luxemburg ultimately concluded in her thesis that Polish urban industry ought to be brought further in competition and interaction with Russian urban industry. Such a conclusion would be considered most politically potent in converting members of the PPS to the internationalist SDKPiL if it was supported using data concerning the historical collaboration and competition of Polish and Russian capital roughly since the time of the Third Partition of

“alumni” whose work had gone through the publishing house included Georg W.F. Hegel, Max Weber, George Simmel, and eventually John Meynard Keynes.

³² If we were to describe this argument in the terms which she develops in *Accumulation*, Russian statecraft in the late nineteenth century was certainly imperial (it aimed at expansion of state influence into other geographic territories), but not imperialist (it was not used as a tool *of* expanding metropolitan industry). I engage in this brief anachronistic experiment to demonstrate that Luxemburg’s early work was continuous in the content of its political concerns with her later work, even as its form changes to suit the political stakes of her changing historical context.

³³ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 360.

Poland (1795). This Partition brought Polish lands under the jurisdiction of the Russian Empire and its memory had been mobilized by various Polish nationalist groups in order to attempt to stir uprisings to gain independence.

Although Luxemburg's own suspicions concerning the integrity of Marx's model of expanded reproduction seep through the text of the doctoral thesis, these suspicions were not made explicit as an analytical critique. Exegeses of Marx's model of expanded reproduction would have had little impact on the views of a party which capitalized more on the construction of tragic historical narratives concerning the partition than on appeals to Marxist political economy.³⁴ Since the PPS structured its own arguments for Polish national independence by deploying abstract symbols of alleged national origin (the exploited peasant, etc.), Luxemburg decided to meet their idealist nostalgia with empirical data concerning the immediate history of Polish industry, 1820 onward.

"Industrial Development" was the earliest example of a series of writings by major emerging Marxist intellectuals at the end of the twentieth century which focused specifically on the development of capitalism throughout the Russian Empire. These figures included Legalist-Marxist thinkers Sergei Bulgakov and Mikhail Tugan-Baranovsky, as well as the then-unknown Vladimir Lenin.³⁵ Indeed, the same year that Luxemburg published her thesis through Duncker and Hublot, Vladimir Lenin was busy performing empirical research for a similar book entitled

³⁴ Marx's critique of political economy very well could have been used to promote Polish independence during this time. Both the PPS and Marx presumed that full capitalist development was only possible in a modern nation-state.

³⁵ Although much research has been done to establish 1905 as point of transformative rupture in the latter three thinkers' careers, no such work has yet been done for Luxemburg's career. That Luxemburg would explicitly debate both Bulgakov and Tugan-Baranovsky in the wake of 1905 and in the text of *Accumulation* is evidence that although these figures were her interlocutors.

*The Development of Capitalism in Russia.*³⁶ The populist Russian nationalist Narodniks were to Lenin what the PPS was to Luxemburg. The Narodniks deployed nominally Marxist, anti-capitalist rhetoric in order to claim that both Russian industry and Russian workers ought to isolate themselves from the economies of other nations so as to prevent the spread and intensification of capitalism in the motherland. Both thinkers viewed these political organizations as obstacles to the progressive overthrow of Tsarism which was necessary on the road to international socialism. During the late 1890's, both Luxemburg and Lenin considered the strengthening of industrial capitalism throughout the Russian Empire to be the acceleratory force necessary for capitalism's own eventual demise.

The key analytic distinction between Luxemburg's 1898 text and Lenin's 1899 text was one of dimensionality and directionality rather than one of motion. Luxemburg, even in 1898, considered the eventual demise of capitalism to be facilitated by the very non-linear nature of its development³⁷; its propensity to spiral so that money accumulates for its own sake. Lenin, on the other hand, viewed the development of capitalism as a unidirectional progressive historical force. This force led to the more or less even industrial development of all places affected by its expansion. Luxemburg at this point had not made the claim that Polish and Russian workers ought to unite with workers of the so-called "Orient" into which Polish and Russian capital was expanding. However, her demonstration of the unevenness of capitalism's expansion was a position unique among her contemporaries.

Although Luxemburg cites the presence of Polish and Russian capital throughout the so-called Orient she does not yet conceive of the workers of these markets as candidates with whom Polish and Russian workers might also develop a solidarity. It is important to note the irony of

³⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 73.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 38.

this provincial Eurocentric view considering the multivariant international connections the Mass Strike of 1905 would come to have throughout disparate parts of the Russian Empire and outside of it. The Strike would come to be materially funded by other revolutionary struggles throughout Eurasia and would be deeply ideologically influenced by the other political struggles throughout the continent.³⁸ Although Luxemburg here treated China and Southern Russia as empty geographies whose laborers seem to be immaterial and incorporeal, we will see that the biggest political upheaval of her career (and her resultant intellectual transformation) will be formed by the political labors of people in these very lands. The choice to omit the workers in these lands was a result of the very Eurocentrism of both sides of the debate in which she and the PPS were engaged. Both Luxemburg and the PPS took as their assumed immediate goal the rejection of Tsarist rule in the Western and Northern territories of the Empire; whether through his full abdication by united Polish and Russian workers, or through Polish independence from the Russian Empire.

It would take a radical change in Luxemburg's understanding of the social and political stakes of the nature of expanded reproduction for her method to change from an empirical to a systematic analytic one; and for her conception of "international" revolution to shift from the Russian Empire to the Empire's so-called peripheries. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, this radical change occurred in the very ferment of social and political activity, at one of the most active and internationally connected sites of the 1905 Mass Strike and of the early-twentieth century revolutionary movements throughout Eurasia in general. Luxemburg had enough foresight in her doctoral thesis to recognize that metropolitan Polish and Russian industrial capital was imbricated in, and part of the same system as, the markets of Southern Russia and the

³⁸ MacKenzie, David. 1993. "Eurasia -- the Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored by Abraham Ascher." *Historian* 55 (4): 727.

Far East. However, she had not yet made the claim which she will begin to develop in 1905 that these ‘peripheral’ areas are in fact the center of both capitalist development and its eventual collapse.

Section II: “The Industrial Development of Poland” and *Kapital*

Both the 1897 “Industrial Development” and the 1913 *Accumulation of Capital* shared an attempt to denaturalize the notion that national economies develop independently of one another; that the development of capitalism in one geographic area neither affects nor is affected by the economic activity in another geographic area. Although not framed as a critique of political economy, “Industrial Development” did subsequently reject the presuppositions of Marx’s *Kapital*. Although Marx posited his work as an all-encompassing theoretical critique of capitalist political economy, it assumed that that political economy takes the same form as the local effects which are most superficially evident in the eyes of its author: within an industrialized nation-state like the one of Great Britain.

Indeed, Marx drew the bulk of his conclusions assuming that the proletarian class subject to exploitation in capitalist society—and thus meant to take over the means of production—engages uniformly in industrial and rationalized wage-labor. This was precisely what allowed him to exclude from the purview of capitalist exploitation and the possibility of developing revolutionary consciousness the labors of what he called the lumpenproletariat. The colonized peasant who produces the raw materials which are then sent to be processed in the British factory is considered a lumpen element of capitalist society according to Marx because she is typically isolated from the masses of other workers like her and thus does not understand herself as part of a class. This diagnosis of the peasant’s inevitable isolation from other peasant workers—and her

resultant inability to develop class consciousness—is itself backed by certain racist assumptions concerning the labor and life of various peasant populations, especially colonized ones.³⁹

Thus Luxemburg’s “Industrial Development” deserves careful consideration because it demonstrates a more globally oriented interpretation of capitalist production than was typical of other Marxists contemporary to her moment. Furthermore, it demonstrates an early empirical observation of imperialist, expanded reproduction which would later be diagnosed as a systemic problem endemic and central to the existence of capitalism in *Accumulation*. Although in “Industrial Development” the phenomena of imperialist expansion are still described as epiphenomenal to the industrial metropolitan production of the factory, this text nonetheless marks the beginning of Luxemburg’s thinking through the provincializing, Eurocentric assumptions of Marx’s work on political economy. It is only by examining the contours of Luxemburg’s earliest empirical observations of imperialist expansion that we can fully outline the ways in which the Mass Strike of 1905 will come to push her to reformulate these observations into a full-fledged critique of that political economy in 1913.

Section III: “Industrial Development”: The Mutual Co-Constitution of Polish & Russian Capital

Rosa Luxemburg’s “Industrial Development of Poland” was split into two parts, each part containing five chapters. The first part concerns “The History and Present State of Polish Industry” and the latter part concerns “Russia’s Economic Policy in Poland”. However, these two issues are immediately revealed to be dialectically shaped by one another. Luxemburg argues in the first chapter of “History” that the Third Partition of Poland by Russia in 1795 was the pivotal event which set the stage for the development of Poland into a capitalist economy.

³⁹ Note the differences in tone between Marx’s 1853 article “British Rule in India”, condoning the East India Company’s “civilizing mission”, and of Marx’s 1882 letter to Karl Kautsky lamenting the plight of the Polish peasant.

More specifically, it was the continued influx of “immigrating officials and usurers... who owed their material existence to the country’s great political and economic crisis”⁴⁰ which created a brand-new urban capitalist class. The existence of this class was previously curtailed because of pre-1795 Poland’s continual “decay of urban production and trade”.⁴¹ The lending of capital from these new immigrants to the semi-feudal nobility—and the resultant continuous indebtedness of the nobility—propelled a significant move away from patrimonial land ownership between 1800 and 1820.⁴²

Poland’s distinct lack of national sovereignty and independence is what made it “the clearest expression”⁴³ and in fact the premonition of the advancement of Russia’s political economy.⁴⁴ Poland’s lack of national political sovereignty created the possibility for its emerging capitalist class to interact and compete with new capital-holding immigrants. The state provided free houses, free building materials necessary for the construction of industrial buildings and machinery (iron, etc.), rent exemptions, a six-year long exemption from taxes, exemption from military conscription, and the duty-free import of foreign materials to potential immigrants.⁴⁵ Although the collapse of feudalism was nominally on the agenda of many of the secret Polish nationalist societies which favored independence, it was precisely this development of capitalist industry brought on by the Russian jurisdiction over Congress Poland which would lay the infrastructural and industrial groundwork necessary for the peasantry to proletarianize in 1864.

⁴⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 84. These are presumably mostly immigrants from other parts of the Russian Empire.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 84.

⁴² *Ibid*, 85. Much of the nobility was so deeply in debt to these new German capital lenders that Polish serfdom likely would have totally collapsed had the Polish Kingdom not subsidized the debt. Serfdom in the Western Russian Empire was barely surviving without government intervention.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 82.

⁴⁴ The rest of the Russian Empire would officially abolish serfdom in 1861.

⁴⁵ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 85.

Although Luxemburg has yet to turn to develop a critique of Marx's key text, we thus see that even in her earliest work she vehemently opposed to Marx's empirical claims supporting the PPS's support of Polish independence. He writes in 1882 that Polish national sovereignty is necessary for the development of its industry and a strong proletarian socialist movement.⁴⁶ Although Marx describes these claims in historical terms, citing the attempted Revolution of 1848 as his evidence, we see distinctly how his omission of the development of Polish exports to outside markets itself is based on an analytic error in his work. This error is the presumption that a so-called national economy could ever be a closed system at any stage of its development; that Polish independence and a nominal abolition of serfdom would automatically provide the peasantry with an alternative form of industrialized labor. Luxemburg rightfully points out in her thesis that such a route would have left Poland with no market to which it might sell the goods from its slowly developing manufacturing towns.⁴⁷ The hypothetically newly freed peasants would indeed have immediately found themselves either in the depths of starvation or engaging in alternate forms of bonded labor. Luxemburg's very choice to analyze the growth of the Polish economy as it depended on influxes of foreign capital and outflows of newly manufactured goods is already an implicit critique of the assumptions in Marx's political economy which shaped his empirical analysis of Polish independence.

These outflows of manufactured cloth goods in the 1820s precipitated by the introduction of foreign capital would lay the foundation of the proper large-scale industry in Polish cities that

⁴⁶ Marx writes in an 1882 letter to Karl Kautsky: "So long as Poland is partitioned and subjugated, therefore neither a strong socialist party can develop in the country itself nor can there arise real international intercourse between the proletarian parties in Germany, etc, with *other than émigré Poles.*" Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Briefe an A Bebel, W Liebknecht, K Kautsky und andere* (Moscow, 1933). Note the irony of such a claim considering the very lack of militancy of the German SPD relative to the various socialist parties which would participate in the Warsaw contingent of the 1905 Strike, which at its height was the most active site of the Strike.

⁴⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 92.

would emerge in the 1840s. Both this foundation and its outgrowths were precipitated by the concurrent growth of Polish exports to Russia and China-by-way-of-Russia.⁴⁸ The prominence of Polish industry among both markets was in fact a result of Congress Poland's lack of economic protectionist measures relative to Russia proper. The market of Congress Poland became an enticing source of goods which for metropolitan Russians would have been too pricy to get from outside of the bounds of the Empire (Germany). Furthermore, metropolitan Chinese consumers were deterred from purchasing wool cloth goods from the Central and Eastern parts of the Russian Empire because of their strict tariffs. Congress Poland's membership in the Empire allowed its manufacturers tariff-free travel to transport their products to Chinese markets using Russian road and river systems. Tellingly, the period during which both sets of exports significantly decreased began in 1831, the year of the Polish uprising.⁴⁹ This would lead to a heightened tariff between Poland and Russia and the abolition of free transit to China through Russian lands. This punishment of the Polish national economy in an attempt to benefit the Russian national economy would in fact harm the industries of both.

Luxemburg demonstrates in her work that the increased activity between any two national markets is necessarily accelerated and brought into more robust fruition when one or both of the national markets becomes embedded in military conflict. She argues that the return to net positive industrial development and transition to "large-scale industry"⁵⁰ in Poland is incited by the decreased seclusion of its national economy through the abolition of customs-barriers between Poland and Russia. More importantly, though, she argues that this nominally increased ease of economic interaction between Poland and Russia could not reap its full economic

⁴⁸ Ibid, 88-89.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 89.

⁵⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 92.

potential for either national economy if it were not for the “revolutionizing effect” of the Crimean War (1853-1856).⁵¹ The newfound need to clothe the Russian military presence—which after the War was now indefinitely stationed throughout more distant points in the empire—quickly with cheap manufactured goods (the cheapest of which were in Poland) precipitated the construction of railroad lines linking Polish cities with distant corners of the Russian Empire. Between 1862 and 1877 Warsaw and Łódź became connected through new railroad lines to St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Wolynien, White Russia, Podolien, Odessa, Batumi, Rostov, and a series of other cities in southern Russia and Transcaucasia.⁵²

This increased demand for various manufactured goods during the War, like the manufacture spurred by the 1795 partition of Poland, created the jobs necessary for the newly freed serfs of 1861 to enter the industrial workforce. The demand for manufactured cloth during the war precipitated the introduction of the mechanical loom and spindle into Polish factories, first into the Scheibler factory in Łódź in 1854. This incentivized Russian manufacturers to follow suit: the first mechanical spinning mill was created in Moscow the following year.⁵³ Although the collapses of serfdom in Russia in 1861 and in Poland in 1864 were caused by the convergence of many historical phenomena which are outside of the scope of this paper, these factories created during and immediately after the Crimean War would come to expand in order to employ vast segments of these emerging members of the industrial working class. Had Russian manufacturers not been forced to accelerate industrialization during the War and their competition with Polish industrialists, many of these new industrial workers would have simply become free and landless.

⁵¹ Ibid, 93.

⁵² Ibid, 94. Note that the railroad lines constructed to connect these cities for the purposes of the War would later be used as routes of weapon and information transfer during the 1905 Mass Strike.

⁵³ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 94.

Thus Luxemburg demonstrates that the development of one national industry and the other are two sides of the same coin: that advances in the one precipitate parallel, although not identical, advances in the other. Furthermore, the advances of both Polish and Russian industries are fueled by the geographic and technological integration of the two through the construction of railroad lines and exchanges of manufacturing technology. In order to spur the development of these economies in the 1850s, however, the spark which set off the above changes was that of armed military conflict. Here this military conflict is described as an additional catalyst of capitalist expansion, but in the Mass Strike of 1905 Luxemburg will see mass opposition to the Russo-Japanese War as evidence of its centrality as part of the very fuel through which disparate local realities become irrevocably enmeshed in a relation of exploitation to the metropolitan economy. The systematic occurrence of armed military in the expansion of markets is an analytic principle which Luxemburg will establish in *Accumulation*, particularly in its final chapter, “Militarism as a Province of Accumulation”.

Here, however, Luxemburg continues to efface the precise position of the violence and labor involved in that expansion, even if she acknowledges that it requires a military element. The subject taking on the actions of socioeconomic change in Luxemburg’s sentences is either national industry or manufacturing in the abstract (i.e. “Polish industry gains very fertile ground...”⁵⁴ because of the Crimean War) or groups of Polish/Russian *industrialists*. The former narrative choice refers to the general system of relations characterizing the respective national economies—Polish industry or manufacturing consists of all elements (industrialists, workers, and capital) which go into its formation and growth. However, the only constituent element of Polish and Russian industry which Luxemburg describes as acting in the world as a group of

⁵⁴ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 121.

historical subjects throughout her first chapter is groups of Polish and Russian *industrialists*. Here is a characteristic example of their activities in her narrative: “But the Polish industrialists are also running ahead of the Russians specifically in the opening up of Asian markets.”⁵⁵ Even though the Crimean War opened up markets for Polish manufacturing in the war effort itself, it also opened up markets of various local populations which would steadily consume more Polish manufactured goods long after the war.⁵⁶ In other words, Polish industrialists—and Polish industry for that matter—depended in part upon workers in Polish city centers to manufacture these goods.

More importantly, they depended on the populations of workers in Odessa, Donetsk, Baku, Batumi and other euphemistically named “new markets” to consume those goods and, increasingly, to produce the raw materials necessary for the final production of those goods.⁵⁷ Indeed, the diversification of both Polish and Russian metropolitan industry depended on the increased access gained by Polish industrialists to cheap coke, coal, iron and cotton in Southern Russia and Transcaucasia during and after the Crimean War. The Odessa-Łódź line’s speedy and subsidized provision of the aforementioned materials to Polish industrialists particularly allowed Polish and later Russian metallurgical production to boom, an industry which before 1853 had been practically non-existent relative to the hegemonic textile production in Northern and Western city centers.⁵⁸ Here it is important to note that Briansk, Warsaw Steel, and Putilov Ironworks companies would come to almost exclusively use iron ore from this region in order to

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 172.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 122.

⁵⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 119. This was particularly the case with sugar beet manufacture.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 153. See also: McCaffray, Susan Purves. *The Politics of Industrialization in Tsarist Russia: The Association of Southern Coal and Steel Producers, 1874-1914*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1996. Print, 156.

produce railways, artillery, and other metallurgical goods following the Crimean War.⁵⁹ The Putilov Ironworks Company would be considered the birthplace of the Mass Strike in St. Petersburg; and Warsaw Steel and Briansk would be the corporations owning the plants experiencing the Mass Strike in Warsaw and Moscow respectively.

However, as we will see in Chapter Two, the revolutionary unrest which we typically envision having taken place exclusively in cities like St. Petersburg and Warsaw actually began in the very cities whose monopolization by Polish and Russian industrialists Luxemburg favorably narrates above. The prescience of the wave of general strikes in Southern Russia and Transcaucasia will convince Luxemburg that Southern workers' previous peripheralization at the hands of Northern industrialists was in fact deeply entwined with both the new imperialist war in the Far East and the revolutionary unrest in Northern metropolitan centers.⁶⁰ Indeed, she would note in 1906 that the various labors of the Mass Strike, as fueled and begun in the Southern periphery of the Empire, was an attempt to break the cycle of imperialist expansion of which both the Crimean War and the Russo-Japanese War would become a part. Her doctoral thesis's misattribution of productive and historical force to a group of local industrialists rather than to the workers whose labor power *makes* both commodities and history would become the central target of Luxemburg's 1913 critique of Marx's closed system of Expanded Reproduction. Writing to her German colleagues in the SPD while in the midst of the Warsaw Strike, she would contend that it would take "intercourse with the people in the movement" in order for that schema which she had previously taken to be self-evident to be fundamentally shaken.⁶¹

⁵⁹ McCaffrey, 153.

⁶⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York, NY: Monthly Review, 2004. Print, 175.

⁶¹ Ettinger, Elżbieta. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. Print, 137.

Chapter Two: The Mass Strike and Luxemburg

“[T]he mass strike in Russia displays such a multiplicity of the most varied forms of action that it is altogether impossible to speak of ‘the’ mass strike, of an abstract schematic mass strike. All the factors of the mass strike, as well as its character, are not only different in the different towns and districts of the country, but its general character has often changed in the course of the revolution.”⁶²

Rosa Luxemburg, “Massenstreik”, 1906

Section One: The Strike Outside of Warsaw

The Mass Strike of 1905—and the broader Russian Revolution of which it was a part—is traditionally cited as having begun on January 22 of that year, Bloody Sunday. The local socialist organizations and workers’ councils in the participating cities would come to rhetorically tie to the state violence committed in St. Petersburg to their economic and political demands.

However, the general rise in mass political activity throughout the Empire in the years preceding and proceeding 1905 troubles this normative periodization of the Strike and proves Bloody

⁶² Luxemburg, Rosa, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York, NY: Monthly Review, 2004. Print, 173.

Sunday to be simply one symptom of a much more geographically expansive exploitative socioeconomic system.

Luxemburg put it best in her 1906 pamphlet “Massenstreik” that the Strike was defined by its very multiplicity across space and time: its very lack of a stable, delineable point of origin. In the pamphlet Luxemburg specifically demonstrates that the wave of general strikes which would reach Petersburg, Moscow, Warsaw, Łódź, and other Northern and Western cities were actually fueled by a previous set of strikes throughout Southern and Central Russia beginning in March of 1902. These strikes would continue and change their size, scope, and political demands in reaction to the wave of strikes and other mass (mostly anti-war⁶³) demonstrations developing in the North and West throughout 1904-1906. Throughout this chapter I will use the term ‘Mass Strike’ to refer to both the Mass Strike as it is typically periodized according to its lifetime in the North and West (occurring from 1905-1906) and the larger Mass Strike which encompasses both the first Southern and the later waves of strikes (occurring from 1902-1906). I choose to consider the initial Southern wave of strikes a part of the temporally and geographically broader Mass Strike because: 1. This wave of political unrest was critical in inspiring the wave of strikes in the North and West which historians normatively consider to have begun on Bloody Sunday; 2. Although the demands between the two waves of strikes were not identical throughout space and time, they shared a fundamental opposition to the mutually supporting Tsarist regime and metropolitan capitalist class.

Although the workers and soldiers who demonstrated in St. Petersburg on Bloody Sunday would express a range of demands and forms of political messaging against the Tsar, the mass of striking workers who were mobilized in the demonstration itself did not appear out of nowhere. This component of the Russian Revolution is often portrayed as simply being evidence of a

⁶³ The Russo-Japanese War, declared in February of 1904.

growing demand for liberal reform throughout urban centers of the Empire. However, the workers' initial collective action which brought them to become more formally organized in 1904 occurred in response to the arbitrary firing of four workers at the Putilov Ironworks plant. This incited a mass strike of virtually all the plant's 12,000 workers and over 155,000 other workers at 382 other plants in the city.⁶⁴ Thus the initial mobilization of workers, a portion of whom later participated in the Sunday demonstration, was motivated by labor-oriented demands: no firing of workers without due cause, an eight-hour work day, and an elected workers' committee. The Putilov plant was a central site of railroad and artillery production necessary for the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the weapons which would be transported on that railroad to contribute towards the Russo-Japanese War.⁶⁵ Thus their labor-centered demands were also accompanied by critiques of the War's negative effects on Russian industrial workers, although they did not yet establish any explicit platform calling for an end to the War.

Father Gapon, the Orthodox priest who would gather the assembly of workers to deliver their petition to the Tsar, drafted it to include measures to improve industrial working conditions, fairer wages, an eight-hour day, universal suffrage, and an end to the Russo-Japanese War. Although these demands were not wholly discontinuous with the demands laid forth by workers involved in the initial mass strike throughout the city, it is also important to note that Gapon's inclusion of the more liberal demands were shaped by his own collaboration with the Petersburg Okhrana.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the 1896 general strike in Petersburg which would serve as the

⁶⁴ Harcave, Sidney Samuel. *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905*. London: Macmillan, 1964. Print, 68-72.

⁶⁵ Harcave, Sidney Samuel. *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905*. London: Macmillan, 1964. Print, 42.

⁶⁶ The Okhrana was the secret police force which collaborated with the gendarmes and was stationed throughout Russian cities. It was first formed in 1881 to combat left-wing revolutionary activity. It often clandestinely collaborated with supposed allies of revolutionary or political terrorist organizations in

inspiration for the Putilov workers included similarly labor-centered demands: paid compensation on coronation holidays, a ten-hour work day, and increased pay for piecework.⁶⁷ This earlier strike included 40,000 participating workers at the plant and approximately 73,000 workers at other plants throughout the city.⁶⁸ Thus the dominant image of Bloody Sunday and the events preceding and following it as being solely the product of popular demands for a liberal government in fact fail to recognize that these ideas were quite secondary to their working conditions and the effects of the War at the time. As we will see throughout the rest of this chapter, workers' popular demands for a liberal government were not inherently there from the Strike's inception; but would grow out of an increasing understanding that economic exploitation and militarism were bolstered by the autocratic form of the Tsarist regime.⁶⁹

Section Two: Warsaw During 1905

It is true that the number of workers involved in the Warsaw component of the Mass Strike throughout 1905-1906 was notably greater than those in other cities. Twice as many workers were involved at its height as there were in St. Petersburg at its height.⁷⁰ The cause of this expansive participation is often described as the specific nationalist discontent held against recent policies of so-called Russification in Polish schools and the supposedly disproportionate conscription of Polish soldiers in the Russo-Japanese War relative to other populations in the Empire. This view is most notably defended by Robert Blobaum, who claims that Warsaw

order to divert the more radical goals of these movements towards liberal demands, such as voting rights and the introduction of a constitution. One might call this a policy of containment.

⁶⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York, NY: Monthly Review, 2004. Print, 174.

⁶⁸ Harcave, 40.

⁶⁹ Blobaum and other authors have portrayed the events of the Russian Revolution of 1905—and other revolutionary movements throughout Eurasia at the turn of the century—as evidence of the inevitability of “modern” liberal forms of governance (and eventually the modern nation-state) spreading from the West to the East.

⁷⁰ Blobaum, Robert. *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*. Ithaca: Cornell U, 1995. Print, 72.

workers' participation in the strike was in fact the sound of a suffocated modern nation-state attempting to give birth to itself.⁷¹ He argues that, although the Strike was exclusively organized by workers' councils and socialist parties⁷², the PPS's role in cultivating anti-war demonstrations before the Strike and in organizing participants in the Strike is evidence of this fact.

However, this argument ignores the fact that the PPS—the most nationalist-leaning socialist organization in Warsaw—was only one of three organizations (along with the SDKPiL and the Bund) leading these changes in mass political activity in the city at the time. As we know, the SDKPiL aimed to form an alliance between workers of all nations throughout the Russian Empire to overthrow the Tsar, end the War, and to eventually overthrow capitalism. The Jewish Bund similarly promoted collaboration with workers of other nationalities in the Mass Strike to achieve its shared shorter term aims. They differed from the SDKPiL in their specific vision of a future socialist federation of nations—each of which would maintain cultural autonomy—throughout the former Russian Empire.⁷³ The prominence of these two organizations directly contradicts the dominant historiographic interpretation of the Warsaw strike as an attempt at a Polish national uprising.

Blobaum also fails to take into account the fact that the PPS itself by 1904 had split into two factions: the Old Guard (*Starzy*) and the Young Guard (*Młodzi*). The Old Guard operated from its émigré headquarters in London, while the majority of the Young Guard continued to

⁷¹ Ibid, 4. Here it is important to note how similar Blobaum's retroactive projection of Poland's inevitable striving towards national territorial autonomy is to Marx's same 1882 arguments for Polish national autonomy which Luxemburg refuted in her doctoral thesis.

⁷² Rather than the clandestine nationalist parties which operated in parts of the countryside at this time. Blobaum himself stresses this point on page 58.

⁷³ The general platform of the SDKPiL was that cultural autonomy would organically proceed from the establishment of socialism. The Bund differed in that it did not reject the promotion of legal protections for ethnic minorities ensuring cultural autonomy in the process of the class struggle which would precede the establishment of a socialist multinational federation. This model of the multinational socialist federation was shared by the Austro-Marxist School, the work of which would influence the nationality policy of Vladimir Lenin.

reside in Congress Poland. The former faction, led by the eventual Chief of State Józef Piłsudski, supported a Polish national uprising which would split off from other workers both throughout the Russian Empire and within the territory of Congress Poland.⁷⁴ The latter faction increasingly came to support a union of Polish workers with all workers throughout the Empire in order to overthrow the Tsar and would increasingly try to ally themselves and co-organize demonstrations with the SDKPiL.⁷⁵ The division between these factions would become more intense during this increase in revolutionary political activity throughout 1904-1906. It is crucial to note that this latter faction of the PPS—because of its physical presence among the working populations with which they were concerned—maintained greater control over the publications, demonstrations, and other forms of political messaging which the masses demonstrating and participating in the strike would encounter throughout 1904-1906. This is not to say that there weren't exclusively nationalist organizations operating throughout Congress Poland at the time—but they were mostly located in rural areas of these lands and had little influence on the Mass Strike as it appeared in Polish cities.⁷⁶

The eleven months before Warsaw workers' formal participation in the general strike consisted of a significant rise in mass antiwar demonstrations which would serve as critical tactical and ideological preparation for Warsaw workers and students in the year ahead. The convergence of these three parties' political messaging during this time period and during 1905

⁷⁴ Although Piłsudski would later promote the idea of Poland as a 'home of nations' which would grant equal rights to Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarussians (but, notably not to Jews or other ethnic minorities) residing in its territories, he rejected the idea of Polish workers organizing alongside workers of these other populations. His vision of the state included the participation of certain non-Polish nationals, but his vision of the national uprising did not.

⁷⁵ "Proletariatu Polski: Odezwa SDKPiL, PPS-Lewicy I Bundu" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 491-96. Print.

⁷⁶ Blobaum, Robert. *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*. Ithaca: Cornell U, 1995. Print, 78; 115. Blobaum himself admits this fact.

itself indicates the prominence of an internationalist anti-Tsarist political discourse which influenced Warsaw workers and in which Warsaw workers participated.

A wave of protests staged by workers' committees and impressive student body walk-outs at both Warsaw University and the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute erupted in February of 1904 upon the announcement of Russia's war to acquire Japanese-governed territories in Manchuria and Korea. The momentum of this antiwar sentiment continued to build. Throughout the latter half of 1904 the participants in these antiwar demonstrations began to number in the hundreds and later in the thousands. The earliest recorded instance of such a mass demonstration was organized by the SDKPiL in July of 1904 and included 350 protesting workers.⁷⁷

The most infamous of these mass demonstrations was organized by the PPS on November 13 of that year in Grzybowski Square. It resulted in the arrest of over six hundred protesters, the wounding of twenty-seven civilians, and the killing of seven civilians.⁷⁸ Its brutal repression by the Tsarist police—as well as Piłsudski's creation of a paramilitary unit for its enactment—has made it a notorious symbol of the supposed Polish nationalist roots of Warsaw workers' participation in the Mass Strike and generally in the Revolution of 1905. However, it is important to note that Piłsudski's involvement in this demonstration was only paramilitary. He ordered a shipment of armaments to Warsaw and gave specific orders to the clandestinely armed fighters to “fire shots” so as to incite a general revolt among onlookers.⁷⁹ The workers and students involved in the demonstration were unaware of these plans. Furthermore, the members of the Young Guard who had been responsible for publicizing, organizing, and creating the

⁷⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Czerwony Sztandar* : organ Socjaldemokracji Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy 1904 R. 2, nr 18 Lipiec. Zurich, 1904. Although Blobaum cites the PPS as having originated this anti-war demonstration trend in October of 1904, we know that the SDKPiL began organizing such demonstrations as early as July of that year.

⁷⁸ Blobaum, Robert. *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*. Ithaca: Cornell U, 1995. Print, 44.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

political messaging for the demonstration likely did not know about Piłsudski's plan to steer the anti-war demonstration into an armed insurrection. Indeed, Piłsudski had sent these instructions to the members of the Combat Organization of the PPS—a paramilitary unit he had personally established and over which he had personal jurisdiction—from Kraków, 182 miles away from Warsaw and located in an entirely different empire. Piłsudski and his Old Guard were thoroughly lambasted for this act of “political adventurism” by rival socialist parties, various workers' councils, and the Young Guard of their own party.⁸⁰ This and other attempts to redirect political demonstrations throughout the Strike towards a national insurrection throughout 1905-1906 would be continuously critiqued by workers and organizers as irresponsible attempts by Piłsudski to achieve his own counter-revolutionary pipedreams.⁸¹ Thus we see that the geographic and ideological coincidence of the schism between the Old and Young Guards within the PPS is no accident. It speaks to the alienation of the Old Guard from the actual demands of working people within Congress Poland and the rest of the Russian Empire. In the moment of the Strike, while Piłsudski commanded his paramilitary battalions from afar, other organizers among the three socialist parties (Luxemburg among them) met with entire factories of workers.⁸²

At this very same Grzybowski demonstration, the Young Guard of the PPS displayed banners which read “PPS: We don't want to be soldiers of the Tsar!” and “A Japanese victory is our victory!” These slogans would re-appear in many PPS-led demonstrations throughout the general strike in 1905.⁸³ Although this genre of political messaging did not explicitly call for

⁸⁰ Potkański, Waldemar. *Odrodzenie Czynu Niepodległościowego Przez PPS W Okresie Rewolucji 1905 Roku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2008. Print, 135.

⁸¹ Potkański, Waldemar. *Odrodzenie Czynu Niepodległościowego Przez PPS W Okresie Rewolucji 1905 Roku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2008. Print, 134.

⁸² Luxemburg, Rosa, Georg Adler, Peter Hudis, and Annelies Laschitzka. *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. London: Verso, 2011. Print, 228.

⁸³ Potkański, 150.

Polish workers to link arms with workers throughout the rest of the Empire⁸⁴, it also certainly did not highlight the uniqueness of Polish workers' plight. In this sense the local members of the Young Guard organizing these demonstrations went against the grain of the Old Guard's insistent claims that Polish subjects were disproportionately conscripted to fight in the war. The fact that the slogan on the latter banner in fact seems interchangeable with many SDKPiL banners used at demonstrations during this time—"Long Live Japan!", etc.⁸⁵—demonstrates even the PPS's production of an antiwar discourse which united Polish workers with those resisting the war in Japan. In any case, it is crucial to note that the socialist party which was expected to hold the most nationalist platform refrained from formulating a nationalist anti-war campaign in the moment when the mass anti-Tsarist political activity of Warsaw workers and students would begin to ferment. That prominent elements in the party in fact expressed explicitly internationalist sentiments akin to the program of the SDKPiL, and to a lesser extent the Bund, demonstrates that we ought to take the internationalist scope of Warsaw's participation in the Mass Strike seriously, even if all participants weren't card-carrying members of the SDKPiL.

The fact that slogans from this wave of antiwar demonstrations would become the norm in the demonstrations of workers participating in the general strike throughout 1905-1906 is no surprise. The shared socioeconomic precarity experienced by workers in Warsaw, Petersburg, and other areas throughout the Empire consisted of symptoms whose causes were the same as the imperialist war in Japan. First, these cities all shared in common that they had not yet recovered from the depression of 1900-1903. Thus, those cities whose workers primarily produced textiles had not yet raised civilian income enough that the government demand for textiles in the war

⁸⁴ We see this sort of messaging appear with the SDKPiL and the Bund.

⁸⁵ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Czerwony Sztandar* : organ Socjaldemokracji Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy 1904 R. 2, nr 18 Lipiec. Zurich, 1904.

would match offset the lack of civilian demand for textiles.⁸⁶ Even those factories where production was metallurgical—and thus experienced higher government demand during the war—tended to prevent the workers from seeing any increase in profits. Because of the still high unemployment rate from the previous depression, these factory owners began to fire workers who refused to work overtime hours without overtime pay.⁸⁷

Likewise, the policies of so-called “Russification”⁸⁸ which became more widespread throughout the Empire between 1902-1905 were not a product of some sort of long-fermenting Russian national chauvinism on the part of the Tsar. Rather, they were aimed at providing all subjects of the Empire standardized Russian language skills so that they can more effectively communicate with one another in the case of conscription and war such as the one with Japan. The introduction of mandatory Russian lessons in Polish schools in fact paled in comparison to contemporary attempts to actively prevent or diminish the teaching of local languages among ethnic minorities throughout Siberia, Transcaucasia, and other parts of Southern Russia.⁸⁹

Luxemburg, in private letters to her SPD colleagues Luise and Karl Kautsky, expressed astonishment at the degree to which the unity of various workers’ oppression throughout the Empire was being discussed and acknowledged by workers in the Strike. She exclaims, “In fact the feeling of solidarity and even brotherhood with the Russian workers has developed so strongly that one is involuntarily amazed, even though we [the SDKPiL] have worked toward

⁸⁶ Harcave, Sidney Samuel. *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905*. London: Macmillan, 1964. Print, 42.

⁸⁷ This is what prompted the firing of four workers at the Putilov Factory which incited the infamous Petersburg contingent of the Mass Strike.

⁸⁸ In the case of Poland these language policies were mostly protested in the countryside.

⁸⁹ Harcave, Sidney Samuel. *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905*. London: Macmillan, 1964. Print, 69; 135.

that goal”.⁹⁰ As evidence of this she cites the fact that the Strike continued to escalate in Warsaw “as though political freedom already existed” in honor of its waning in Petersburg.⁹¹ And, even if we were to presume as Blobaum does, that the PPS was the most influential party involved in the Strike at the time, this expression of international solidarity among workers is also corroborated by their own political messaging throughout 1904-1906.

Section Three: Luxemburg, The Strike, & Marx: Work and Revolution

Luxemburg’s first-hand experience of the Strike began when she arrived in Warsaw on December 30, 1905, although she began advising members of the SDKPiL tactically from her home in Berlin starting in February of 1904. Although stationed in Warsaw, Luxemburg would use a sizeable portion of her writing on the Strike to discuss its development and effects relative to cities outside of Congress Poland. She was of course in a privileged position to paint such an expansive portrait of the phenomenon as both a macroscopic revolutionary phenomenon rooted in various sets of local material conditions. As the chief writer and editor for several publications issued both by the SPD (whose membership reached 1,000,000 at its height) and the SDKPiL, Luxemburg had developed an encyclopedic knowledge of news concerning recent labour struggles throughout urban centers in both Russian and German Empires. She wrote to the Kautskys that “[f]rom my intercourse with the people in the movement I am learning what one could never learn from books; moreover, one can achieve something from direct contact”.⁹² Thus Luxemburg’s deep contextualization of the Warsaw contingent of the Strike with descriptions of the international ferment from which it developed signifies that this “intercourse with the people” which moved her so forcefully contained much more than simply a set of local

⁹⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa, Georg Adler, Peter Hudis, and Annelies Laschitza. *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. London: Verso, 2011. Print, 228.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 229.

⁹² Ettinger, Elzbieta. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. Print, 137.

conditions or the plight of one nation. For the Luxemburg, the local *was* the global; and a dialectical material engagement with the latter through the former was more politically and intellectually instructive than the text of any book, including that of Marx.

Rosa Luxemburg spent roughly two months in Warsaw collecting accounts of the Strike, agitating workers at factory meetings⁹³, and frantically publishing special editions of the *Czerwony Sztandar* (the central publication of the SDKPiL) in order to recruit workers to join the party. The stakes of these pursuits were high: even if the Strike failed to procure the abdication of the Tsar or an end to the war in Japan, its momentum had to be captured in order to form a sizeable alliance between Polish and Russian workers' councils. On March 4, however, her mode of operation in the Strike significantly changed. On that day her apartment was searched by the tsarist police and she was arrested for being caught with various copies of her recently written pamphlets. She would spend two and a half months imprisoned in the infamous high-security Citadel Fortress, during which she would write a bulk of the work she would publish throughout 1906. She continued to meet with various socialist organizers "from the outside" and commissioned them to continue her work for her.⁹⁴

Luxemburg spent both this time within the Strike and the remainder of the year frantically writing down the tactical and theoretical lessons that she learned during her time in Warsaw. The experience exhilarated her not only because of the opportunities she saw for uniting the platforms of various socialist parties throughout the empire, but because of its sense of historical gravity. She noted that "the spirit of Marx is in [this] movement of workers"⁹⁵, but

⁹³ These meetings would often hold tens of thousands of workers.

⁹⁴ Ettinger, Elżbieta. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. Print, 136-137. Particularly notable during this time was Luxemburg's decision to warm up to the emerging Bolshevik faction of the RSDLP.

⁹⁵ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 89.

that something about their actions in fact exceeded Marx's own text and legacy.⁹⁶ Thus the writings that she produced during this period tended to cross genres. Before this moment her essays for the *Czerwony Sztandar*, meant to describe facets of the SDKPiL's party platform, were centrally focused on specific party issues with only occasional and brief references to Marx or his theory. Throughout 1906 they increasingly included longer asides which began to resemble full-blown critiques of Marx's political economy and explanations of their relation to historical events.

I choose three works from this period to illustrate the Strike's impact on Luxemburg's conception of Marxian political economy. The first is a long-form essay entitled "Karol Marx" which Luxemburg began writing in December of 1905 and finished some time after her return from Warsaw. This essay first narrates the importance of Marx's prioritization of direct action by workers against capitalists. It then goes on to describe the ways in which contemporary labor struggles in fact demonstrate the need to revise certain basic categories of Marx's political economy and conception of history. The second document is a long-form pamphlet published by the SDKPiL entitled "What do we Want?", also some time in early 1906. The first half of the essay contains a polemic concerning the necessity of Polish unity with workers throughout the Russian Empire, accompanied by commentary on the Strike's relation to the work of Marx and Engels.⁹⁷ The latter half of the document includes a list of demands—and their respective rationales—which the SDKPiL supports as the Strike approaches the overthrow of Tsarism. The third document is an article from a special issue of *Czerwony Sztandar* published in February of 1906 entitled "A Word on the Constituent Assembly of the Provisional Government". The title refers to Luxemburg's proposition that an elected provisional people's government ought to be

⁹⁶ Ibid, 92.

⁹⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 316.

established in order to more efficiently execute the demands of the Revolution.⁹⁸ Much of the text of the article, however, consists of historical analysis of the Mass Strike as it compares with the “incomplete” previous revolutions in France and Germany.⁹⁹

No single document produces a singular linear narrative about the effects that the Revolution was having on Luxemburg’s conception of Marxian political economy at the time. This is indeed a testament to both the pace at which the Revolution moved and her pragmatic concerns in the heat of the moment: when one is working to agitate hundreds of thousands of striking workers in a city under martial law, the publication of works which consisting of long treatises on political economy is both inappropriate and impractical. Thus I choose to read these texts simultaneously across one another in order to trace Luxemburg’s developing critique—a critique which undeniably peaks through during this revolutionary moment, but becomes systematically fleshed out in 1913.

“What do we Want?” serves in part as a list of demands, but it also serves as a polemic against the Old Guard of the PPS meant to convert both the increasingly drifting Young Guard and striking workers to the internationalist cause of the SDKPiL. The central critiques and demands among the workers between 1904-1906 were indeed not monolithic. They included exploitative and dangerous working conditions, job insecurity, the Tsar’s use of working-class Polish conscripts to fight the war in Japan, and (to a lesser extent) the Russification happening in Polish schools. Luxemburg saw that the one thing that these elements all shared in common in the minds of workers was a fundamental relation to the Tsarist regime. Indeed, why should Warsaw factory and railroad workers work in increasingly unjust conditions in order to produce weapons and supplies for a war which does not concern them? Furthermore, why should Warsaw

⁹⁸ Luxemburg, Rosa. “Rzecz o Konstytuancie I Rządzie Tymczasowym”. Warsaw: n.p., 1906. Print. Signature 64263, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 2.

workers fight that war? And—in the case of rural peasants concerned with Russification policies—is it coincidental that these measures are accompanied with increasing restrictions on the teaching of the Polish language in schools?

Even though Luxemburg saw the fundamental collusion of the Tsarist regime with the capitalists profiting from the war effort throughout the Empire, she begins by demonstrating that the workers striking in other cities throughout the Empire were being held in a fundamentally similar relation of material exploitation *and* cultural repression to the Tsar. She writes that the proletariat of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania is in fact part of the Russian proletariat because their status as proletariat was defined in relation to the same regime of power: “Tsarist rule materially and morally suffocated not only Polish people, but also Russian people... Polish exploiters found under the Russian Tsar wings to shield them and to defend their interests, just like Russians”.¹⁰⁰ She cites the Russian Empire’s previous brutal treatment of ethnic and tribal minorities in the Caucasus in its efforts at territorial expansion¹⁰¹ as fundamentally connected to the present exploitation of petroleum workers throughout Caucasian cities. In “Massenstreik”, written during the same period as these articles, she would in fact claim that the March 1902 strike of petroleum workers in Batumi—the first of the emerging wave of strikes throughout the Empire—occurred earlier than in Petersburg or Warsaw precisely because Batumi workers had reached their limit of exploitation sooner than had workers in other, supposedly more ‘developed’ cities throughout the Empire.¹⁰² She thus connects the locally experienced symptoms of the system of capitalist “despotism”—the perceived persecution of Polish people and

¹⁰⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 327-328.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 332.

¹⁰² Luxemburg, Rosa, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York, NY: Monthly Review, 2004. Print, 175.

tradition—to the other locally experienced symptoms of that socioeconomic system which were being protested contemporaneously.

Luxemburg then argues that these forms of political persecution and injustice being protested in throughout 1902-1906 are themselves working at the behest of industrial capital rather than for their own sake. This is a dramatic shift from her previous diagnosis in her doctoral thesis and other work that Russian industrial capital had not yet become strong enough for it to develop an explicitly imperialist relation with markets being brought into its influence. She writes that the Tsarist regime's attempted expansion into Manchuria and Korea is fueled by "the development of machine production, of great industry, [which] knots its way into all countries, introducing ever wider masses of the population into misery and utter dependence on capitalists".¹⁰³

This language of knotting is prescient to Luxemburg's later definition of imperialism in several ways. It signifies that industrial capital does not have to be present in a certain geographic area in order for the workers of that geographic area to be coercively entrenched in the funding of its expansion. Indeed, the image of the knot becomes perfect to describe the expansion of industrial capital: as it expands in one area, it creates its very opposite on its obverse side. The creation of systematic 'undevelopment' in certain areas (in the 'periphery') in order to develop and expand the industrial production in others (in the 'metropole') will be argued in *Accumulation* as the definitive formal characteristic of expanded reproduction. The tightness of the knot—the fact that one must use physical force to 'undo' it—speaks to the fact that this dialectical division between two local realities cannot be undone without force and movement. Luxemburg's conclusion that so-called 'peripheral' areas are in fact the fulcrum upon

¹⁰³ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 316.

which revolution pivots appears throughout much of her writing during this time and will re-appear in *Accumulation* when she discusses slaves' refusal to work during the U.S. Civil War as a manifestation of the general strike¹⁰⁴.

Thus, when local forms of injustice which seem disconnected from relations of production occur—the sending of reserve soldiers from Poland and Transcaucasia to Japan, for example—they are all fundamentally connected to one another in their common relation to a Tsarist regime which itself is fueled by the efforts for industrial capital to expand. These forms of injustice are connected to the fact that those seem workers being sent to fight in the Russo-Japanese War are working factories producing materials necessary for that war's enactment and necessary for the profits of both the local capitalist class and those capitalists with commercial interests in Manchuria and Korea. We see certain areas of the Empire experience waves of strikes earlier than others because even local forms of both political control and economic exploitation appear in distinct forms across space and time¹⁰⁵—and thus might incite revolutionary eruptions differentially across space and time—they remain fundamentally rooted in the efforts of capitalists to profit off of imperialist expansion.

The above argument makes it unsurprising the time Luxemburg spends critiquing various forms of utopian socialism in “Karol Marx”. She argues that the Old Guard of the PPS and any other platform of isolated socialism—any form of socialism which does not include all workers—“is not itself an authentic component of any true workers' movement”.¹⁰⁶ Both the Old

¹⁰⁴ This discussion is found on page 338 of *Accumulation*. Although notable it is unfortunately quite brief. A more extensive elaboration of this argument can be found in Barbara Fields's seminal essay, “Who Freed the Slaves?”

¹⁰⁵ This is why we see certain moments of the Empire experience waves of strikes earlier than others.

¹⁰⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 89. The explicit examples of this utopian socialism she uses are the Old Guard of the PPS and the utopian communes of the Dukhobors. The emigration of the persecuted pacifist Dukhobor sect from the Caucasus and from Crimea to establish a colonial settlement in the Saskatchewan province

Guard of the PPS and Karl Marx himself would be considered advocates of such a utopian socialist platform as it pertained to their common view of the exceptional Polish national oppression. Both Piłsudski's and Marx's focus on the plight of Polish workers turned the 'Polish nation' into a fetish object whose material relations of production were erased from public purview and political analysis. The Old Guard's focus on an uprising of only Polish workers transforms divorces the phenomenon of increased teaching of the Russian language in Polish lands from the emerging military necessity for Polish soldiers to be able to communicate with the Russian soldiers along whose sides they were sent to fight. This platform divorces the local superstructural phenomenon from related superstructural phenomena in other areas—language repression throughout the rest of the Empire—and the material violence which actually undergirds both sets of local phenomena.

Luxemburg proved in her doctoral thesis that the very same is true of Marx's contention that the "Polish peasant or worker...[always] encounters first the fact of national subjugation".¹⁰⁷ Such a claim ignores that what Marx calls "national subjugation"—in fact simply the ease with which capital flows in and out of Polish lands because of its borderland status—is the very condition of the development of Poland's industrial economy which he considers to be a historical necessity. Luxemburg thus argues that it is dangerous and politically irresponsible to treat the persecution of the workers of any single nation—even if it comes in the form of cultural repression—in the Empire as if it were an isolated phenomenon. The Strike convinces her that it is not only metropolitan Polish and metropolitan Russian economies which are two sides of the same coin, as was her conclusion in her doctoral thesis. It is also that the territories of the Empire

in Canada to demonstrate the danger of treating various forms of perceived national persecution as distinct from others. Their experience of settlement in Canada was turbulent and only made it easier for the Tsar to commission conscripts of other religious and cultural backgrounds from the Caucasus and Crimea.

¹⁰⁷ Marx, Karl. *Briefe an A Bebel, W Liebknecht, Kautsky und andere* (Moscow, 1933).

which Luxemburg had deemed purely peripheral in her thesis—Southern Russia and, to a lesser extent, the Far East over which it is fighting its imperialist war—are also sides of that proverbial coin; and they are in fact the sides which feel the contradictions of the metropole first.

These historical observations about Warsaw's position within the geographically and temporally expansive Mass Strike, and her observation that the Strike is a reaction to an attempt at imperialist expansion, set the stage for her claim that the very terms of Marx's political economy need to be redefined. Marx's criteria for the revolutionary activity of the proletariat include the presence of an exclusively industrial economy and the economy's situatedness within a modern nation-state. The wave of strikes throughout Southern Russia which ignited the eventual Mass Strike patently subvert both of these criteria. Indeed, even the participation in Warsaw and St. Petersburg was based on alliances of workers in a multinational empire; and the workers in both cities also collaborated with certain forms of anti-Tsarist activity by the peasants in the countryside.¹⁰⁸ It is for that reason that Luxemburg concludes: "In this same way [as class struggle changes and varies in form] the teaching of Marx will sooner or later find in its own parts, most dangerous to the prevailing social order, that which will certainly make it 'overthrown'."¹⁰⁹ It might be easy to skim past the middle fragment of the sentence and to conclude that one day the work of Marx will become obsolete (will overthrow itself) because the dialectic of history of which it was a part will have led to the prevailing order of international socialism. Luxemburg certainly does not disavow this sort of class struggle as a mode of progress; or, more accurately, of movement.

However, elsewhere in the essay Luxemburg makes a more damning claim about the Mass Strike's effect on the constituent parts of Marx's text: "Marx's teaching is the child of

¹⁰⁸ Blobaum, Robert. *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907*. Ithaca: Cornell U, 1995. Print, 150.

¹⁰⁹ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 93.

bourgeois knowledge, but for the birth of this child the mother will have to pay with her life”.¹¹⁰ For this child to take on a life of its own through revolutionary class struggle the very categories which once constituted it in theory must be overthrown in practice. These categories of Marx’s are constituted by the presumptions of bourgeois knowledge: the inability to conceive of revolutionary consciousness existing outside of an industrialized and ethnically homogenous nation-state, the inability to conceive of labor which is exploitative but not industrial in its local form, the inability to conceive of systems of economic exploitation which are not hermetically sealed from one another. Indeed, “regardless of the [textual] theory of Marx, the practice of what Marx discussed exists first in those places with which we are not acquainted”.¹¹¹ The ‘practice’ of Marx’s discussion is indeed the collective action of workers; or, in her words, “the movement of workers” to which she refers throughout the essay. Her choice to refer to this phenomenon as “the movement of workers” rather than a more abstract and typically Marxian turn of phrase, ‘class struggle’, signifies an active effort to emphasize in Marx the material actions of workers in the world. This continued focus on the materiality which characterizes their work thus becomes the new criterion through which a relevant form of labor is defined, as well as the revolutionary political action associated with that labor.

This avoidance of the term ‘class struggle’ to describe workers’ political and other labors demonstrates an active effort to think of workers as multivariant in their class position. This goes against the grain of the old Marxian assumption that capitalist societies only consist of industrial workers and the capitalists who own the corresponding means of production. This is an assumption which Luxemburg will attack in her contention in *Accumulation* that capitalist

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 92.

¹¹¹ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 89.

exploitation necessarily occurs in an open and interconnected system.¹¹² It is not one's position in an industrial factory which defines one as a worker and a potential participant in revolution, but rather one's being moved by industrial capital into various forms of physical labor. Thus, a peasant producing the raw material necessary to be processed in an industrial setting *is a worker* who is exploited at the behest of industrial capital. Furthermore, a so-called 'independent' subsistence farmer who does not produce such raw material but who is relocated by the state in order for a railroad company to procure petroleum from their former land, is also a worker in an exploitative relation to industrial capital.¹¹³ Luxemburg thus argues that the contemporary political movements of workers redefines what constitutes their *movements as workers*. By this she means to say that any working person who has experienced the "knot[ting]"¹¹⁴, totalizing effects of industrial capital is a worker capable of revolutionary action. This explains why Luxemburg will rarely use the word 'proletariat'—with its entrenched connotations of strictly industrial labor—and will instead refer to exploited *workers* throughout these essays and throughout *Accumulation of Capital*, a deliberately unusual choice for a formal work on Marxian political economy.¹¹⁵ This is, furthermore, a choice which she did not make when writing her doctoral thesis.

Luxemburg does not consider these workers to be simply monolithic, however. It is crucial to remind ourselves that the defining characteristic of the political demonstrations in the

¹¹² See page 58 in Chapter Three of this thesis.

¹¹³ This is a reference to Luxemburg's argument that the Polish nationalism of the Old Guard of the PPS was just as much a form of false utopian socialism as the resettlement of the pacifist Dukhobors, which allowed the encroachment of railroad companies to the petroleum fields among their former villages.

¹¹⁴ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 316.

¹¹⁵ This is not to say that Luxemburg considers individual workers more important or real than the unity of their exploitation. Rather, she will avoid grouping them under a class associated with a historically and geographically specific type of labor in order to acknowledge that laborers in so-called 'non-capitalist' areas of the world are still affected by—and affect—the expansion of industrial capital.

Strike—as well as the labors for which those actions take place—for Luxemburg is multiplicity and polyphony.¹¹⁶ Thus the difference in the relation of workers to capitalists and the Tsarist state is distributed in highly specific ways throughout space and time. This is precisely why Luxemburg works to painstakingly document the order and the circumstances under which various strikes erupted and subsequently mutated throughout the Empire in “Massenstreik”.

She writes that the workers with which the terms of Marxian theory ought to catch up—and thus the workers whose work ought to be considered as such—are those workers whose labor power is “most exploited...[into] the private hands of capitalists”.¹¹⁷ She also argues that those who are most exploited and alienated from their labor—those who see the least of its final product—are in fact the first to “see the development of industry most clearly [and] the fact that the riches of the bourgeoisie, along with their own misery, descends from this [development]”.¹¹⁸ Thus it is those people whose misery most intensively fuels the richness of the bourgeoisie—those for whom the rate of exploitation is the highest¹¹⁹—who are in fact most likely to develop a revolutionary consciousness; to be physically pushed by their misery to “see the fact” of their exploitation. It is of course quite standard to discuss the exploitation of workers generally in Marxian writing. However, in 1906 it is still unusual to acknowledge the difference in the degree of exploitation between various segments of workers based on the degree to which industrial capital has “knot[ted]” itself into one’s geographic space and local relations of production. Although the specific rate of exploitation is a technical measurement which Luxemburg will

¹¹⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa, Peter Hudis, and Kevin Anderson. *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*. New York, NY: Monthly Review, 2004. Print, 173.

¹¹⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 317-318.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 318.

¹¹⁹ The rate of exploitation is also a technical measurement that Luxemburg will develop in *Accumulation* which she uses to distinguish between peripheries created by the metropole. Here she describes the phenomenon informally.

develop in *Accumulation* in order to describe the specific relation of exploitation between peripheries and their metropolises, this informal description of the periphery's greater proximity to revolutionary consciousness is the foundation upon which she will elaborate this critique in 1913.

Chapter Three: *Accumulation of Capital*

“The bourgeoisie, by the improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communications, draws all, even the most barbarian nations, into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate”.¹²⁰

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848

Section I: An Overview of *Accumulation of Capital*

The above statement by Karl Marx is symptomatic of a fundamental error common to normative understandings of Marxian political economy in the early twentieth century. It is an assumption which also surfaces in Luxemburg's own doctoral thesis, although not explicitly in the terms of a “civilizing mission” of Polish and Russian capital. She nonetheless committed the same error of attributing the labor of expanded reproduction and the movement of history to the metropolitan bourgeoisie rather than to the workers whose exploited labor undergirds both phenomena. And although she does not go as far as to paint the local populations in the areas which Polish and Russian capitalists begin to monopolize as engaging in an “obstinate hatred” for Northern industrialists, she certainly does not narrate them as engaging in the labor which fuels capitalist expansion or the revolutionary labor which might cause its downfall. Her witnessing of the spread of revolutionary force from Southern Russia to its Northern industrial

¹²⁰ Marx, Karl. *Selected Writings in Sociology & Social Philosophy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964. Print, 137.

centers would compel her to revise Marx's political economy in *Accumulation* so as to account for the multivariance of capital's circulation throughout the world. This "knotting" circulation would not draw the "most barbarian nations into civilization", but would rather draw all local realities into some sort of relation to an exploitative system. Luxemburg's formal attempt to illustrate the inevitability and centrality of that knotting in the development of capitalism would be her attempt to rebirth the categories of Marx's "bourgeois thought" which for her were murdered in the Mass Strike into the first major work of heterodox and globally-minded Marxian political economy.

The crux of *Accumulation* is guided by a single question. As international militarism and the monopolistic circulation of both industrial and financial capital are on the rise, what contradictions and effects does Marx's diagram of expanded reproduction produce for other contemporary Marxists' understanding of political economy? Expanded reproduction is taken by Marx and his followers to consist of the processes by which capitalist society reproduces itself. Marx considers this phenomenon to occur when capitalists convert some portion of the expropriated surplus value gained from selling commodities into capital.¹²¹ In simple terms, it is the process by which capitalism expands outwards geographically. This question is especially motivated by Luxemburg's continuing debates with Bulgakov and Tugan-Baranovsky. Although 1905 had been a radical turning point in the thought of all three thinkers—Bulgakov traded his legalist Marxism for Orthodox theology—Tugan-Baranovsky in particular maintained his position that the bourgeois class was the acceleratory force of expanded reproduction, not workers. In the first section of *Accumulation* Luxemburg reads Marx's model of expanded reproduction against that of Adam Smith. In the second section she outlines the ways in which

¹²¹ Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, Ernest Mandel, and David Fernbach. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. I. London: Penguin in Association with New Left Review, 1991. Print, 593-594.

the theoretical mainstay of Tugan-Baranovsky's legalist Marxism devolves into the undialectical bourgeois economics of Say, Ricardo, Sismondi, and Malthus. Luxemburg then provides a step-by-step revision of Marx's diagram and a description of its political consequences in the third section of the text. Although Luxemburg's deconstructive work in the first two sections is exhilarating to read, I choose to read closely the third section of *Accumulation* across her writing in the Strike. I make this choice first because Luxemburg includes in the description of this alternative model of expanded reproduction the key elements of her critiques waged throughout the former two sections. Furthermore, it is the section where she most explicitly deals with the political effects of Marx's model and Tugan-Baranovsky's reading of it: the potential that Russia will come to be an imperialist state, the threat of world war, and the weakening of international solidarity among workers.

Section II: Expanded Reproduction as Engaging Both a Metropole and a Periphery: An Overview of Terms

Rosa Luxemburg's doctoral thesis used patterns of observed economic history to make a critical distinction between historical forms of statecraft which are used to facilitate the expanded circulation of capital outside of the metropole and those forms of statecraft which attempt to expand national circulations of capital in order to establish strictly political power outside of the metropole.¹²² According to the terms of orthodox Marxian political economy provided in *Kapital*, the economies of these former states were engaged in capitalist modes of production; whereas the economies of the latter states were engaged in semi-capitalist modes of production.

¹²² Luxemburg considers the former form of statecraft to appear in cases such as Great Britain and France; and considers it to be gradually developing in urban centers throughout Poland. Luxemburg considers the latter form of statecraft to appear in the case of the Russian Empire.

This so-called semi-capitalist character of the latter modes of production was used to assign the economies of certain states a less developed position relative to the economies of other states.¹²³

This earlier distinction between states which work at the behest of capital and those circulations of capital which work at the behest of the state would certainly inform the construction of *Accumulation*. By 1913, however, Luxemburg would no longer see the above distinction as one which occurred between different state or national economies; nor would she consider the terms of the distinction to be ‘capitalist’ economies versus ‘semi-capitalist’ economies. Luxemburg’s foremost critique of Marx’s political economy in *Accumulation* states that the “knotting” of industrial capitalism captures all human and non-human life in its web, even when certain microscopically viewed local non-industrialized modes of production seem to be quite discontinuous with the local realities of industrialized capitalist societies. This seeming discontinuity is in fact anything but. In order for the bourgeoisie to expand production it must actually create markets which maintain enough infrastructure so that: 1. the labor of its workers can be exploited, and thus its products utilized by the bourgeoisie of the metropole; and 2. The workers of the territory can purchase products sent back from the metropole in order for the metropolitan bourgeoisie to gain further profit.

In this way, the expanded investment of capital by the metropolitan bourgeoisie in non- or lesser-industrialized territories creates a heightened expropriation of surplus value both at the

¹²³ Although not all Marxists publishing work between the publication of *Kapital* and the publication of *Accumulation of Capital* agreed on the specific stages of economic development, their shared method of the historical-materialist dialectic generally held that human history is composed of economic stages, whose teleological movement towards communism is driven by the circulation of capital. Marx himself conceived of this historical movement as beginning with “ancient” civilizations which excel towards a feudal economy towards an industrialized capitalist economy towards a socialist economy, towards communism. Although the specific details of this model were and continue to be debated by Marxists, Luxemburg’s doctoral work reflects the shared contemporary Marxist belief that different states’ economies can be considered separate from one another and can be related to one another in terms of a linear model of historical development.

moments of production and consumption. There is a heightened degree of exploitation among the local working population. Local workers in these so-called peripheral markets receive an even lesser wage relative to the exchange value of the eventual product. Furthermore, their market is flooded with commodities whose profits go to the metropolitan bourgeoisie, leaving local entrepreneurship and infrastructure robbed of its potential sources of capital investment.

Luxemburg would not yet describe Southern Russia as embodying this sort of periphery for its Northern metropolitan centers in her doctoral thesis. However, as we saw in Chapter Two, her experiences in Warsaw would reposition these earlier striking cities as evidence of a developing quasi-imperialist relation between Polish and Russian industrialists and the workers of the South.

Luxemburg refers to this expansion of the circulation of metropolitan capital as a form of expanded reproduction and in doing so enacts a critique of Marx's original definition of the phenomenon. He defines this capital as consisting of constant capital, c , which is made up of durable and inanimate means of production such as machinery, factories, etc.; and variable capital, v , which is the labor power of the proletariat.¹²⁴ This act of using the profits from the exploitation of the proletariat in order to expand the means of production is referred to as the accumulation of capital. As we will see in Section II of this chapter, one of the key distinctions between Luxemburg's and Marx's conception of the accumulation of capital in the process of expanded reproduction is one of geography and of delimitation. Marx claims that this process of expanded reproduction occurs within a closed national market—that the constant capital and the variable capital purchased always occurs within, say, the island of Great Britain rather than the cotton plantations of the Southern United States. Luxemburg considers the very geographic

¹²⁴ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 314.

interconnectedness of expanded reproduction—its reliance on the slave labor in the Southern U.S., for example¹²⁵—to be proof that a national market cannot be considered a closed system.

More specifically, Luxemburg considers this form of expanded reproduction to be the vehicle through which capitalist relations are reproduced unevenly and with varying intensity so as to produce the disparities in living and working conditions which exist between the metropole and the periphery. Here I use the term ‘periphery’ rather than the typical counterpart to metropole, ‘colony’, because Luxemburg’s critique aims to encompass many different forms of uneven economic relation under the term ‘imperialism’. Although many historians periodize imperialism as a phenomenon separate in time but materially related to the phenomena of settler and other colonialisms, Luxemburg’s critique of Marx’s political economy asserts imperialism as an umbrella term for the necessary condition of expanded reproduction which takes many formal guises.

This attempt to analyze the economic relation between the ‘metropole’ and the ‘periphery’—and in doing so, reifying what precisely one means by either term—was not historically new or unique to Luxemburg. In 1894, four years before the publication of Luxemburg’s doctoral thesis, Max Weber published an essay entitled “Developmental Tendencies”. In it, Weber critiqued the moving economic hinterland of Slavic seasonal migrant workers from Silesia who would come to Eastern Germany to earn money harvesting sugar beet as it prevented the creation of a working class consisting of “permanent workers” as in England.¹²⁶ Thus the use of such terminology by Weber and other social scientists before 1913,

¹²⁵ Ibid, 332-333. Here it is important to note that her first ruminations on the U.S. Civil War as a form of general strike among slave laborers—a revolution beginning in the economic periphery—first appeared in her 1906 essay, “A Word on the Constituent Assembly and the Provisional Government”, written while she was imprisoned during the Strike.

¹²⁶ Weber, Max. "Developmental Tendencies in the Situation of East Elbian Rural Labourers"[1894], *Economy and Society* 8, 1979, 199.

although varying based on context, was usually fueled by an attempt to make claims in favor of policies either restricting or facilitating the movements of various ethnic others in and out of a certain geographic territory.

Luxemburg's political economy, on the other hand, is expressly concerned with how that political economy shapes the potential for internationalist labor organizing. This is her claim in her doctoral dissertation, where she envisions the unity of Polish-Russian proletariats toppling both the Tsar and Polish-Russian capital.¹²⁷ Although Luxemburg does not yet use the terms 'metropole' or 'periphery' in her doctoral thesis, she considers on the one hand the Russian Empire to be the periphery of the metropole of Western Europe; the Northern Russian Empire to be the periphery of Congress Poland proper; and Southern Russia, Central Asia, and the "Far East" to be the periphery of both Congress Poland and the Greater Russian Empire. It is this third set of peripheries which Luxemburg initially allows to remain peripheral while the textile and metallurgical workforces in Warsaw and Petersburg grow larger and then eventually join forces. These are the workers of the world which Luxemburg in 1897 considered to be confined to the irrelevant outskirts of industrial political economy and subsequently to the proverbial waiting room of history.¹²⁸

Thus, Luxemburg's 1913 development of the periphery as consisting of the most fundamental and the most heavily exploited labor necessary to the development of industrial capitalism is deeply invested in a belief that those laborers are the very pivot of revolutionary force. This is why Luxemburg maintains certain degree of flexibility in her usage of the term in *Accumulation of Capital*: the peripheral labor of a given industry is the step in the process of

¹²⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Industrial Development of Poland*. New York: Campaigner Publications, 1977. Print, 178.

¹²⁸ Borrowing Dipesh Chakrabarty's term from *Provincializing Europe*.

production which is the “limit” of production.¹²⁹ This limit is both constituted quantitatively through the dollar to horsepower cheapness of the labor and qualitatively by the dependence of subsequent stages of the production process on the periphery. Although the production of textiles requires both the cultivation and extraction of “raw” materials such as cotton as well as its later stages of additional processing, it is the cultivation, extraction, and processing occurring on the slave plantation which constitutes the limit of the latter form of industrial work. Both are vital to the production of the final product, but Luxemburg considers the former to be its very limit. Paradoxically, Luxemburg also characterizes the periphery as that which confounds the limit: as that which to the naked eye appears to be geographically outside of the industrialized world, but which in fact is the very labor which allows the industrialized world to create its borders in the first place.¹³⁰ In this sense, what constitutes a peripheral form of labor according to Luxemburg is certainly historically contingent. By 1913, for example, Luxemburg believes that the Southern Association of Coal and Iron in the Russian Empire has allowed for Southern Russia to occupy an intermediate position between that of metropole and periphery.¹³¹

Section III: Luxemburg’s Formal Valuation of Labor in the Metropole & the Periphery

Rosa Luxemburg extracts four key principles of expanded reproduction from Marx’s *Kapital*.¹³² First was a restatement of Marx’s contention that the surplus value to be capitalized will take the form of constant capital (the means of production) and variable capital (the purchasing of labor power of the workers, whose labor is sold in order to procure the means of subsistence). In other words, the expansion of production is procured at once by the expansion of

¹²⁹ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 323.

¹³⁰ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 434.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 337.

¹³² Her diagnosis of these principles specifically comes from a reading of pages 593-594 of his first volume.

inanimate means of production and the making inanimate the labor of workers.¹³³ Second, Marx considered the expansion of industrial capitalist reproduction to only occur through industrial capitalist means of production and subsistence. According to Marx, capitalist production could not expand through the use of bonded labor, non-industrialized labor, or other forms of ‘lumpen’ labor.¹³⁴ Third, the limit of this expansion is determined by the amount of surplus value which there is to be capitalized into local, industrialized capital; and by nothing else. Fourth, since surplus product¹³⁵ is wholly purchased in its entirety at the end of any given cycle of production, the accumulation of capital is limitless. These four principles coalesce to assert that expanded reproduction in a given industrialized, geographic area needs nothing but its local industrial modes of production in order to continue.¹³⁶ Such a model erases or otherwise minimizes the importance of three types of labor which are necessary for the enactment of expanded reproduction: the workers within the geography of the metropole, the lumpenproletariat within the metropole lumpenproletariat, and those workers from outside the metropole or the periphery. This third group of workers—especially those engaged in agricultural forms of labor—is often described by Marxists as also constituting a ‘lumpen’ form of labor, unable to achieve class consciousness.

First Luxemburg critiques the model’s implicit claim that the accumulation of capital is fueled first by the actions of capitalists rather than by workers in general, including the metropolitan proletariat. Luxemburg writes that Marx’s assumption of the complete consumption

¹³³ This inanimacy is produced simultaneously through their labor’s use in the construction of the commodity fetish; as well as their continued base subsistence in the system of wage-labor.

¹³⁴ Marx, Karl, and Daniel De Leon. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Milwaukee: Wiseblood, 2013. Print, 18.

¹³⁵ Surplus product is defined by Marx as all production which exceeds what is necessary for a given population of workers and their dependents to continue living at a given standard of life. See Chapter 14 of *Kapital*, Volume I.

¹³⁶ Luxemburg writes that Marx’s model is “based on the self-sufficiency and isolation of capitalist production”. See: Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 334.

of the surplus product within a closed market presumes that the aim of capitalists is to produce goods for the well-being and the consumption of the proletariat. It presumes that the proletariat of a given market earns enough in wages to have complete collective purchasing access to the products of their labor. Such a case is of course impossible, since workers cannot consume more of the surplus product than that portion which corresponds to variable capital, their wages.¹³⁷ Marx's model claims that the permanently increasing surplus value is realized by the capitalist class and not by the proletarian class.¹³⁸ Such a model makes it seem that capitalists can create new capital out of "thin air"¹³⁹, rather than out of the expropriated surplus value created by the proletariat. This formulation indeed positions expanded reproduction as a phenomenon of capitalist society in which the engine of material history is not the laboring class, but the owning class. It in fact "disregards the increased productivity of labor"¹⁴⁰ necessary for the expansion and deepening of capitalist relations to take place.

Here we see how the Mass Strike was pivotal for Luxemburg to recognize this error in Marx's model. This is an error which she had unthinkingly repeated in her doctoral thesis when claiming that the concurrent growth of Polish and Russian industrial capital—rather than the labor power of those workers in Southern Russia extracting the materials necessary for its expansion—was the fuel through which Polish and Russian proletariats could combine. Recall that in 1906 Luxemburg wrote that the most important principle of Marx's political economy was its conclusion that "the liberation of working people must be the act of [those] working people"¹⁴¹, but that his categories had to be revised so as to reject various forms of "utopian

¹³⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 315.

¹³⁸ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 315.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 315-316.

socialism”.¹⁴² As demonstrated on page 44 of Chapter Two, the definitive element of this utopian socialism was its fetishization of a given social phenomenon so as to erase the global relations of labor and violence which brought it into being. In the case of Marx’s and Piłsudski’s endorsement of a Polish nation-state, the object of this fetishization was the Imperial language policy which worked to integrate Polish workers and peasants into the military complex of the Empire’s emerging imperialist pursuits.

However, Luxemburg realized in 1906 that her opponents’ fetishization of the status of the Polish language is itself deeply entwined with her own previous fetishization of the Polish bourgeoisie as uniquely propelling industrial development and subsequent revolutionary action. Her initial expression of critical doubt concerning the terms of Marx’s political economy is expressed during a passage in which she compared the lack of uniqueness of the Polish bourgeoisie to the lack of uniqueness of the Polish language policy. She writes that both ignore the material exploitation of local workers which undergird both phenomena; and that they more importantly ignore the knotting of capital first and foremost “in those places with which we are not acquainted”.¹⁴³ Luxemburg thus recognizes that her own former provincializing focus solely on the union of Northern workers in the Russian Empire is funded by the same ideological mistake committed by Marx when attributing expanded reproduction to the work of metropolitan industrial capitalists.

This mistake is based in Marx’s political economy, but reappears in his writings in three other interrelated moments: 1. in his claim that Polish national autonomy is necessary for the development of its industry; 2. In his claim that Polish national autonomy is necessary to curb

¹⁴² Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 87.

¹⁴³ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 89.

Asiatic despotism from entering Europe¹⁴⁴; and 3. in his claim that metropolitan industrialists are a civilizing force. All three conclusions are based in the treatment of the Polish nation and the Polish industrial bourgeoisie as phenomena which pre-exist the labor and violence that brings them into being. After all, the abstraction which is the ‘persecution of the Polish language’ itself is part and parcel of the Tsarist-endorsed imperialist expansion funded by the labor of its workers and the workers of the rest of the Empire. Similarly, the Polish bourgeoisie is funded by that same network of workers, as it profits from the expropriation of surplus value from the Donbass all the way to Warsaw. Insofar as the Imperial policies of language instruction are invested in engineering the imperialist war which would expand and deepen that expropriation of surplus value, the Polish bourgeoisie equally benefits from the Russification of “its own” and other peoples in the Empire.

In 1897 Luxemburg omitted Southern Imperial workers from revolutionary consciousness and positioned Polish and Russian workers’ revolutionary consciousness as epiphenomenal to the industrializing force of metropolitan capitalists. Her decision to reformulate Marx’s model of expanded reproduction in 1913 comes from her recognition that this unthinking acceptance of Marx’s model, if taken to its logical conclusion, in fact would lead her to commit the same errors as her enemies in the Old Guard of the PPS in 1905. If the metropolitan workers are the fuel which propels simple reproduction¹⁴⁵ within the geography of a certain market, then Luxemburg pivots workers in the peripheries of a given industry as the fuel of its expanded reproduction. Although the work and consumption of lumpen workers both within and outside of the metropole give motion to expanded reproduction, it is those workers

¹⁴⁴ “Poland’s European Mission”, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, edited by Paul Blackstock and Bert Hoselitz, and published by George Allen and Unwin, London, 1953, 104-08.

¹⁴⁵ Meaning the reproduction of the conditions of production at a constant rate. For example, maintaining a constant ratio of employed workers to the number of their dependents.

geographically outside of the metropole who do so most centrally. Luxemburg asserts this because the creation of the surplus value which is to be capitalized has “no other limit but the intensity of exploitation, when the laboring population is given”.¹⁴⁶ Recall that when writing during the Mass Strike she asserted that this limit of exploitation is also the first limit of revolutionary consciousness: “[i]t is the most exploited workers [who] see the development of industry most clearly [and] the fact that the riches of the bourgeoisie, along with their own misery, descends from this [development]”.¹⁴⁷ This is why Luxemburg periodized the Mass Strike as having begun in March of 1902. This was the moment when the Empire’s most exploited workers (its limit) began to “see” the globality of industrial capital in which they and growing numbers of others were entangled and chose to act against it.

This critique of Marx’s systematic omission of the labor and thus the revolutionary force of the periphery is followed by a critique of his omission of various local metropolitan forms of labor from his model of expanded reproduction. Luxemburg’s 1913 assertion that lumpen workers’ consumption and labor as pivotal to expanded reproduction in fact began in her 1906 analysis of non-industrial workers’ positions throughout various local enactments of the Mass Strike. She diagnosed a pivotal set of ‘lumpen’ elements as those people employed by the Tsarist state in order to surveil, police, and ensure the smooth enactment of Tsarist policies in favor of industrial capital’s expansion. Luxemburg identifies all those members of institutions “which work in the service of capitalists” as members of the professional military, Tsarist police, legislatures, and courts.¹⁴⁸ These are the actors whose work serves to maintain and expand relations of exploitation between the owners of production and other working people. In this

¹⁴⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 323.

¹⁴⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 318.

¹⁴⁸ Luxemburg, Rosa. “Rzecz o Konstytucji i Rządzie Tymczasowym”. Warsaw: n.p., 1906. Print. Signature 64263, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 323.

sense, they occupy a unique class position in that they perform a type of work in service of capitalists, but the product of that work is solely the maintenance of the status quo of social relations. Because of that fact, professionalized members of the military and criminal justice systems are in general considered to be the “instruments” of capitalists rather than simply workers.¹⁴⁹

However, Luxemburg also critiques Marx’s omission of those ‘lumpen’ elements in the metropole whose work does not simply reify the status quo through military and legal apparatuses. They include social elements as diverse as teachers, sex workers, medical professionals, thieves, and agricultural peasants. She writes in 1906 that “contrary to our present thought...there is no type of work which is separate from the creation of capitalist society in one way or another” and lists as examples the roles of the teacher and the peasant.¹⁵⁰ She particularly focuses on the teacher as a subject whose work produces no single physical product, but remains exploited and controlled in order to instill into students a certain set of ideological norms. Luxemburg would similarly argue in 1913 that “the material form of the surplus value is quite irrelevant to its realization”¹⁵¹ and that the only way in which Marx’s model retains any realistic integrity is to recognize that “surplus value...[can be realized] only if it is sold to such social organizations or strata whose own mode of production is not capitalistic”.¹⁵²

Marx’s conception of expanded reproduction as only consisting of local industrial workers and capitalists is both mathematically impossible and fundamentally erases an entire category of laborers’ exploitation as fundamental to the functioning of capitalist production. This

¹⁴⁹ Luxemburg, Rosa. “Rzecz o Konstytucji I Rzadzie Tymczasowym”. Warsaw: n.p., 1906. Print. Signature 64263, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 324.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 323.

¹⁵¹ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 332.

¹⁵² Ibid. By “not capitalistic” Luxemburg is referring to Marx’s assumption that a pure capitalist economy only consists of workers and capitalists.

separation of specific types of exploitation experienced by those lumpen elements—say, a teacher who is not allowed to teach a local language in a public school but who must teach nonetheless—from the “knotting” of industrial capital effectively bars collaboration and solidarity between various segments of the working population. It was the SDKPiL’s and PPS’s relative lack of integration of both rural workers and non-industrial workers within Warsaw which Luxemburg pointed out was the biggest flaw of the Strike.¹⁵³

That all of the above workers were becoming entangled in capitalist society through militaristic means was no coincidence. This was the case with Southern Russia’s entanglement within the knot of Polish and Russian industrial capital. Both Polish and Russian industrialists would support attempts to entangle through military force into this knot the peoples and lands of the Far East. Already in her doctoral thesis Luxemburg recognized that the opening of “new markets” often occurred in and through war. In her final chapter of *Accumulation*, however, she would express the historical cyclicity of that militarism which was being protested in the Mass Strike as the fundamental vehicle through which expanded reproduction took place. If its fuel was always the labor of workers, and chiefly the labor of workers most exploited in the periphery, then the mechanism through which that fuel was acquired would consist of international military conflict in various forms. It is first and foremost by definition the mechanism through which primitive accumulation is achieved¹⁵⁴ and furthermore the mechanism of further accumulation most profitable for capitalists to engage once the state is working at their behest.¹⁵⁵ Thus the definitive characteristic of industrial capitalism is not bringing more peoples

¹⁵³ Luxemburg, Rosa. “Rzecz o Konstytuancie i Rządzie Tymczasowym”. Warsaw: n.p., 1906. Print. Signature 64263, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 340.

¹⁵⁴ Luxemburg, Rosa. *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge, 2004. Print, 434.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 442.

and lands into “civilization”, but in fact violently entrenching them further into various relations of exploitation with the metropole.

Conclusion

If Luxemburg’s *Accumulation* had been written in a vacuum, solely a response from the inanimate pages of one text to another, then there is no way that it would have been as critical of Marx’s political economy as it would come to be. Luxemburg’s adoration of Marx, even in the moments when she was most aggressively critical of the most fundamental categories of his thought, was undying. The Mass Strike may have propelled her to dramatically announce the death of the remnants of bourgeois thought in Marx’s political economy in 1906,¹⁵⁶ but it didn’t stop her from praising those aspects of his work which she considered to be spectrally present within the movement of workers. She begins another essay written contemporaneously by claiming that, “[i]t wasn’t until Marx and Engels that the pursuit of socialism would come to have a solid and clear foundation”.¹⁵⁷

She clearly had been invested in the basic tenets Marx’s political economy since for almost a decade by the time she entered the Strike. This is why her doctoral thesis, even as it demonstrated the interconnectedness of various geographies in the expansion of industrial capital, continued to take for granted certain aspects of Marx’s model of expanded reproduction. First, it failed to recognize the systematic manner in which industrial capital comes to knot all human and non-human life into its expansion: that no worker and no form of labor is outside of

¹⁵⁶ Luxemburg, Rosa. *Karol Marx*. Warsaw: n.p., 1905. Print. Signature 59901, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw, Poland, 92.

¹⁵⁷ Luxemburg, Rosa. "Czego Chcemy?" *Polskie Programy Socjalistyczne 1878-1918*. Comp. Tych Feliks. Warsaw: Książka I Wiedza, 1975. 314-87. Print, 315-316.

industrial capitalism. It thus also failed to recognize the systematic, militaristic violence and unevenness with which that knotting occurs. Although Polish industry might compel the diverse and non-violent development of Russian industry, the introduction of Southern Russia into that network would take a war and would not be met with the same diversity of industry.

This results in the workers of those peripheral regions becoming the very “limit” of capitalist expansion. This limiting character applies to the relative degree of their exploitation, their primacy in the process of production, and in their proximity to revolutionary consciousness and movement. It is thus appropriate that Luxemburg would begin to formulate the contours of her critique of Marx in the moment when she realized the revolutionary prescience of the periphery in the context of the Mass Strike itself: the inception of the Strike in the outskirts of the Empire rather than at its center.

The degree to which Luxemburg’s formal work was shaped by this “intercourse with the people of the movement”¹⁵⁸ is not necessarily exceptional. Lukacs, who would draw the exact opposite conclusions to Luxemburg concerning the relation of mass spontaneity and organization, was also influenced by the social ferment in which he lived. His model of the reification of the worker’s consciousness was of course informed by his historical position both within overwhelmingly agrarian Hungary—a population he considered more difficult to politically organize—and during the rise of Fordism and the assembly line. His very alienation from many working populations was part of what would lead him to focus on the so-called alienation of the worker from other workers, and the necessity of the party professional to reveal that alienation to the worker. Thus it is simply the case that the social ferment which moved Luxemburg so forcefully in the Mass Strike was one which revealed the interconnectedness of

¹⁵⁸ Ettinger, Elżbieta. *Rosa Luxemburg: A Life*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. Print, 137.

workers' relation to imperialism, despite the multiplicitous character of their local material realities.

The popularity of Lukacs's focus on alienation as exhibited in the development of Western Marxism would perhaps make sense given the contexts in which the constituent writers of the field were working. Luxemburg wrote *Accumulation* immediately before the first World War. For Jewish exiles like Benjamin and Adorno it made more sense to consider debates about alienation and aesthetics—rather than mass movements and exploitation—to be the limits of their discursive fields.

On the other hand, the limits of these debates are deeply unsatisfying in a strain of critical theory which claims to be historically materialist. The fact that seminal works of Marxian writing focused on issues of imperialism and global relations of exploitation were produced by writers from the global South during the time of the Frankfurt School is evidence that such a Marxism was still possible and long overdue. Although distinct from the critique Luxemburg would enact in 1912, these works share the common development of a heterodox Marxian political economy and conception of history. Furthermore, they all demonstrate that the polyphony of social revolution which responds to the knotting effects of capital is the very force which deconstructs both that knotting and the order of Marx's own text.

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