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21

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LUXEMBURG'S VISION OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

*As Norman Geras has stressed in his essay *Bourgeois Power and Socialist Democracy: On the Relation of Ends and Means* (in *The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg*, *New Left Books*), Rosa Luxemburg's concept of socialist democracy neither corresponds to the theory of bourgeois parliamentarism nor does it subscribe to the anarchist-libertarian worldview. Inextricably linked to the praxis of class struggle and accomplishment of the socialist revolution, her vision of democracy from the beginning to the end is steered by the principle of dialectics which incorporates criticism as well as the corrective impact of the actual revolutionary experience. This exciting journey, by reconciling contradictions, aspires for a sociopolitical order where the individual and the collective are bound by the practice of free and fruitful human endeavour. This paper explores Rosa's dialectical understanding of the theory and practice of socialist democracy, which is but another name for the realm of freedom, as envisaged by Marx in his *Paris Manuscripts*.*

EPIGRAPH AND EXAMINATION

"Proletarian revolutions ... criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltriness of their first attempts ... until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible".¹

(Karl Marx)

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The lines quoted above from Karl Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* serve as an appropriate epigraph to my paper for the following reasons:

Reason 1 : The very act of questioning and criticizing various aspects of the revolution, be it the Bolshevik crowned with success or the German which failed, prompted Rosa Luxemburg to measure, assess and define the nature of socialist democracy, which was of course the aim of the two revolutions in question. In other words, the act or revolution and its aspired-for-outcome happened to be two inseparable parts of one single discourse.

Reason 2 : Like the act of the revolution itself guided by its own dialectic, the ultimate objective of 'socialist democracy' attains a synthesis at the level of theory and even vision only *after* resolving the contradictions, which provoke an intense dialectical encounter. This process of genuine, redemptive resolution is something qualitatively different from a superficial attempt undertaken to patch up irreconcilable dichotomies. While the latter was attempted by Eduard Bernstein in his articles advocating Social Reform² as the cardinal way – as pointed out by Rosa Luxemburg with characteristic vigour in her seminal work *Reform or Revolution*³ - the former is a rigorous dialectical exercise holding theory and praxis, act and vision together in one inextricable pattern. Rosa herself described the essential difference between the two engagements. Whereas, in her words, "Bernstein saying goodbye to our system of dialectics resorts to the intellectual seesaw of the well known 'on one hand – on the other', 'yes but' etc' and thereby loses 'the axis of intellectual crystallisation', the steadfast dialectician utilises this crucial axis around which isolated facts group themselves in the organic whole to structure a coherent conception of the world."⁴ Needless to add, Rosa's understanding of democracy revolving around this dialectical axis advances towards a final vision which is both consistent and comprehensive.

Reason 3 : This final virtue, nevertheless, does not conceal the battle that had to be waged at the levels of emotion and reason – the battle between contradictions – before the outcome is proclaimed in programmatic faith. Just as the flowering act of revolution criticizes and interrupts itself vigorously at every step, the aim of the revolution

is similarly subjected to tenacious argumentation by Rosa who was possibly more vital and volatile than the other comrades. One of her best biographers, Peter Nettle, has underlined this remarkable trait by saying “It is impossible to understand Rosa Luxemburg as a political person without accepting her capacity for judging everything in the form of an extreme dichotomy – words or action, hope or desire, living or dying. Mere political differences were mealy-mouthed understatements; what was happening is a miniature private dialectic of her own, the birth of a new world amid the dust and ashes of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*”.⁵ This new world is of course Rosa’s indestructible dream of social democracy, an outcome of the tirelessly self-critical revolution itself, forged by the power and insight of her dialectical commitment. Though her first cogitations on this subject were forcefully expressed in her *Reform or Revolution*, in statements like “We must conclude that the socialist movement is not bound to bourgeois democracy, but that, on the contrary, the fate of democracy is bound with the socialist movement ... He who renounces the struggle for socialism renounces both the labour movement and democracy”,⁶ the more incisive explorations are to be found, expectedly, in her critical engagement with the pamphlet on the Russian Revolution and in her last phase of unforgettable articles written for the *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag) when the Spartacist uprising was drawing towards a tragic close. This dual contextuality once again proves how revolution and its promised fulfilment are two sides of the same coin.

LETTERS AND INTERROGATION

But what was the basic, persistent question that provoked Rosa Luxemburg to spell out her understanding of democracy repeatedly in such emphatic terms? The answer to this question is perhaps to be found in one of her sensitive replies to a letter written by Sonja Liebknecht where Sonja, herself, pronounced the query that was also Rosa’s own. In that very phase when Rosa was to write her critique of the Russian Revolution, she wrote from her prison cell in Wronke to her dear, younger friend Sonja in that reply dated May 23, 1971, “Sonja, you are bitter about my long imprisonment and ask – How is it that some people may decide over the fate of others? ... My little bird, the entire cultural history of humanity,

which according to some conservative estimate comprises some 20,000 years, is based on some people deciding the fate of others, and this has deep roots in the material conditions of existence. The only way to change this is by painful upheaval; we are witnessing now one of these painful chapters.”⁷ This letter is crucial because it expresses the fundamental question as well as doubt and answer to the question in strikingly human terms.

No wonder, Margarethe von Trotta began her film on Rosa with Rosa uttering these words inside the bleak courtyard of the prison. Significantly, we are offered an example of this practice of a few deciding over the fate of others in the very next scene where we see political prisoners lined up against the wall being shot by guards. We can interpret this act as an illustration of monarchy, bourgeois that is class-tainted democracy, or even socialist democracy gone astray hopelessly – at murderous work.

Let us deconstruct this letter to pinpoint the basic problematic. Both Sonja Liebknecht and Rosa in their distinctive ways were disturbed by the almost ingrained asymmetry in socio-human relations. This asymmetry is built on and sustained by the thoroughly undemocratic practice of some determining the fate of others. Further, when this practice is institutionalised and made sacrosanct, it gives birth to a repressive sociopolitical system. What enables this anti-democratic system to continue is evidently the deep-rooted disequilibrium in the material conditions of existence. By disequilibrium we mean and Rosa meant exploitative class relations which ensure the unjust coexistence of the feudal lord and the serf, the capitalist and the worker, the imperialist and the colonized. Obviously, the three former decide the fates of the three many latter. This persistent perversion of the ideal polis, which we label democracy, can be cured and corrected by periodic revolutions or, as Rosa describes them, “painful upheavals”. In a flash, thereafter, the letter-writer links the strain of her thought to the palpable present by stating, “we are witnessing now one of these painful chapters”.

It would not be incorrect on our part to regard the ‘painful chapter’ as the Russian Revolution because the other letters which she wrote during this phase to Marta Rosenbaum, Luise Kautsky and Sonja Liebknecht pointedly refer over and over again to the

turmoil the Bolshevik Revolution caused within her. Even the adjective 'painful' / 'qualvolle' is carefully chosen. Like Walter Benjamin's dialectical image, it stresses the indispensability of birthpangs associated with any revolution, necessarily armed, as well as celebrates the liberation it promises, the liberation of every single being placed in the network of a liberated collective. If there is a strain of pessimism of the will in this letter, it is adequately balanced by the optimism expressed to Marta Rosenbaum in another letter written from the same prison cell barely a month ago. In this letter, Rosa wrote, "Dear Marta, well, the wonderful things in Russia affect me like an elixir of life. Isn't what comes from there a message of salvation for all of us ... For this reason, I would like to hear that you are in a better frame of mind, that you are all in high spirits and a happy mood – despite all the misery and horror".⁸ Indeed, these letters written from the prisons of Wronke and Breslau before her release, in their articulation of rousing hope and courage, disturbing queries, acceptance of pain and joy, and even tragic reflection evoke a structure of feeling which Raymond Williams would have called uncompromisingly dialectical.

RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND CRITIQUE

From these letters to the text *Russian Revolution* signify a specific advance in Rosa's critical engagement with the principles and praxis of democracy, triggered as they were by the Bolshevik experience. In this text we find the light and shade, praise and denunciation, euphoria and shock wedded together explicitly in an unbreakable knot, the like of which is absent in the letters more given to heartfelt praise. At this point, I would like to advance a particular point of view that is not primarily preoccupied with the sheer correctness or not of her evaluation of the Bolshevik revolution in isolation. It is true that Clara Zetkin stressed that Rosa was not adequately informed about the events in Russia and that is why perhaps her criticism, at times, sounded as intense as her eulogy. Moreover, according to Clara Zetkin, Rosa revised her former assessment of the mixed achievement of the Bolsheviks, Lenin and Trotsky in particular, in the light of her later do-or-die participation in the German Revolution.⁹ Without underestimating the historical importance of such revisions and reassessments, could we not also approach the

entire question from the epistemic-ideological perspective and claim that, notwithstanding the fallibility of her evaluation, she regarded the Russian Revolution as a highly relevant example to (i) establish an intrinsic link between socialist revolution and socialist democracy and (ii) to highlight the preconditions of a socialist democracy per se. In other words, the most appropriate example of the time offered her the opportunity to delineate the spirit of socialist democracy which can be only ensured by the dictatorship of the proletariat. The pressing palpability of the Bolshevik Revolution gave to her language in the text an urgent fervour which we can discern even more clearly in Alfred Doebelin's epic-novel *Karl and Rosa, November 1918*. Almost echoing the sentences of Rosa's political text we have all read, Doebelin wrote with the help of a slight creative colouring:

"Yes, the events in Moscow had attracted her attention. This was what engaged her most intensively, excited and challenged her.

For Lenin was out there working like a battering ram, hammering against the turrets of the old society, toppling one wall after the other. The edifice trembled. It could not be long now until the whole thing crashed to the ground with a thundering collapse that would awaken the whole world.

How the drama intrigued Rosa. She read how they were attacking Lenin. She defended him. What were these Mensheviks thinking, tainted with their bourgeois ideas? How was Lenin supposed to act? These foolish utopians and weaklings. They thought he would just sit back and wait while the Whites prepared a military dictatorship with all its terrors for the proletariat.

She began to take down notes again, alert and aggressive.

"In this situation the Bolshevik wing has proven its historical worth by proclaiming from the very beginning those tactics that alone could save the revolution and by acting upon them systematically. All power in the hands of the masses of workers and peasants, that was the sword stroke that slashed the Gordian knot, leading the revolution out of its constricted passage and opening for it the free plain of uninhibited development."

But then Lenin's face was revealed to her, his cynical smile. He was betraying democracy. He was setting it aside. For what purpose? To create without disruption what he called revolution.

But we are not generals commanding armies. We do not command, we battle side by side on toward the same goal.

Lenin versus bourgeois society, what is he then? A general, a dictator, a man of the past, whose methods are those of the past, he is no socialist but a bourgeois.

Rosa became impassioned by the ups and downs of the conflict with the man. What? To have thousands shot in retaliation for an attempted assassination? To shoot them down summarily, cold-bloodedly, all the while pretending to be inaugurating a socialist society? It was enough to make you long for the days of the czars, may they rest in peace, when every case was investigated and each guilty party hanged or exiled on his or her own.

She sat with paper before her and thought. We have had a great many discussions about the dictatorship of the proletariat and its relationship to democracy. Just look at him, how simply he solves the problem. The solution is : Lenin. Goethe, a German, said, "Moral man's greatest treasure remains the individual personality." Not the man who smashes it, the dictator.

I am the dictatorship of the proletariat, Nikolai Lenin has decreed. But why? Just ask my Latvian Rifles and the Red Guard. You will receive a bang of an answer. But what do you need all that grand rhetoric for then? Let's simply call it war and victory and defeat.

In what way is his war different from that of the Germans against the French and the English? His is fought out between civilians, the other between uniformed soldiers. The brawl has moved to the home front, the illness has spread to the homeland. What magnificent progress.

Rosa jotted it down angrily.

"With the suppression of political life throughout the country, the political life of the Soviets must likewise languish. Without general elections, without unhampered freedom of the press and assembly,

without free debate of opinions, life will die out in every public institution. It will only seem to live, while only one single effective pulse of life will remain – the bureaucracy.

"It is at its base an oligarchy. Most certainly a dictatorship – but by a handful of politicians. In effect, a bourgeois dictatorship."

She brooded for a while before she dashed it off:

"Real dictatorship, our dictatorship, consists in the application of democracy, not in its abolition".¹⁰

I have deliberately quoted this extract in full because its vibrant prose not only recreates the emotional turmoil of Rosa caught between the inseparable contradictions of the momentous event but also etches her unsullied vision of what socialist democracy should be. Once we deconstruct the passage, the dialectical tug of war between the positives and the negatives emerge unambiguously.

First, the positives

- (1) Rosa applauds Lenin for working like a battering ram.
- (2) Rosa is more than aware of the dubious role of the Mensheviks and, more importantly, the terrible threat posed by the White reaction.
- (3) In fact, by combining 1 & 2, Rosa underlines the historical worth of the Bolshevik Revolution. It is as if this Revolution – neither a putsch nor insurrection carried out by a Blanquist minority – has attained the worth of a lasting model, albeit not without flaws.

Now, the negatives:

- (1) By directing the assassination of many as a reply to the assassination attempts made on him, Lenin is indulging in that practice of terror which is opposed to the vaunting ideal of socialist democracy. This is plain killing which cannot be legitimized.
- (2) Instead of practising or trying to practise or trying to prepare the ground for the dictatorship of the proletariat, which, as Rosa stresses over and over again, is the synonym for socialist democracy in the making, Lenin has arrogated all power to

himself. As if he and his trusted few represent the solution, or better still, the ideal synthesis between the capture of power and the practice of power.

- (3) Once we combine (1) and (2) we find that the Bolshevik experiment is hurtling towards a reality where the freedom of the press, assembly, general elections etc etc are destined to disappear.

To conclude, the dictatorship of the proletariat as asserted by Lenin and Trotsky does not correspond to her vision of dictatorship which is, by definition, based not on the abolition, but thriving application of democracy down to the very pores of the social reality. The positives and negatives bound together by the simultaneity of the sharply clashing dialectic may only be resolved by a bottom to top, grassroot-based, ceaseless and vigorous interaction between the vanguard and the masses. That precisely is Rosa's shining vision. But whether this unsullied vision is at all realizable in the hurly-burly of the revolution is positing another question that calls for another discourse. Suffice it to say here that her text on the Russian Revolution embodies her vision of socialist democracy and serves as the culminating point of her cogitations which began from *Reform or Revolution*, and is heard again in *Organisational Questions of Social Democracy*, *The Mass Strike* and the *Junius Pamphlet*. The essence of this vision is, in Rosa's words, heard yet again in her article on National Assembly which appeared in the *Rote Fahne* some months later, "Today it is not a question of democracy or dictatorship. The question that history has placed on the agenda is: bourgeois democracy or socialist democracy? For the dictatorship of the proletariat is democracy in a socialist sense. It is not a matter of bombs, coups d'etat, riots or 'anarchy', as the agents of capitalist profit dishonestly make out; rather it is the use of all the means of political power to realize socialism, to expropriate the capitalist class – in the interests and through the will of the revolutionary majority of the proletariat, that is, in the spirit of socialist democracy".¹¹ What mattered to the visionary is the redemptive spirit of the socialist system which demolishes the unbridgeable dichotomy between the form and content plaguing all expressions of bourgeois democracy. The content of class exploitation encased in the supposedly faultless

form of parliamentary democracy cannot be the goal of socialist democracy whose form and content should hold the individual and the collective in one indivisible digit of harmonious liberation.

It goes without saying that any other Revolution, along with the overwhelming Bolshevik, would have provoked the same reaction from Rosa had its practice led to a similar compromise or even betrayal. The practice, real or imagined, constructed the antithesis which Rosa attempted to counter and challenge by her synthetic vision. But what would have been her response, had she been engulfed in the Revolution itself? Imagine Rosa in the shoes of Lenin or Trotsky. Her dependable comrade-in-arms, Leo Jogiches, provided a reply to this query voiced by Rosa herself. When Rosa asked, "But how can Josef Dzierzynski be so cruel?"¹² Leo answered, "If the need arises, you can do it too". In a different vein, Leszek Kolakowski sharply criticized the 'mythical faith' Rosa nurtured in the purificatory process of the revolution. Questioning Rosa's unreal idealism, he said, "Rosa Luxemburg, on the other hand, seemed to believe that the Bolsheviks could have held on to power by democratic means under a system of popular representation. This strange notion could only be based on her mythical, unshakeable belief in the innate revolutionary character of the masses, which, left to themselves, were bound to evolve socialist forms of public life. Lenin and Trotsky were a good deal more circumspect and realistic than this."¹³

ROTE FAHNE AND RESOLUTION

Do the comments of two radically dissimilar figures like Leo Jogiches and Leszek Kolakowski open another though related terrain of dialectics, this time between the carefully nurtured ideal and the rough and tumble of actual politics experienced every moment? To put this question squarely, how and to what extent did the living encounter with the German Revolution (November- December 1918) alter Rosa's discourse on revolution and its offspring, socialist democracy? Did her understanding undergo a radical change, as some would prefer to believe?

If one analyses the stirring articles of this ultimate phase and compares its themes interrelated with those examined earlier in the other tracts I have already mentioned, one finds that a clear and

cogent subterranean link binds the past with the foreboding present. The arguments and counter-arguments clash, basically, within the same dialectical frame though their fervour and fire increase manifold under the awful pressure of the uprising going awry. In fact, the maximum that occurs is the compelling emphasis on some specific aspects, which in a different context in the past were not accorded that comparable importance, although neither rejected nor denied altogether. These turns and shifts, twists and stresses, fill the earlier gaps and fired as they are by the raging battle doomed to defeat, invest the debate with an exemplary passion, tragic and sublime at the same moment. Clara Zetkin did not indulge in any exaggeration when she compared Rosa's role as a commentator in this period with that of Marx pouring himself out in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848 when another revolution confronted defeat.¹⁴

Let us highlight some of the running or continuous themes which culminate in the *Rote Fahne*.

- (1) Rosa's lifelong war against the weak-kneed and evasive reformism of German Social Democracy, understandably, reaches its apex here when the majority of SPD and the UPSD in their own ways ensure the death of the uprising. Rosa's unforgiving assault against these duplicitous comrades is steered by two connected factors: (i) they have betrayed the proletariat's uprising, no matter how premature it was (ii) as a result, they have annulled the birth of socialist democracy, its natural offspring. Rosa appears like a defiant Cassandra here, for what she had claimed about Eduard Bernstein in 1899 was fulfilled to the word by his successor, the Ebert-Scheidemann duo.
- (2) Like Lenin and Engels, Rosa, even in this very difficult period, believed that revolution could not be tailor-made one fine morning. It is true that she was an intrinsic part of the abortive uprising – her commitment prescribed no other course – nonetheless, her eloquent critique of the 'Acheron set in motion' in 'Order reigns in Berlin' reasserted the importance of painstaking groundwork, preparedness, inspired leadership and rockhard organizational strength – elements which are required

to cement the success of any mass-based, spontaneous outburst.

- (3) Even in her last days, she opposed the method of Louis Auguste Blanqui wedded to armed insurrection by small groups as well as the ultracentralism of the party-apparatus, by underlining the inestimable importance of the revolutionary majority. Her eagle's eye mapped the correct contours of the socialist revolution and the socialist state with undiminished vigour. Indeed, the best explication of this vision, after *Russian Revolution* is read in *What does the Spartacus League want?* Crystal clear and determined, these lines chart her final dream: "In all previous revolutions a small minority of the people led the revolutionary struggle, gave it aim and direction, and used the mass only as an instrument to carry its interests, the interests of the minority, through to victory. The socialist revolution is the first which is in the interests of the great majority and can be brought to victory only by the great majority of the working people themselves ...

From the uppermost summit of the state down to the tiniest parish, the proletarian mass must therefore replace the inherited organs of bourgeois class rule – the assemblies, parliaments and city councils – with its own class organs – with workers' and soldiers' councils. It must occupy all the posts, supervise all functions, measure all official needs by the standard of its own class interests and the tasks of socialism. Only through constant, vital, reciprocal contact between the masses of the people and their organs, the workers' and soldiers' councils, can the activity of the people fill the state with a socialist spirit."¹⁵

Now, let us underline the changing shifts and emphases which do not constitute any radical 'break' – to borrow Althusser's term – but certainly sharpen and deepen the process of dialectics.

- 1) Rosa always advocated the overthrow of the bourgeois-capitalist system in uncompromising terms. She did not, like any misty-eyed liberal, accuse Lenin and Trotsky of applying force and violence. However, her allegiance to revolutionary violence received the most ardent expression in her articles in

the *Rote Fahne*, precisely because the Spartacist uprising revealed fully and nakedly to what extent the enemies could possibly go. Categorical statements like ‘The violence of the bourgeois counterrevolution must be confronted with the revolutionary violence of the proletariat’ (What Does The Spartacus League Want); ‘Arming of the entire male adult proletarian population as a workers’ militia’ (Ibid); ‘The fight for socialism is the mightiest civil war in history’¹⁶ bring her close to the militant position of the Bolsheviks.

- 2) At the same time, in spite of her unqualified denunciation of bourgeois democracy which she labels ‘parliamentary cretinism’, she advocates participation in the elections to the National Assembly. This fine-tuning of the principle of acceptance and rejection, which is the basis of dialectical praxis, is in a sense a continuation of her criticism of the Bolsheviks’ dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, though it is much more focused and penetrating. In point of fact, the vision of Rosa as depicted earlier is sharpened here by her grasp of the suitable revolutionary strategy. While her ideology unmasks the essential inefficacy of parliamentary politics, yet again, her growing sense of realpolitik prompts her to support the minority’s move for participation in the election. One of the most remarkable passages exploring this dialectical complexity is found in her speech in the debate on the National Assembly. In one single breath she demolishes the absolutism granted to bourgeois democracy by Bernstein et al and, ironically, proposes its tactical utilization, “We all agree that the National Assembly is a bastion of counterrevolution ... we want to blow up that bastion from within”.¹⁷
- (3) Finally, the glaring drawbacks of the uprising made her acutely conscious of the imperative role of the leaders, of the party and the organization. She did not minimize by any measure the importance of spontaneous mass assault but then this was simply not enough. Possibly, for the first time, the unguided and impulsive nature of the uprising led her to realize that a strong, mutually reinforcing revolutionary contract had to be forged between the proletariat and its vanguard. Her indictment

of the leaders in the article ‘What are the Leaders Doing’ attest to her acknowledgement of this indispensable bond. She wrote, “On their own spontaneous initiative they (workers) occupied *Vorwärts* and seized the bourgeois editors and the WTB (Wolff’s Telegraphic Bureau) and, so far as possible, they armed themselves. They are waiting for further instructions and moves from their leaders.

And meanwhile, what have these leaders done? What have they decided? Which measures have they taken to safeguard the victory of the revolution in this tense situation in which the fate of the revolution will be decided, at least for the next epoch? We have seen and heard nothing.”¹⁸

As we read and reread these articles, we realize the limitless dedication of Rosa to the dialectics of liberation. At one level, her uncompromising critical insight fortified by experience exposes the gaps and fissures of the 1918 uprising; at another level, her uncompromising commitment to the cause provokes her to throw all caution to the wind and join the battle. Why? Simply because, as Karl Liebknecht said, ‘the proletariat is on the march’. In a word, she inhaled and exhaled dialectic with her brain and blood every second.

The articles in *Rote Fahne* also indicate Rosa’s revised estimate of the Bolshevik Revolution. By contrasting the triumph of the former with the impending defeat of the latter in ‘The Debate on the National Assembly’ she paid her final compliment to her Russian comrades, Lenin in particular. Rosa’s repeated arguments with Lenin did not deter the latter from writing a glowing obituary on her where he compared her with the soaring eagle whose life and message would inspire Communists of future generations. The eagle’s sharp eye pinpointed the differences between the two uprisings in the ‘Speech in the Debate on the National Assembly’ – a flawless realisation that dawned a bit too late, “When the National Assembly was rejected in Russia the situation there was somewhat similar to the one in Germany today. But have you forgotten that before they rejected the National Assembly, something else had happened in November: the proletariat had taken power. Do you already have a Socialist Government today? Do you have a Lenin-Trotsky Government?

Russia had a long revolutionary history, whereas Germany does not. The Russian Revolution did not begin in March 1917, but much earlier in 1905. Their most recent revolution is nothing but the most recent chapter, preceding it lies the entire period that began in 1905. It produced a level of maturity in the masses very different from what exists in Germany today. You have nothing behind you except the pitiful half revolution of November 9.”¹⁹

CONCLUSION

The synthesis in Rosa's context could only be aspired-for. Its most eloquent expression is recorded in Alfred Doebelin's novel where Rosa and Karl read Karl's last declaration which proclaims, "We have not fled and we are not vanquished ... The long road to Golgotha for the German working class has not reached its end, but the day of salvation nears" and then Rosa responds by asserting, "How true Karl, how true that is, what you have written ... Perhaps from that they will finally realize what the class struggle means for us: much, much more than just a struggle of classes".²⁰ With these words the great narrator Doebelin strikes the right chord. The unspoken in the last words refers unerringly to that emancipatory core, to that vision of socialist democracy, which invests the struggle of classes with a higher dimension, human and redemptive.

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- 1 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Page 14, 1986.
 - 2 Eduard Bernstein, series of articles in *Neue Zeit*, 1897-98, and *Evolutionary Socialism*, London 1909.
 - 3 *Reform or Revolution*, Rosa Luxemburg, in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* Ed. By Mary Alice Walters, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1986, Pages 33-90
 - 4 Ibid, Page 85-86.
 - 5 *Rosa Luxemburg*, Peter Nettl, Oxford Paperbacks, Oxford, 1969, Page 408.
 - 6 *Reform or Revolution*, Page 76.
 - 7 Rosa Luxemburg, Letter dated 23 May, 1917, *Briefe aus dem Gefaengnis*, Karl Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 2000, Page 48. Translated by the author.
 - 8 Letter to Marta Rosenbaum dated April. 1917. *The Letters of Rosa*

- Luxemburg*, Ed and Tr by Stephen Eric Bronner, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1993, Page 195.
- 9 Clara Zetkin – mentioned by Sobhonlal Dutta Gupta in his book *Rosa Luxemburg and her Critics*, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta, 1994, Page XVII.
- 10 Alfred Doebelin, *Karl and Rosa – November 1918: A German Revolution*, Tr by John E Woods, Inter National Publishing Corporation, New York, 1983, Pages 74-75.
- 11 *The National Assembly* – Rosa Luxemburg's article in *Rote Fahne*, November 20, 1918. Reproduced in Sobhanlal Datta Gupta's book, Page 186.
- 12 Peter Nettl's book, Page 486.
- 13 Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism-2*, OUP, Oxford, 1978, Pages 87-88.
- 14 Mentioned by Sobhanlal Datta Gupta in his book, page XX
- 15 'What does the Spartacus League Want?' Article by Rosa Luxemburg in the *Rote Fahne*. Reproduced in Sobhanlal Datta Gupta's book, Page 169.
- 16 Ibid, Pages 171-172.
- 17 Ibid, in the article, 'The Debate on the National Assembly', Pages 184-185.
- 18 Ibid, in the article, 'What are the Leaders Doing?'
- 19 Ibid, in the article, 'The Debate on the National Assembly', Page 182.
- 20 Alfred Doebelin, Ibid, Page 472.