Luxemburg-Gramsci Line*

A: tayyār lūksimburg-ġramšī. – F: ligne Luxemburg-Gramsci. G: Linie Luxemburg-Gramsci – R: linija Ljuksemburg-Gramši. S: linea Luxemburgo-Gramsci. – C: lusenbao-gelanxi luxian 卢森堡-葛兰西路线

The term LGL was coined by Peter **Weiss**. He included it in a July 1977 outline indicating how he planned to structure the final section of his *Ästhetik des Widerstands (ÄW)/The Aesthetics of Resistance* (*AR*). There this term stands for nothing less than the perspective of Weiss's work as a whole. In part directly inspired by it, in part detached and based on knowledge and experience gained in particular, if related contexts, the LGL became a metaphor for the quest for a renewal of Marxism and the socialist movement. To grasp how, one needs to reconstruct Weiss's approach, sketch his reception on the Left and, finally, bring out Rosa **Luxemburg's** connection to Antonio **Gramsci** in a new way, interpreting the LGL as a line of development in which **Luxemburg's** role in renewing the Social-Democracy's theory and practice is clarified from a **Gramscian** standpoint, while Gramsci appears as a thinker whose critical elaboration can also be read as a response to unresolved questions in **Luxemburg**.

1. *Peter Weiss*. – With *AR*, **Weiss** has bequeathed the workers' movement a magnificent historical account in novel form that goes far beyond the framework of traditional

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historiography. He lends cultural expression to the workers' movement, transforms knowledge into actively intervening thought, and tells this story of struggles and failure from the standpoint of a possible Marxism initiated, in his view, in the figures of **Luxemburg** and **Gramsci**. In his *Notizbücher* [Notebooks], accordingly, **Weiss** notes, as a guideline >for the final section<: >membership in the party – that it was a small party is of no importance. Membership a declaration of principle – ideological affiliation -- absence of constraint and dogmatism – Luxemburg Gramsci line – precondition: clarification of historical mistakes – living critical science, rejection of any and all forms of idealism, mystifications, or the cultivation of illusions< (608). Three dimensions are prominent here: affiliation with the party as a self-imposed obligation excluding dogmatism, criticism of mistakes as the precondition for a living Marxism, and *Ideologiekritik*. These three proposals are responses to the wrenching contradictions in which Weiss develops the LGL. At stake are appropriation of the past, concepts, and culture from one's own (class) standpoint. Weiss writes the story as self-education in the movement: >One cannot work these questions out by oneself, there are many of us, and we arguably also speak for many – for this reason I have joined a party, the CP […] a community in which it is important that everyone express his opinion in various ways, in contradiction with others in the democratic sense< (December 1977, on the democratised Left Party-Communists in Sweden; 650).

The sentence of **Luxemburg's** that is the most widely quoted on the Left, but also far beyond it – >freedom is always freedom for those who think differently< (*RLR*, 305, transl. corr., FH), which has been brought down to the level of a

simple appeal for liberal tolerance – figures as a guiding principle in **Weiss's** *Notizbücher* (663, 692, 699, 823, 837). It is, so to speak, re-appropriated and politicised. Initially, the issue is exclusion and employment bans in the West. Later, it is state censorship in the GDR, where Weiss's historiography was not tolerated. Conflating the two, Weiss writes, on receiving a prize in the West: >We who write find ourselves, and no mistake, in an unremitting struggle against restriction of the freedom of speech, against state authorities' discrimination against, and expulsion of, those who think differently< (692). The principle strikes out the hardest against Stalinism: >massacre […] is of the essence […] of a centralism taken to its furthest extreme […]. Equally to blame are those who blindly obey, who bow down before the figure of the Forefather, who quell every impulse to rebelliousness in themselves, who call their monstrous broken-spiritedness discipline. No less responsible, however, are […] the victims, who went the furthest in their servility […] to the point of self-extinction […]. They were perhaps the greatest traitors of all, for they had once been the most eminent thinkers of the materialist science of society< (607). In the debate over the new Vietnam, Weiss recalls, in July 1979: >True freedom is the freedom which is also that of those who think differently< (823). Here it becomes unmistakably clear that this principle is not intended as an appeal for peaceful tolerance, but that what is at stake is the very essence of socialism.

Luxemburg had appended this principle originally as a marginal note to her criticism of the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. The context should be recalled. It was, she says, >the immortal historical merit< of the Russian Revolution to have put itself >at the head of the

international proletariat with the conquest of political power and the practical placing of the problem of the realization of socialism< (*RLR*, 310, transl. corr., FH); but, at the same time, errors were made in setting the course of the construction of socialism, which was taking place >under the frightful compulsion of the world war, the German occupation< (308). Taking issue with a formula of **Lenin's** which had it that the socialist state was merely the capitalist state stood on its head – rather than the working class now the bourgeoisie was being repressed – she writes: >This simplified view misses the most essential thing: bourgeois class rule has no need of the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not able to exist< (304-5). Because the masses had not been involved deeply enough in the construction of socialism, it could not become any kind of socialism at all for them. Taking issue with **Trotsky's** view that it was only a question of an >open and direct struggle for power< (1919, 80), **Luxemburg** enumerates how the Bolsheviks have promoted the >suppression of public life< and, by doing that, have >blocked up the fountain of political experience and this source of this rising development<, thereby making >the practical realisation of socialism< impossible (*RLR*, 305). It is here that the well-known passage occurs in the form of a marginal comment: >Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party – however numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom is always freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of a fanatical concept of ^justice^^ but because all that is invigorating, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on

this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when ^freedom^^ becomes a special privilege< (305, transl. corr., FH).

Weiss – implicitly criticising **Luxemburg's** critique of **Lenin** even as he confirms it – asks about the conditions under which >true freedom […] which is also freedom for those who think differently< (*N*, 1979, 823), can exist at all: >But it is no more possible in VN [Vietnam], they say, than it was after the October Revolution/reality no more allows of it in VN than in Cuba, although, here as well as there, the preconditions for it seem to exist / here as well as there, a humanistic basis / but also, here as well as there, an external foe constantly striving to bring the Revolution to its downfall […]. It's the old problem: socialism has never yet been able to develop freely; the imperialist enemy was always standing in its way< (ibid.).

Thinking differently becomes, for **Weiss**, a keyword for Marxism, which he characterises as humanistic, critical, self-critical, unwilling to settle for ready-made formulas and in search of new strategies (13 May 1977). In a critical backward glance, he presents the >shattering of the Second International, the successive splits in the Third International, the wasteland after the disastrous errors in the assessment of fascism<, the mistaken Popular Front policies, the political devastation associated with World War II, the icy Cold War crisis (*N*, 633) – and goes on to call for risking something new. >Our experiences of the past half century have taught us that suppression of criticism, of the will for independent investigation of social processes, necessarily brings on cultural death< (712). Those are Luxemburg's words in a different context: >Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of

press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element< (*RLR*, 307). One theme spills over into the next: criticism of mistakes and self-criticism, critical science, culture, learning from experience – and they are, at the same time, the foundations of Luxemburg's thought. After the failure that saw the Social-Democracy vote war credits in 1914, she issued a call to found a new party in 1917: >now, however, it is clear to every thinking worker that a rebirth of the workers' movement out of its present collapse and present ignominy is impossible without a clear grasp […] of the causes<. What must be understood, according to Luxemburg, is >bust up of 4 August 1914 for sure already had roots in the very core of the workers' movement *before* 4 August 1914< (GW 4, 270-71). Only if one knows the roots of the problem, she says, can one extirpate them and gain the >firm ground< needed to build a new organisation. Hence >the starting point […] for the creation of a new socialist movement in Germany< must be a >thoroughgoing *evaluation of the past* […]. Clear guidelines for the future can only be drawn from the well of self-criticism, from an excruciatingly thorough examination of our own mistakes in programme, tactics, and organisation […]. The task was to undertake a *political* examination of the practice of the German Social-Democracy and the labour unions in its main features, to expose their main defects in the past […] something we must also do in our propaganda before each individual worker when we try to rally him to the opposition's banner< (271).

Luxemburg calls for >exposing the *political* roots of bureaucracy and the degeneration of democracy in the old party, and chopping them off with an axe< (272-3). **Weiss**

holds this critique up to illustrate the contrast between revolutionary and bureaucratic thinking: >what a gulf between those who think like revolutionaries, who are, that is, uncompromising and intent on throwing off all forms of oppression, and the functionaries and bureaucrats nested in their apparatuses< (*N*, 633). **Luxemburg** and Weiss alike repeatedly emphasise that one must learn from experience to find a pathway to the future, and declare that the form of such learning is experiment. **Weiss** (612) approvingly quotes a sentence by the social-democratic theorist Ernst **Wigforss** from 1938: >Socialism can assume dogmatic, dictatorial forms, but it can also be *critical*, experimental, ready and willing to learn from experience.< **Luxemburg** writes: >Only experience is capable of correcting and opening up new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts […]. Otherwise, socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals< (*RLR*, 306; see 302-3 for a similar passage). A new society, Luxemburg insists – and Weiss repeats – cannot be built by following old recipes. It requires experiment. It *is* experiment.

Weiss constantly integrates (as did **Brecht** before him) sentences, words, and images of **Luxemburg's** into *ÄW*, and even takes elements of his critique of traditional historiography as well as suggestions for revamping it (*N*, 782) from them. Luxemburg calls for writing history as the work of ordinary men and women. >*The whole of human history is a work created by the social cooperation of many people, is a work by the masses* […Human] history abounds in sagas about heroes and individuals' mighty deeds; it echoes with the fame of wise kings, bold military commanders, daring explorers, heroic liberators, inventors of genius […]. At

first sight all good and evil, the happiness and the misery of the peoples is the work of individual rulers or great men. In reality, the peoples, the nameless masses themselves, forge their own destiny, their happiness and woe< (GW 4, 206-7). Weiss takes up Luxemburg's invitation to decode a certain type of historiography as obfuscation of people's liberation struggles and makes it *ÄW*'s opening scene and finale (>the last scene must evoke the Pergamon frieze<, *N*, 897), sometimes using her language almost verbatim, and at other times adopting her characteristic style. As in Brecht, so too in Weiss, it is >reading workers< whose thoughts and insights as they look at the Pergamon altar help to decrypt historical testimonies in a new way. >It was no doubt highbred figures who trod barbaric mongrels underfoot here, and the sculptors did not immortalize the people who were down in the streets, running the mills, smithies, and manufactories, or who were employed in the markets, the workshops, the harbor shipyards […] no doubt, only the names of some of the master artists were handed down […] and not the names of those who had transferred the drawings to the ashlars […] and nothing recalled the peons who fetched the marble and dragged the huge blocks to the oxcarts, and yet, said Hellmann, the frieze brought fame not only for those who were close to the gods but also for those whose strength was still concealed, for they too were not ignorant, they did not want to be enslaved forever […] they rebelled at the end of the construction< (*AR*, I, 8). In this way, **Weiss** invokes the history, carved in stone, of those silenced by a historiography that only has eyes for the victors; he invokes it as awakening, as future, and thus simultaneously writes a new history.

The traces of **Luxemburg** in *ÄW* (where she herself appears as

an actor) and in the *Notizbücher* are impressive, but the second segment of the Luxemburg-Gramsci line is not directly to be found. Gramsci appears only once in the *Notizbücher*, albeit in a crucial passage: >It's right for us to jettison the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In our countries, the particular class that could be called the proletariat no longer exists; here there are only big blocks of people united by the same interests, the same desires, the same aversion (as defined by **Gramsci**), as they clearly appear in the communist movement of Italy, Spain, and France. When these blocks gain a majority, for long not any more by way of revolution, but by a democratic vote, the discredited concept of dictatorship will have been replaced by a concept that could perhaps be called resoluteness< (October 1978, 749). In the passage that bids farewell to the dictatorship of the proletariat, **Luxemburg** too is abandoned, and **Gramsci**, with his concept of the bloc, is taken up. The Luxemburg line is pursued via Gramsci, and intervenes in the politics of the workers' movement. The adversaries are the >hardened, unmoving and unmovable trusties of an ideology<; they >are always on the reactionaries' side, no matter which bloc they consider theirs, and their apparently rigorous, militant attitude serves only to preserve a stockpile of outdated ideas< (631). Conversely, Marxism is for **Weiss** the science of criticism. As a Marxist, he says, one finds oneself at all times in a dialectical process, can never consider anything finished, must call everything into question (630). Thus Gramsci is summoned to bear witness to a now indispensable, new historical-critical mode of thought and is, at the same time, one of the two figures who, as Marxists, are still alive, meaning that the coming generation can refer to them

and turn to them for support in order to discover what remains true in Marxism, amidst all its failures.

To comprehend the split in the workers' movement, the tragedy of self- laceration, the mistaken Popular Front politics and their destruction in fascism, and yet not simply despair: for that one needs **Gramsci**, with his concepts, his proposals, his philosophy of praxis that pursues contradictions from the global level all the way down to the individual subject – Gramsci with his attitude of >pessimism of the intelligence< and, despite all, >optimism of the will< (*PN* I, N. 1, §63, 172). Thus the whole of *ÄW* can also be read as a Gramscian novel, in which theory, practice, resistance, revolution, art, and criticism are united. For the third volume of *ÄW*, **Weiss** comes to the conclusion that >it is no longer a question of depicting the path to an aesthetics of resistance; rather, this aesthetics forms the basis of the whole view. The gaze turns from this aesthetic towards the occurrences . The motif of resistance is in art, as described here, of particular importance (in first place) , since the problems weighing people down have become so onerous that they seem unbearable to them< (*N*, 782). The speeches and articles that Luxemburg produced in the context of the crushed November 1918 uprising speak essentially of courage and the need for struggle, of indignation over the adversary, despair over bloody defeats and, ultimately, the certainty that one can learn from defeats. The >I was, I am, I shall be!< (*RLR*, 378) at the close of **Luxemburg's** last article, written in a context in which, once again, *Order reigns in Berlin*, refers not to Luxemburg herself, but to the revolution. Weiss appropriates this sentence as follows: >Again and again, it was to be as if all earlier hopes had been dashed by later lost intentions […]. The hopes would

remain. Utopia would be necessary. Later too, the hopes would flare up again, countless times, quelled by the superior enemy and re-awakened. And the realm of those hopes would grow bigger than it was in our day, spreading to every continent. The urge to contradict, to fight back, would not wane< (*ÄW*, III, 265).

2. *Reception*. - In 1985, in the framework of a German-Italian cultural festival, a conference was held under the title >The Luxemburg-Gramsci Line<. The idea, born in 1983 at the Hamburg Volksuniversität, was to combine **Luxemburg's** idea of exemplary mass learning with **Gramsci's** concept of hegemony and to call on Peter **Weiss** as the main witness (cf. **Kunstreich**/**Holler** 1986). Of the forty papers given at the conference, only few actually referred to both **Weiss** and **Luxemburg**, let alone to a **Luxemburg-Gramsci** line. Ten were published in a 1989 collection bearing the same title as the conference; anyone who looks for LGL on the internet will be referred to this collection. The two editors, Ulrich **Mehlem** and Thomas **Weber**, draw a connection in the book's preface between this project and Perestroika, then in its beginnings: >Over against what separates **Luxemburg** and **Gramsci**, the common and the complementary take centre stage: the project of both thinkers is to overcome subalternity and develop the capacity for social agency of those at the bottom […]. Rosa **Luxemburg's** emphasis on self-initiative and autonomy […] and **Gramsci's** concept of the hegemonic ^war of position^^ [come together to constitute] a programme for reorganisation< (*Die Linie Luxemburg-Gramsci*, 5).

Wolfgang Fritz **Haug** long ago pointed out that **Weiss's** concern is >to further develop a Marxism in the line that

runs from Rosa **Luxemburg** to **Gramsci** by way of a newly re-discovered Lenin< (1981, 34). He went on to recall the contrasting judgements of the early Gramsci (the Gramsci of 1920), who called the murdered Rosa **Luxemburg** and Karl **Liebknecht** >greater than the greatest of Christ's saints< (O 9, 157) because of their practice of struggle for the workers movement, and the **Gramsci** of the *Prison Notebooks*, who criticised **Luxemburg's** contribution to the mass-strike debate at the theoretical level for the >iron economic determinism< it displayed (cf. *SPN*, N. 7, §10, 233), for her expectation that capitalism would break down, and for her neglect of the laws of the >war of position< between classes in favour of a rapid >war of movement<, treated as absolute and held up as a >model for revolution< (Haug 1989, 6). **Haug** stresses the LGL's significance in the context of the urgency of a renewal of Marxism and passes on Lisa and Wolfgang **Abendroth's** judgement ascribing pre-eminent historical authority to Weiss's novel, marked by >an intensity<, according to the Abendroths, >which no history of the workers' movement and the resistance […] has ever matched< (1981, 23 and 20; Haug, 7).

Frank **Deppe** considers the question of the LGL at the higher level of the significance that both authors have for >revolutionary Marxism […]; Rosa **Luxemburg** in the context of German Social-Democracy's left wing, which, in the debate with the reformism and centrism, ultimately opted for independence as the ^Spartacus League^^ and then as the KPD; **Gramsci** as the head – as **Togliatti** put it in 1962 – of the Italian CP's ^leading group^^< (15). **Deppe** warns against >making amalgams that can hardly be theoretically justified<, identifying what the two authors have in common as >the socialist revolution< (16) and the >renewal and further development of Marxism<, including a >preoccupation

with the crisis of Marxism< (17). The difference between them, he insists, is that **Luxemburg** was the theorist of the war of movement, **Gramsci** that of the war of position, leading Gramsci, in >the perspective of the working class's struggle for hegemony<, to >a reflection on ^a fundamental intellectual and moral reform^^< (18). This helps explain the non-contemporaneous reception of the two theorists, according to **Deppe**: **Luxemburg's** came in the wake of the student movement (owing to her conception of spontaneity), while the reception >with international resonance< of **Gramsci** came only with the conception of Eurocommunism (18). **Luxemburg's** contribution to the renewal of Marxism consists, in **Deppe's** view, in her critique of reformism and of >divorcing the economic from the political struggle<, >the labour unionists< fetishism of organisation on the one hand and the ^parliamentarisation^^ of social-democratic politics on the other< (21). Deppe characterises her >conception of the breakdown of capitalism< as problematic, although it does, he concedes, aptly bring out the significance of the >underdeveloped' countries and of military expenditures as a sphere for capital investment< (22). He does not, however, notice that what he considers the positive aspects of **Luxemburg's** thought show her to be in a war of *position*. A positive **Gramscian** reference to **Luxemburg** may be discerned, he believes, in the need for a >philosophy of praxis< that >historicises the theory-practice relationship< (25). Yet **Gramsci** is said to have reflected upon the >perspective of a new revolutionary strategy in the West< after the defeat at the hands of fascism, unlike **Luxemburg** (ibid.), and, precisely in this connection, to have criticised her position in the mass-strike debate as >economistic<. **Deppe** calls **Gramsci's** >attitude to **Luxemburg**< >distanced< and, further,

historically determined by the >prejudices against her that gained ground in the Communist International after Lenin's death< (26). In distinction to Luxemburg, he affirms, Gramsci strove >to set a new path for proletarian revolution< (27). However, **Deppe** overlooks the fact that, after the >scandal of 4.August 1914< (GW 4, 271), **Luxemburg** too aspired to do just that.

Generally speaking, the question of a LGL seems to have been posed too early for the left theorists of 1985. They were familiar either with **Gramsci** – thanks above all to the important texts translated and edited by Christian **Riechers** in 1967 (the complete German-language edition of the *Prison Notebooks* began to see the light only in 1991) – or with Luxemburg, but not with both, although that was indispensable here. As a rule, it was **Luxemburg** who was neglected. That cannot be chalked up to the inaccessibility of her writings, for the edition of her works launched by Clara **Zetkin** and Adolf **Warski** in 1923, although it was not pursued in the GDR until the 1970s, *was* in fact accessible. The dilemma finds expression in, say, Vittantonio **Gioia's** claim, made after he read **Luxemburg's** shrewd reflection on the reception of **Marx's** work in the workers' movement (GW 1/2, 368), that she considered scientific theoretical studies to be unnecessary for politics, with the result that **Gramsci's** analysis in its entirety could be >deemed a sharp reaction to **Luxemburg**< (1989, 43). Domenico **Losurdo** (1997) discusses **Luxemburg** only marginally and negatively in his book on **Gramsci**, because, in her critique of the construction of socialism, she >accused the Bolsheviks of once again striking down the path of ^Jacobin rule^^< (162).

Jörg **Wollenberg** offers a different appreciation in 2005,

that is, twenty years after the first attempts, taking the LGL to be >a different history of workers' education from below< (22). >When Peter **Weiss** is read properly, it appears that this ^Luxemburg-Gramsci line^^ should be extended to include critics of an ^atavistic patronisation^^ [Weiss]. We might here mention figures such as August **Thalheimer**, Walter **Benjamin**, Ernst **Bloch**, Karl **Korsch**, Bertolt **Brecht**, or Paulo **Freire**, on whose works Weiss also relies< (22). **Wollenberg** deciphers the LGL as a >critique of the main features of the education reserved for workers, from Wilhelm **Liebknecht** to the present day, a critique which sets its hopes on workers' capacities for self-development and ^socialism through enlightenment^^ and takes its inception in a radical questioning and self-examination of the workers' movement inspired by Rosa **Luxemburg's** categorical imperative: ^the emancipation of the working class can only be the work of the working class itself, says the Communist Manifesto, taking working class to mean not a party executive committee seven or even twelve individuals strong, but the enlightened mass of the proletariat in person^^< (2; cf. GW 3, 38). In this line, **Wollenberg** founded, together with veterans of the anti-fascist struggle, Peter **Weiss** reading groups in Bremen, the city in which Weiss began his work. This new educational activity was supposed to take up the tradition of the >Red Academy<, the old >party school of the workers' movement before it split, council education, and even aspects of […] labour-union educational activity and socialist (Heim-)Volkshochschulen< (2). >With the ^defeat of a basic scientific Marxist position^^ (Otto **Brenner**) in the SPD and labour unions after 1945<, >these traditions were lost<, according to **Wollenberg**, and >repressed or even deliberately suppressed – despite attempts by Oskar **Negt**

and others to link up with and renew them in the 1960s and 1970s< (ibid.). Thus **Wollenberg** draws a connection between **Weiss's** work and Luxemburg's critique of the kind of educational work that neglects the subjects. To >drumming in a sum of positive knowledge<, **Luxemburg** opposes the >exchange of ideas< as a form of >training in systematic, independent thinking< (24; GW 2, 551), while settling scores across the board with the kind of labour-union education in which >teachers [are] condemned to recite< one and the same thing >four times in a row in a seven-month period< (GW 2, 552-3). >Every teacher who does not want to become a soulless machine< must rather, she says, >constantly develop his subject, constantly gather new material for it and re-organise his exposition of it. This becomes especially necessary for teachers in our workers' schools, who are at the same time, after all, only comrades in the struggle sitting behind a lectern, and thus learners themselves, not professional educators< (552). **Wollenberg** refers to **Gramsci** as someone who was for the council movement and against >authoritarian learning< (23). Like **Luxemburg** (among others), he is said to have stood for >moments of possibility of the realization of a concrete utopia< (27), in a now obliterated tradition >of historical, scientific, and cultural education< (22). **Wollenberg** cites a passage in which **Weiss** expresses his dispair over the terrible dialectic of the antifascist resistance: >That was the dreadful horror : the fact that the party, whose task should have been to work for the liberation of culture, wiped out its creative thinkers and treated only the clichés as valid. All those who had gathered around Luxemburg had been advocates of a revolution that was supposed to promote the development of people's positive faculties; and just as fascism had taken

a hammer to the refined achievements of art and literature, so the orders for the destruction of the intellectuals had come from the centre of communism< (33-4; *ÄW*, III, 151). **Wollenberg** pursued the LGL in **Weiss** reading courses in Bremen in opposition to a labour-union educational system that no longer wanted to hear anything about the LGL. >In the failure of the organised workers' movement<, in **Wollenberg's** view, **Weiss** saw >the history of subjugated people's untapped capacity for education. *The Aesthetics of Resistance* can accordingly become the point of crystallisation for a new formation of emancipatory forces after the collapse of actually existing socialism [**Bernhard** 1992, 191]< (21).

Bernd **Röttger** (2011) grasps the LGL differently, a quarter of a century after its initial reception: in Peter **Weiss**, the LGL is not just an empty formula that left-wing intellectuals quickly assimilated, but a >fundamental position< that had already been developed in outline. According to **Röttger**, this position can be discerned time and again in the history of the workers' movement, hence (and especially) in **Luxemburg** and **Gramsci**, but also before and after them. It is characterised, he says, by three essential moments: an orientation to the practice of people's self-enablement, which only creates the initial condition for revolutionary upheaval; an orientation to the defeats of the organised workers' movement as historic opportunities for advancing the organisation's self-transformation and renewal; and – with an eye to **Marx's** affirmation that >men make their own history, but under already existing circumstances< that again and again restrict action – an elaboration of the dialectic of structure and action.

3.1 *War of position / war of movement and revolutionary* Realpolitik. - After reading Rosa **Luxemburg's** *The Mass Strike: The Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906) (Cesare **Alessandri** translated the text to Italian in 1919-20), **Gramsci** expressed the judgement that >this little book, in my view, constitutes the most significant theory of the war of maneouvre applied to the study of history and to the art of politics. The immediate economic factor (crises, etc.) is seen as the field artillery employed in war to open a breach in the enemy's defences< (*PN* III, N. 7, §10, 161). But the historical experiences of 1905 were, Gramsci thought, generalised >somewhat hastily and superficially too<, while, >thanks to a certain ^economistic^^ and spontaneist prejudice<, >the ^voluntary^^ and organisational elements which were far more extensive and important in those events< were neglected (*SPN*, N. 13, §24, 233). For Gramsci, **Luxemburg** counted too heavily on the self-destructive tendencies of the capitalist mode of production and, as a result, overlooked the structure in which the system could regenerate itself in diverse rescue stations and thus not >lose faith in [it]self, [its] forces, and its future< (ibid.). **Gramsci's** critique points to **Luxemburg's** insufficient analysis of the reproduction of the power of domination because of >the awaiting of a sort of miraculous lightningstrike< (ibid., transl. corr., FH). At the same time, it fails to consider her actual political activity. **Gramsci** was obviously unaware of **Luxemburg's** day-to-day politics, which she herself has called >revolutionary *Realpolitik*<. In many respects, her model of politics corresponded to his conception of politics in the >war of position< in which the struggle for hegemony must be

pursued in non-revolutionary times. Luxemburg makes it clear that >[i]t is absurd to think of the mass strike as one act, one isolated action. The mass strike is rather the indication, the rallying idea, of a whole period of the class struggle lasting for years, perhaps for decades< (*RLR*, 192). **Gramsci**, for his part, recalls that >[i]n the period after 1870, with the colonial expansion of Europe<, all the >organisational relations of the State< altered, while >the Forty-Eightist formula of the ^Permanent Revolution^^ [was] expanded and transcended in political science by the formula of ^civil hegemony^^< (*SPN*, N. 13, §7, 243). He therefore suggests >studying ^in depth^^ which elements of civil society correspond to the defensive systems in a war of position< (235).

Luxemburg had lived through World War I and witnessed the politics of the Social-Democracy and the activity of the working masses during it; this impelled her to criticise and renew the politics of the workers' movement, her own included. **Gramsci** had experienced, in addition, the laborious construction of socialism in Russia and the defeat of the workers' movement at the hands of Italian fascism, which threw him into prison. This configuration compelled him to think about renewing the politics of the workers' movement.

The key to **Luxemburg's** conceptions of the war of position – and thus of civil society – is her revolutionary *Realpolitik*, which is underpinned by highly controversial statements about parliamentarianism, revolution, democracy, the dictatorship of the proletariat, freedom, the cultural, bourgeois rights, and the state. In all these domains, Luxemburg had the merit of posing a series of questions and displacing existing problematics that **Gramsci** further

elaborated by means of the concepts of hegemony, civil society, the integral state, the historical bloc, and organic intellectuals. One of the problems in any approach to Luxemburg, however, is that her work has been practically buried by biased receptions, through which one must therefore dig one's way. It is possible to draw from it sharply conflicting claims about each of the aforementioned domains and elevate them to the rank of >valid definitions< – but to do so is to miss, from the start, **Luxemburg's** way of thinking and working. For she neither thinks in terms of definitions nor paints things black and white. Her theoretical strategy aims, precisely, to dissolve conventional oppositions and displace questions. Thus even the usual stock question as to whether Luxemburg was for or against parliamentarianism misses her working method. In the debate about parliament, she lays the groundwork for a politics in contradictions which **Gramsci** later aptly conceptualises as the struggle for hegemony in civil society.

3.2 *Parliament*. – **Luxemburg** understands parliament to be a historical form of the bourgeoisie's class domination that must be used by the working class's representatives to improve working people's social conditions and, at the same time and even more importantly, must be defended against constant threat from the bourgeoisie. The aim of every intervention and the aim overall should be to show that a different social order is necessary. Thus, like **Gramsci** after her, Luxemburg takes politics to be, among other things, a learning process that should qualify people to participate in governance. In 1918, she wages a polemic against a proposed election boycott: >Elections represent a

new instrument of revolutionary struggle<. A >crude either-or […] is a simplification that does not serve to instruct and educate the masses< (GW 4, 483). She fights for a politics that will show the masses >the inadequacy of reformist patchwork and the necessity of socialist revolution< (GW 1/2, 125). Thus the >Social-Democracy< arrives at the contradiction, which it must also assume, that >socialist activity< can be only be directed to preparing the introduction of socialism, yet >must capture all attainable positions in the existing state, must advance everywhere< (ibid.). >The Social-Democrats' role in the bourgeois legislative body is, from the start […] caught up in inner contradictions. To participate in positive law-making in a way that can have practical consequences while simultaneously bringing to the fore the standpoint of fundamental opposition to the capitalist state every step of the way: that is, in broad outline, our parliamentary representatives' difficult task< (GW 1/1, 251). **Luxemburg** does not analyse this problematic – for example, the question of leftists' participation in government – in any greater depth (cf. Brie 2011). On specific points, however, she does discuss how politics in contradictions is to be pursued as >a particular way of shaping our representatives' *parliamentary* activity< (GW 1/2, 453). This includes acknowledging actions by capital and the state that are of public benefit, while at the same time constantly exposing those of their features imposed by >present-day legislation and the present-day legal system and administration, dominated by the spirit of private property< (123). Thus she considers it necessary to fight >for the development of transport, but not for the capitalist state's policies on the rail-roads […] for raising the level of the school system, but not for its

present-day forms< (122). Luxemburg also sees the coalitions in the capitalist camp which demand the ruling bloc to do their dirty work for them: >Here want-lists addressed to the state are drawn up, concerning economic legislation, means of transport, rail-road rates, public services – all for capital's greater good. When capital requires it, rivers are polluted by industrial waste and neighbourhoods are transformed into stinking sites of contagion. But when the organised power of capital gives the nod, canals are dug, railways are built, and exclusive residential neighbourhoods spring up, awash in air, sunlight, and glistening greenery< (GW 3, 431).

In parliamentary work, the individual steps that can be taken on the thin line between >sectarian nay-saying and bourgeois parliamentarianism< (GW 1/1, 252) may seem quite small and almost over-subtle. **Luxemburg**, however, provides a further guideline for such work, while simultaneously proposing a further shift for, this time, parliamentary representatives' edification: >Only the cooperation of various forms of struggle< constitutes socialist politics. She mentions mobilisations >in the streets<, general strike and, especially, press work, >in the sense that the working masses are increasingly invited to consider their own power and their own actions, and do not regard parliamentary struggles as the central axis of political life< (GW 1/2, 454). Thus Luxemburgian politics also requires a critical perspective, a critical standpoint, that go beyond the bounds of existing society (454-5). Even if parliamentarianism, democracy, and freedom of the press are not specifically socialist goals, but bourgeois rights, they remain necessary conditions for struggle within bourgeois society. However, as soon as the Social-Democracy declares these conditions themselves to be goals, it is

locked into rigid bureaucratic forms and becomes one bourgeois party among others. The alternative, according to Luxemburg, is to show at every moment that the world's destinies are not ruled by parliament, but dominated by capital that is in the process of becoming transnational, and that this brings war, destruction, and mass misery in its wake.

3.3 *Revolution and hegemony*. - **Luxemburg's** concern, therefore – to put it in **Gramscian** terms now – is to forge a politics for socialist hegemony. The traditional question as to whether reform or revolution constitutes this politics proves, once again, to be incorrectly posed. Both are means of struggle. One is required, within the bourgeois state, in order to improve the condition of the working class, and for its education, while the other is required to overcome this state, since political power cannot be attained without overthrowing it. **Luxemburg's** conception of revolution and violence, which at the same time says something about the relationship between *war of position* and *war of movement* – **Gramscian** concepts again – runs: >not, to be sure, out of a predilection for acts of violence or revolutionary romanticism, but out of bitter historical necessity, the socialist parties must sooner or later, in cases in which our efforts are directed against multiple interests of the ruling classes, also be prepared for violent clashes with bourgeois society< (GW 1/2, 247). In clear terms, she situates the two standpoints in the historical process, describing, at the same time, the interrelationship between the different political means: >The idea that parliamentarianism is, for the working class, the sole political means capable of ensuring its

salvation is as far-fetched and, in the end, as reactionary as the idea that the general strike or the barricade is the sole such means […]. However, a clear understanding of the need to use force both in individual episodes of the class struggle and for the final conquest of state power is indispensable from the start; it is this understanding that can lend even our peaceful, legal activity real emphasis and effectiveness< (ibid.). **Luxemburg's** orientation is towards linking the various means, that is, struggling in parliament, the factory, the street, and the press. It is precisely this multiplicity that constitutes socialist politics. Every form of struggle practised in exclusion eventually turns reactionary. The result, she says, is idealist sacrifice, a bureaucracy that encourages passivity, and paralysing fatalism. If any one of the individual forms becomes independent of the others, it will eventually lose the vitality that results from integrating the greatest possible multiplicity of forms and makes up the substance of socialism for Luxemburg. >There is nothing more improbable, impossible, or fantastic than a revolution even an hour before it breaks out, and nothing simpler, more natural, or more self-evident than a revolution after it has fought its first battle and gained its first victory< (GW 4, 255).

In her critique of Bolshevik policy after the beginning of the revolution, **Luxemburg** raises the question of >dictatorship or democracy<. Proletarian dictatorship, she says, cannot be merely a bourgeois dictatorship with proletarians at its head; it must be *democratic as dictatorship* in the form of majority rule. In the revolution, the goal is no longer to protect >bourgeois democracy<, but it *is* >to create a socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy – not to eliminate democracy

altogether< (*RLR*, 308). The decisive difference resides >in the *manner of applying democracy*, not in its *elimination*, in energetic, resolute attacks upon the well-entrenched rights and economic relationships of bourgeois society<. It >must be the work of the *class* and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class – that is, it must at every turn proceed from the active participation of the masses; it must be under their direct influence, subjected to the control of complete public activity; it must arise out of the growing political training of the mass of the people< (ibid., transl. corr., FH). Here dictatorship may be understood as forced development or a permanent categorical imperative. All must learn to rule by taking responsibility for social self-rule.

This is where **Gramsci** puts an analysis of the development of *civil society*, whose underdevelopment in Czarist Russia leads him to a different assessment of **Lenin's** policies. The necessary step from a war of movement to a war of position, that is, to consolidating >trenches<, had to be taken under great time pressure, requiring, to begin with, >identification of the elements of trench and fortress<, since >the state was everything, civil society […] primordial [and gelatinous; FH]< (*PN* III, N. 7, §16, 168-9).

3.4 *Dialectical thinking: the mole.* – **Luxemburg's** comments on the revolution testify to >an implicit passionate dialectic […] which finds itself put to the question of its conduct amidst conflicting necessities< (W.F.**Haug** 2005, 236). A >real revolution, a great outpouring of the masses<, can, in her view, >*never become* an artificial product of conscious planning, leadership, and propaganda<

(**Luxemburg**, *The Revolution in Russia 1905;* 2018a). This explains her interest in the >non-linear and sudden, the unforeseen< that realises a >leap in time< (**Haug** 2005, 237). Conversely, **Luxemburg** conceives of the >appropriation< of state power as endless small-scale work >in every province, in every city, in every village, in every municipality in order to take and transfer all the powers of the state bit by bit from the bourgeoisie […].< (*RLR*, 372, transl. corr., FH). Her approach to revolution flows from her assessment – with **Marx** – of the capitalist mode of production as itself revolutionary, until the point is reached at which the destructive forces inherent in it are directed against society. The laws of development of capitalism itself ceaselessly sap the very foundations on which they are effected; they give birth to the proletariat as a force in its own right, thus operating to subvert all old forms.

By means of the mole metaphor, **Luxemburg** presents the dialectic of history as an incessant burrowing through society's inner depths which, in spatially and temporally discontinuous fashion, shatters the crust of existing circumstances and breaks through to the surface. Thus capitalism can appear in 1896 as >the young mole< which, in an ossified Russia, >undermines the foundations, and this guarantees the overthrow of absolutism from within (GW 1/1, 42). >How merrily it works first right under the feet of Western European bourgeois society!< she writes in view of the 1905 Russian Revolution (2018b). Taken from **Shakespeare**`s *Hamlet*, the mole metaphor had already served **Marx** as a means of expressing the non-linear aspect of development, as a code for movement in the foundations of society. In **Luxemburg**, it is also a way of expressing the

idea that, ultimately, there is ultimately in fact a >great historical law<, as she writes in May 1917 at the moment of the Russian Revolution, which has put an end to the hopelessness of World War I and shown that there can be no bringing class struggles to a halt – that they operate like a natural force, like >a mountain water, whose brook bed has been clogged and which, plunged into the depths, suddenly springs up again in an unexpected place, sparkling in bright colors< (*The Old Mole*, *RW*, 243, transl. corr., FH). The association of subterranean and subversive >burrowing labor< with iron laws is characteristic of Luxemburg's dialectic. It is the *form* in which unexpected movement and purposeful development are expressed simultaneously, so that constant agitation remains a necessity even while no calculation can be made as to when a revolution will break out; indeed, it cannot even be said *whether* it will.

Gramsci too asks these questions, but differently. Although, in November 1917, he had hailed the October Revolution as a >revolution against *Capital*< (*SPW*, 34-7) – read, as a revolution contradicting the assumptions of Marxist theory – later, in prison, after the next disastrous defeat of the workers' movement at the hands of fascism, he analyses revolutions on a comparative historical basis, rather than expressing himself about revolution as such. But he thinks through what is revolutionary about Marxian theory, and this also shifts **Luxemburg**`s question from a day-to-day parliamentary experience to the cognitive process that sustains it >A theory is ^revolutionary^^ precisely to the extent that it is an element of total separation into two camps, to the extent that it is a peak inaccessible to the enemies. To maintain that historical materialism is not a completely

autonomous structure of thought really means that the ties to the old world have not been completely severed< (*PN* II, N. 4, §14, 156).

3.5 *Party and intellectuals.* - The basis for politics is constant study by the party's intellectuals. Like **Gramsci** after her, **Luxemburg** in 1904 imagines a growing group of trained scholars in the world`s proletariat's service showing that its cause is a generalisable standpoint. If party intellectuals are to be effective, they must be represented in parliament, among other places, and use parliament as a platform that allows to speak to the people (GW 1/2, 450). >The war of words as a parliamentary means of action is meaningful only for a party of struggle that seeks support of the people< (ibid.). Luxemburg also sometimes calls the party intellectuals' task >mole's work< (*RLR,* 2018c). However, a political standpoint, she argues, should not be drawn from what the relation of forces makes possible, but must be based on >tendencies of social development< (GW 2, 495). By way of example, she explains that >a sharp wind is blowing against the Social-Democracy in the ruling circles< (1910, GW 2, 484), that militarism and the arms race are increasing the danger of world war, but that the demand for the >legal eight-hour working-day<, >which has no hope of success in today's parliaments<, should nevertheless be put on the agenda by left-wing parliamentary representatives, because it >is in line with the progressive development of the productive forces, technology, and international capitalist competition< (1911, GW 2, 495). The politics of the working-day thus takes, for her, the form of a paradox: it is both a fight for the further development of capitalism and >a giant

revolutionising step toward the enlightenment and organisation of the working class< (ibid.).

The art of politics is practiced in the public sphere. Publicly stating the facts as they are paves the way for enabling the proletariat to take the structuring of society into its own hands. **Luxemburg** does not conceive of >enlightenment<, >enablement<, and >agitation< as the acts of a leadership that teaches the workers, the >mass<, what is at issue and what is to be done. The party is not sacrosanct for her, leadership is not synonymous with the power of command, and the masses' role is not confined to carrying out orders. She thinks socialist politics as a process that enables the >mass< to act purposefully on its own, to exercise power as the power to structure society. Even the concept of >enablement<, however, has too >top-down< a ring to it if one considers the role she ascribes to socialist organisation as a whole. What **Gramsci** calls the struggle for hegemony comes closest to her conception: an attempt to win the people's consensus for the project of an alternative organisation of society and the economy.

Any attempt to grasp such politics conceptually must wrestle with the problem that nearly all words are invested in such a way that all those who are at the bottom of the social scale also appear as stupid and incapable, while those who are at the top and call the tune do so in their own interests. In this spontaneous top-and-bottom logic, two organs of socialist politics are revealed to be ambiguous the party and the intellectuals, whose >duty< it is, according to **Luxemburg**, to participate actively in the mass movement in a >leading< role. She describes both organs in various ways; they >serve<, forge >slogans<, spell out the >orientation<, and so on. Yet, however clear

the spirit of the enterprise may seem, the exact characterisation of those who are supposed to carry things out remains ambivalent. The party is not a party in the bourgeois sense; it is, rather, untiringly active throughout society. When Luxemburg directly addresses the party leadership, it is at the points where it fails and deserves the sharpest criticism (see especially *The Crisis of the Social-Democracy*). Between the outbreak of the World War and the Spartacus uprising, party – as opposed to the formal party, the SPD – appears to be that which carries the spirit of the revolution forward, the spirit Luxemburg sums up, at the KPD's 1918/1919 founding conference, in the phrase >I was, I am, I shall be!< (*RLR*, 378). For that contradictory form (or phenomenon) of history, a socialist party that simultaneously questions its own form, a fundamentally different concept is required. Luxemburg does not, however, work it out.

We can pursue matters further by observing **Gramsci** working on this problematic in the same spirit a scant ten years later, after the experience of fascism. He broaches the question from another angle, that of the party's effectiveness, examining its >force, positive and negative, in having contributed to bringing certain events about and in having prevented other events from taking place< (*SPN*, N. 13, §33, 151). This also means that a party is of no interest from the standpoint, so to speak, of the sociology of institutions; the focus is, rather, on >the history […] of a particular mass of people who have followed the line of the party, sustained them with their trust, loyalty and discipline, or criticised them ^realistically^^ by dispersing or remaining passive in the face of certain initiatives< (150-1, transl. corr., FH). From the masses' standpoint, Gramsci defines the party with regard to its

function of training >qualified political intellectuals, leaders and organisers of all the activities and functions inherent in the organic development of an integral society, both civil and political< (N. 12, §1, 16). So conceived, >socialist party< becomes a process for winning hegemony for an alternative society. The understanding of intellectuals becomes fundamental.

In **Luxemburg**, vagueness in defining the party has it pendant in a similar uncertainty about intellectuals. There can be little doubt that, in all her appeals about what is to be done now, she counts on the intellectuals in the workers' movement. She describes their function the most clearly in her analysis of the situation in Russia in 1904. What was lacking in Russia was the petty bourgeoisie that functioned elsewhere as >a revolutionary connecting link<, a >radical and democratic< force and >necessary material mechanism<, >living cement< with the >necessary fiction of a united folk (^the people^^)<, a >political, spiritual, and intellectual *educator*<. The >intelligentsia [and] liberal professions […] with points of social contact with the […] proletariat<, were able to play an active part in this situation. They >functioned as the ideological representatives of *the working class*, carrying out >the ^mole's work^^ of socialist [...],social-democratic agitation< (*RLR,* 2018c). Within the German Social-Democracy, Luxemburg mentions members of parliament and other representative bodies, journalists, literati; one can always recognise her too among them, a tireless scientific mole of movement politics in the party. But she heaps merciless scorn on the hirelings, the intellectuals bought off by the bourgeoisie (GW 1/2, 382 ff.). She presents the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, with its denial of >Marxian crisis theory< (383), as a ridiculous accomplice of

capital. She caricatures the methods that bourgeois science uses in denouncing prevailing conditions, making its results in this domain useless: >The bureaucrat is joined by his natural extension […] the German professor at his lectern, the theorising bureaucrat who picks apart the living stuff of social reality, reducing it to its finest threads and tiniest particles, classifies and reorders it in line with bureaucratic principles, and submits it as scientific material, all the life thus taken out of it, to the administrative and legislative activity of the councilmen. This diligent labour of atomisation […] is […] the surest means of theoretically dissolving all major social relationships and making the capitalist forest ^scientifically^^ disappear behind an unending multitude of trees< (388). Bertolt **Brecht**, who included a great deal of Luxemburg in his plays and other writings (for example, passages from the Spartacus Programme in his *Refugee Dialogues*), would later integrate these images and this conception in his unfinished play *Turandot or the Whitewashers' Congress*.

In everyday politics, insights can be used like snowballs, as **Brecht** has his Me-Ti say (2016, 101): they melt away and new ones are formed. However, when it comes to handing down the tradition – in other words, the political training of the coming generation – the shifting content of a concept such as >intellectuals< becomes a problem. One could adduce very different definitions when trying to pin Luxemburg down on the question of intellectuals< function in the workers' movement. Sometimes all practice takes precedence over theory, sometimes intellectuals as such are the henchmen of the dominant, sometimes they are narrow-minded, sometimes they are conceited, sometimes they stand over against the common people, sometimes they are part of it,

sometimes they are indispensable to socialist working-class politics. In sum, it may be said that Luxemburg approaches socialist intellectuals as a function or personification of a critique of bourgeois society from the working class's or >people's< standpoint – from the standpoint, in a word, of the general in the process of emerging. Thus the critique of theory too, as well as the analysis of the international situation and the nation-state and its politics, become tasks for intellectuals.

Elaborating the problematic in which **Luxemburg** worked, Gramsci produces a theory of intellectuals useful for thinking her contradictory definitions more clearly. He does not set out from the idea that intellectuals are a distinct professional group but considers intellectuality as a political and social function. Anyone can assume this function, and each class will have its own intellectuals (*SPN*, N. 12, §1, 5-6), who fight for its interests, produce the appropriate concept for this or that particular concern, condense it in slogans, broadcast it in publicly effective form, and write on behalf of their class. **Gramsci** forges the concept of >organic intellectuals< for this context. >There is no organisation without intellectuals […] without the theoretical aspect of the theory-praxis nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of people ^specialised^^ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas< (N. 11, §12, 334). The dominant classes' intellectuals put forward particular interests as universal, thus working towards their hegemony by striving to win the subaltern groups' consent. Conversely, the intellectuals of emancipatory movements work to counter the prevailing hegemony. Their activity is educational, is directed against domination, and facilitates organising at different levels of society; as

teachers, >^administrators^^ and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth<, movement intellectuals (N. 12, §1, 13). Socialist politics will also strive to win over as many intellectuals in the service of the dominant class as it can. That is possible, because the aim here is not to disguise particular interests as general, but to come forward as >organisers of a new culture< (5), a new >intellectual and moral order< (N. 11, §12, 325).

Equipped with definitions like these, we can describe Luxemburg's position more exactly. She herself spoke and acted as an organic intellectual of the workers' movement and sought to win others over to being precisely that – in the end, also to founding a new party (as **Gramsci** did a little later) in opposition to the old Social-Democracy.

3.6 *State and hegemony*. - However clearly and precisely Luxemburg announces the >conquest of political power< as the political goal, what she understands by the state and, with it, governmental authority remains imprecise. A note of hers justifies the conclusion that she knows that the state also makes use of the people by turning one segment of it into soldiers, bureaucrats, etc., and thus knows that the state too is made up of >the people<. She has, however, no theory of the state and its instances or of the relationship between the army and state authority. Rather, she takes it for granted that the state in the form of the army has already put the people in a position which it can also exploit in order to appropriate power: >We know, and rely on the fact, that the German worker's brothers, who were once filled with the […] exalting feeling of love for mankind and the international solidarity of the peoples,

will not betray the precept of humanity even with the king's uniform on their backs. Put your trust in the historical dialectic [… in the fact] that the great mass of people in our real fatherland will sooner or later rise up and say: Enough of these criminal policies!< (March 1914, GW 3, 423). With the outbreak of the World War shortly thereafter, this proved illusory.

Luxemburg explains in many different passages that society is, from within, becoming ever more socialistic under the impulsion of the development of the productive forces, even as the state and law erect ever higher protective walls against this, thus making socialism increasingly unlikely. She assumes that state authority is conservative or reactionary in comparison with the advanced segment of capital that drives development to the point of crisis; that it is, in other words, an obstacle to human progress. Thus (with **Marx**) she conceives of the development of the productive forces driven by the advanced segment of capital as a dynamics increasingly at odds with the relations of production. She does not, however, say which incompatibilities arise as a result of this development and, above all, she gives no thought to the transformation of work and the demands it puts on working people. Although, like Marx, she identifies polytechnic training as the future form of education of the masses, she pays no attention, unlike Marx, to the shift in working people's position with respect to machines and industrial plant – in other words, to the mode of work. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx had theorised the way living labour is gradually excluded from the productive cycle by the development of technology, becoming, tendentially, a supervisor and regulator of machinery (MECW, vol. 29, 91). The demands for the qualification and expenditure of labour power are

transformed as radically as the number of workers is reduced. Structural unemployment and the training of the labour force become the contradictory dimensions accompanying development of the productive forces. Marx elaborates the socialist perspective on the basis of his analysis of them. **Gramsci** follows him here, bequeathing us an analysis of the development of labour, mode of life, entrepreneurial strategies, and state interventions (in Fordism) that provides useful tools for grasping social relationships even in >transnational high-tech capitalism< (cf. W.F.**Haug** 2012). In this context, he also clears a path to a historical-critical understanding of gender relations.

In **Luxemburg**, the socialist point of view results from the working class's confrontation with capital, and must become conscious. It does so thanks not only to agitation and enlightenment, but also to the experience of oppression and the lesson of class struggles, hence from a confrontation that she calls >political<, distinguishing it from merely economic struggle. At issue here is an alternative mode of running the economy, in which the working class comes up against the state as guarantor of the bourgeois form. In this way, Luxemburg justifies her politics in the state against the state. But where a struggle for hegemony is waged, as is in all her speeches, articles, texts, and declarations, it is quite obvious that the people, addressed >through the window<, must be under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois state would accordingly have to be conceived of as a state that is also sustained by the people, including the workers. What is required is a set of analytical tools that can grasp the state inside individuals and, accordingly, grasp individuals in their subalternity. Without the consent of the many, the ruling state will be difficult to maintain or will resort to

dictatorial forms, and no revolutionary transformation is possible.

In **Gramsci**, this means that >there can and there must be a ^political hegemony^^ even before assuming government power, and in order to exercise political leadership or hegemony one must not count solely on the power and material force that is given by government< (*PN* I, N. 1, §44, 137). Luxemburg assumes that the bourgeois state is willing to relinquish bourgeois achievements because they were above all forms for its class struggle with feudal powers and lost their function after its victory; and, further, that increasingly transnational capital freely avails itself of the powers of the state, bending them to its will. Even in these clear-sighted prognoses, however, there is no definition of what the state is and how it works – and therefore also no explanation of what it means to seize state power. The effect of the dialectical process of proletarian class struggle, says **Luxemburg**, is that in the struggle for democratic relations in the state, the struggle itself is organised; class consciousness develops; and >the proletariat, as it thus attains consciousness in the political struggle and organises itself, simultaneously democratises the bourgeois state, making it ripe for socialist revolution to the extent that it itself matures< (GW 1/2, 318).

From **Marx's** thesis that what is real about the talk of human essence is >the ensemble of social relations<, Gramsci concludes that >man<, as a social being, can appropriate this essence, his own, only by endlessly pursuing his self-transformation. This is not just a psychological task, but, above all a political one, because it necessarily involves taking part in structuring social

relations. >So one could say that each one of us changes himself, modifies himself to the extent that he changes and modifies the complex relations of which he is the hub< (*SPN*, N. 10, §54, 352).

Gramsci overcomes the lack of a theory of the state in **Luxemburg** with his concept of the >integral state<. It bears, above all, on the contested relations between society and the state, the economy and politics. Yet Luxemburg does not think that the state is merely an instrument of the bourgeois classes, that it merely regulates society from above and outside it. Rather, her conceptions oscillate, as it were, between such disambiguations, including elements of both conceptions and repeatedly encountering additional problematics. **Gramsci** brings them together in the concept of the integral state: >state = political society + civil society, that is, hegemony protected by the armor of coercion< (*PN* III, N. 6, §88, 75). Politics, the economy, and ideology are thus grasped as internally related. Gramsci develops this theorem in a debate with economism. The integral state integrates the members of society and transforms them. Thus the state can be apprehended in individuals just as the reproduction of the dominant class can be analyzed in them. This makes it clearer what the tasks that devolve upon a class in the struggle for hegemony are. Above all, Gramsci's concept makes it possible to grasp changes in the relationship between politics and the economy; thus politics is understood as >the art of governing men, of securing their permanent consent< (*PN* II, N. 5, §127, 378), while the integral state itself is always also understood to be an >^educator^^ who tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation< (*SPN*, N. 13, §11, 247). All these determinations are of central importance to a theory

and strategy of revolutionary politics. What is more, they clear up inconsistencies in **Luxemburg's** texts in such a way as to bring out the sharp turn charted by her thinking, making it possible to make use of her ideas as a new departure for political thought. As for the question of what the >seizure of political power< means in Luxemburg, as it comes into view in her analysis of parliament, Gramsci notes: >A class that posits itself as apt to assimilate the whole of society – and, at the same time, is truly capable of embodying this process – would take this notion of the state and of the law to such a level of perfection as to conceive of the end of the state and the law, for the state and the law would serve no purpose once they had accomplished their task and been absorbed by civil society< (*PN* III, N. 8, §2, 234).

3.7 *The politics of the cultural*. – Study of **Gramsci's** *Prison Notebooks* reveals the yawning gap left in Luxemburg's analyses and politics as a result of the fact that, in her work for the masses and with the >people<, she neglects the >cultural<. To grasp it and provide a guide for struggles, Gramsci reworks the concept of >civil society<, incorporating it in the materialist conception of history. Politics is thus brought to bear in a different way on subjects who act in contradictions and are, consequently, contradictory in themselves. Gramsci takes action in civil society to be all the practices in which individuals construct a world view for themselves and make sense of society; this determines their political opinion and, ultimately, their actions – at the pub, in associations, in their families, at school, at the workplace, etc. In this way, individuals are woven into the

woof of existing society by countless threads. A study of the way they are thus integrated as well as emancipatory suggestions about alternative practices is required in order to work with them against the ruling hegemony. Setting out from Gramsci, Wolfgang Fritz **Haug** has conceptualised this interweaving of individual and society, as well as the attempt to build a counterhegemony, as a >politics of the cultural< (1988/2011, 137ff, 145ff and *passim*). In many different forms and groupings and in various cultures, people are held fast in habit; they must work through this themselves in order to forge a consciousness of their being and possible goals. >Should this will [a rational will corresponding to objective historical necessities] be represented at the beginning by a single individual<, **Gramsci** writes, >its rationality will be documented by the fact that it comes to be accepted by the many, and accepted permanently; that is, by becoming a culture, a form of ^good sense^^, a conception of the world with an ethic that conforms to its structure< (SPN, N. 11, §59, 345-6).

At certain points, **Luxemburg** comes close to similar ideas – for example, when she discusses the thinking of workers intent on protecting their vested rights, or the >immaturity< that saw them marching off to fight in an ostensibly patriotic war in order to murder their >socialist brothers'; or again, when she assumes that politics must be pursued not with the *victorious*, but with the dominated proletariat; finally, when, in her detailed day-to-day activity, she strives to work against the predominant consensus. She abandons such approaches again, however, for the hope that a direct solution can be found by way of what is basically the already existing consciousness of the situation. The women's question is

exemplary in this regard: here she dismisses out of hand the advantages and constraints of the protection that family and home offer in order to turn to the class question. Thus she also fails to see the power of the cultural milieu in which individuals, workers included, swim like fish in water, as well as the fact that, in the cultural sphere as well, the struggle must always be fought out with contradictory subjects.

This problematic is nevertheless not entirely foreign to her. On the one hand, she sharply criticises pseudo-intellectual exchanges of hot air – what **Gramsci** calls >Lorianism< (*Prison Notebooks*, N. 28) – and, on the other, excoriates the claustrophobic stuffy family milieu in the working class and, above all, in the party. It is indeed the case that >the military and police state< survived >well into the twentieth century; it had its correlatives in an authoritarian society and a subservient mentality […]. The Social-Democracy too remained permanently attached to this historical and social milieu […]. It long proudly referred, to be sure, not just to **Lassalle**, but also to **Marx** and Engels. Yet neither the attitude of the majority of its supporters nor the politics it actually practised, even before 1914, were those of a Marxist workers' party< (**Flechtheim** 1985, 10).

In addition to her political work, **Luxemburg** also produced literary criticism (in prison). She writes of Franz **Mehring's** biography of **Schiller** (*Die Neue Zeit*, 1904/1905) that it plays its part in the >work of emancipation of the working class', and recommends that Schiller's significance be judged on the basis not of what he contributed to the working class but, on the contrary, of what the working class >imported into Schiller's poems in the way of

aspirations and sensibilities […] unconsciously recasting [them] in the world of its own revolutionary thoughts and sensibilities< (GW 1/2, 534). In prison in Wroclaw/Breslau in 1918, she translated Vladimir **Korolenko's** *The History of my Contemporary*, showing in an introductory essay how Russian literature >attacked the deepest psychological roots of absolutism in Russian society', engaging in social criticism and demonstrating a sense of social responsibility (*RLS* 1970, 344). She affirms that literature should not be read as social theory or be judged according to its intentions or the recipes it propagates, but on the basis of the human meaning that constitutes its source and captivates the masses – what she calls >its animating spirit< (345). Thus she also reconstructs the way that the >decadent', >reactionary< authors **Tolstoy** and **Dostoevsky** produce a particular effect on people, >inspiring, arousing, and liberating< them (ibid.). Like **Brecht** after her, **Luxemburg** discerns the fascination that crime holds for the literary world, in that murder becomes not just an accusation levelled against prevailing social conditions, but, above all, >a crime committed against the murderer as a human being, a crime for which we are all responsible< (347). Unusual in her treatment of literature is the fact that she reads novels from the standpoint of their reception by the people, with an eye, that is, to the way people can draw connections between fictional characters and their own lives. Thus literature becomes a medium through which the people can educate itself (GW 1/2, 536).

Gramsci too translated literature in prison – including texts by **Marx** and **Grimm's** fairy tales – and he too wrote literary criticism. Much like **Luxemburg**, he characterises >the type of literary criticism suitable to historical materialism [as] a struggle for culture, that is, for a new

humanism, a criticism of customs and sentiments, impassioned fervor, even in the form of sarcasm< (*PN* II, N. 4, §5, 145). In prison, he too evaluated novels of particular interest for people's everyday reading. Like **Luxemburg** analysing **Mehring's** reading of **Schiller**, he attempts to decipher the meaning that people seek in these novels. **Luxemburg**, however, obviously has in mind a working class that, generally speaking, reads bourgeois literature, even if it confines itself to reading selections from it. **Gramsci** has in mind workers who are, expressly, caught up in another culture created specifically for them – mass-market popular literature – and thus in illusions. He therefore looks for literature written in such a way as to be understood and enjoyed by the people without being ideological or illusory, that is, without locking people into their subaltern status. Unlike mass-market literature, produced for those at the bottom, but not from their point of view, such literature may be described as >popular and democratic< (terms found in the translation of *PN* I, N. 1, §44, 138 and *passim*). Gramsci wants to induce literati on the left to write better popular literature, thus assuming their task as >educators<. Luxemburg wants to bring the people closer to the great works of bourgeois literature in such a way that it can appropriate them for its own purposes. She has a higher opinion of the people than Gramsci does; hence the more durable appeal of his work to a people that does not have a very high opinion of itself. Both **Gramsci** and **Luxemburg**, however, take >the people< to mean the mass of those subjected to the bloc of power and domination.

4. *Conclusion*. - One can, setting out from Antonio **Gramsci**, read Rosa **Luxemburg** as an organic working-class

intellectual who endeavoured to renew politics under dramatically shifting historical conditions, coming up, in the process, against the limits and deficiencies of socialist politics as previously practised. It then becomes clear where her work remained in its beginnings: in the politics of the cultural, the theoretical-political definition of intellectuals, hegemony, civil society, the state and, in connection with it, the development of the forces of production and analysis of the subject, which, embedded in bourgeois conditions, had, if it was to rise up in revolt, to cast off bonds that enlightenment and consciousness alone would not be sufficient to break.

Gramsci, with one more experience of catastrophe behind him, worked on all these points in a way that may be understood as a historical-critical appropriation of **Luxemburg's** thought and her art of politics. He develops and forms the analytical concepts for what she attempted in the political sphere – hegemony, civil society, the integral state, the historical bloc and historical milieu, the politics of the cultural – as well as an appeal to political subjects mired in clashing, contradictory traditions, customs, and cultures to strive for coherence by participating in the endeavour of structuring politics and society, a movement that Luxemburg too regarded as fundamental. Thus Gramsci can also be read as a >Luxemburgist<. Reading Gramsci with Luxemburg's political aspirations and practice in mind teaches us to understand him better; reading Luxemburg with Gramsci in mind not only brings out her inadequacies, but also reveals traces and suggestions whose significance and possibilities we would have missed without him. To study both of them in their reciprocal interactions has a synergic effect that reinforces political hope and, with it, the capacity for

action.

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--> art, automation, cadre party, civil society, class struggle, Comintern, concept, contradiction, critique,

culture, democracy, development, dialectics, dictatorship of the proletariat, discipline, dogmatism, domination, rule, economism, enlightenment, eurocommunism, form, freedom, liberty, functionary, gender relations, guiding thread, hegemony, historical bloc, integral state, intervening thought, knowledge, labour movement, leadership, learning, liberation, literature relations, Luxemburgism, marxism, mass strike debate, masses, mistake, error, mole, organic intellectuals, parties, people's universities, perestroika, persecution of communists, philosophy of practice, politics of the cultural, prohibition of profession, proletariat, reading workers, reform, reformism, resistance, revolution, revolutionary realpolitik, rights, social democracy, socialism, state, subalternity, tendency, theory of ideology, vanguard, war of position

--> Arbeiterbewegung, Aufklärung, Automation, Avantgarde, Befreiung, Begriff, Berufsverbot, Demokratie, Dialektik, Diktatur des Proletariats, Disziplin, Dogmatismus, eingreifendes Denken, Erkenntnis, Entwicklung, Eurokommunismus, Fehler, Form/Formbestimmtheit, Freiheit, Führung, Funktionär, geschichtlicher Block, Geschlechterverhältnisse, Hegemonie, Herrschaft, Ideologietheorie, integraler Staat, Kaderpartei, Klassenkampf, Komintern, Kommunistenverfolgung, Kritik, Kultur, Kunst, Leitfaden, Lernen, lesende Arbeiter, Literaturverhältnisse, Luxemburgismus, Marxismus, Masse, Massenstreik, Maulwurf, Ökonomismus, Opposition, organische Intellektuelle, Partei, Perestrojka, Philosophie der Praxis, Politik des Kulturellen, Proletariat, Recht, Reform, Reformismus, Revolution, revolutionäre Realpolitik, Sozialismus, sozialistische Demokratie, Staat, Stellungskrieg, Subalternität, Tendenz, Volksuniversitäten, Widerspruch, Widerstand, Widerstandsästhetik, Zivilgesellschaft