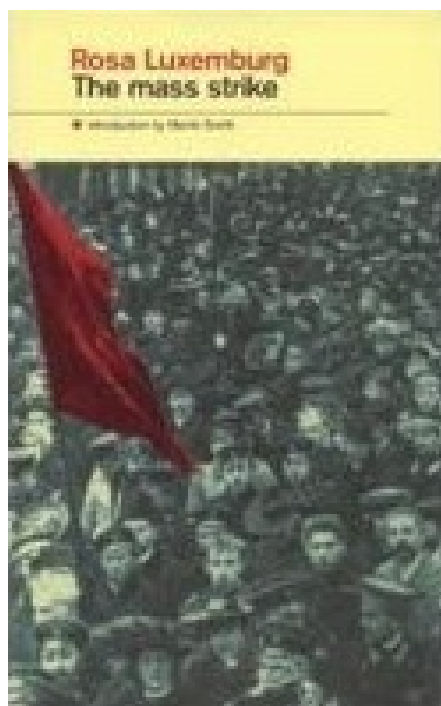




The Mass Strike

Rosa Luxemburg

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The Mass Strike Rosa Luxemburg

La revolución rusa, que tiene sus comienzos en enero de 1905, sorprende a Rosa Luxemburgo en Alemania. Durante todo este año Rosa Luxemburgo se dedica a hacer comprender a los socialistas alemanes el significado de aquellos acontecimientos revolucionarios. En diciembre de 1905 decide partir para Varsovia para participar directamente, junto a sus camaradas de la socialdemocracia polaca, en los acontecimientos revolucionarios que conmovían el Imperio zarista. Fruto de esta experiencia es su libro Huelga de masas, partido y sindicatos, en el que elabora su doctrina de la huelga de masas.

Para Rosa Luxemburgo la huelga de masas, , experimentada en una escala gigantesca, en esta primera revolución rusa, tenía el mérito indiscutible de llenar el vacío teórico que el fracaso de la Comuna de París y la crítica de Engels al insurreccionalismo (en su introducción al libro de Marx Las luchas de clases en Francia) habían creado en la concepción revolucionaria. Para ella la huelga de masas no es una simple «táctica» que debe ser utilizada por el proletariado para defender sus conquistas, sino, por el contrario, un elemento central de la «estrategia revolucionaria». Frente a la negación kautskiana de la insurrección y frente al blanquismo preconizado por los teóricos de la revolución de minorías, Rosa Luxemburgo preconiza lo que ella denomina una «estrategia de derrocamiento», basada en la práctica sistemática de la huelga de masas.

The Mass Strike Details

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Author : Rosa Luxemburg

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From Reader Review The Mass Strike for online ebook

Yaser Maadat says

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Reiki Fernández says

"No existen dos luchas distintas de la clase obrera, una económica y otra política; existe sólo una única lucha de clase que tiende simultáneamente a limitar la explotación capitalista dentro de la sociedad burguesa y a suprimir la explotación capitalista y al mismo tiempo la sociedad burguesa."

Manuel says

This work is curious if compared to the theoretical texts of other leading revolutionary theorists at the time. It contains far more concrete evidence than most of Lenin's texts (as opposed to the facebook-comment-like style of Lenin's polemics which seem to move in 10 directions at once), it doesn't make almost any predictions (except for the problematic development of specialists and bureaucrats in the party and unions), doesn't create any grand vision of the future, and it doesn't generally permit for the formation of any definite concept. It definitely uses immanent critique to show how the development of mass strikes arises historically, and yet it does not attempt to predict where it is going. It is dialectical without a conclusion, or without an absolute or resolution to the question. Her use of the "waves" metaphor, or the "undulating" character of the masses, interestingly shows how water corresponds to her humble admission that there is much that is impossible to control about history, mass movements, and mass events. In this sense, it is anarchistic almost like Lao Tzu. While one may think of the 1917 planned insurrection and go "aha! she's wrong!" this work seems rather to question the way we try to encapsulate a complex dynamic social movement to control it. It is truly a tragedy that her life was cut short, as in 1919 it was clear that her analysis of the ongoing revolution was far ahead of everyone else, especially Liebknecht.

Andrew Janewski says

One of my favourite books. Well-written and accessible.

ufsb says

"???????? ?????" - ??? ???? ?????????, ? ?????? ????????? ????????? ????????? ?????????????? ? ?????? ??? ????????? ??????. ????? ?????? ?????????? ?? ?? ?????. ? ?????? ?????? ?????????? ??????????, ??? ?????? ?????? ????????? ??????, ?????? ?? ?????? ?????????, ?????? ?? ?????? ?????????? ?????????? ? ?????????? ?????????? ?? ?????? ?????? ?????????????? ?????? ?????? ?????????? ?????? ? ??????, ?????????????? ? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?? 1907 ????. ? ?????? ?????? ?????????? ??????????, ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????????? 1905-1907 ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ?????????? ??????????????. ?????? ?????? ??? ?????: ????????? ?????? - ??????, ?????, ?? ?? ?? ?????, ?? ?????? ?????????? ?????????, ??? ? ?????????? ?? ??????. ????????? ?????? ?????????, ?? ?????? ?????? ?????? ? ?????????, ?????? ?? ????????? ?????? - ?????????????? ?????????????????? ??? ?????????????? ? ?? ?????????, ?????? ?????? ?????? ??????????, ?????? ?????? ?????????? ??????. ? ?????? ?????? ?????????? ?????????? ?????????? ?? ?????????? ?? ?????? ?????????? ?????????????????? ??? ?????????, ?? ?? ?? ?????? ?????? ?? ?????? ??? ? ?????? ?? ?????? ??????- ?????????????????? ??????. ?????????? !!! ?????? ?????????? ?????? ?? ?????? ? ??????, ?? ?????? ?????????? ?????? ?? ?????????.

Patrick Harrison says

Part argument over the role of trade unions and strikes in a revolution, part documentation of the great upsurge of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Lots of quotes comparing the pre-war situation in Germany to Russia that bear a lot of information for Australia today.

Kristjhan says

A great document of the era. One of the real strengths of this work is how thoroughly she grounds her argument in an objective analysis of the historical events in the workers' movement leading up to 1905. The central theme is a vindication of the proletariat's ability to enact class struggle on a mass scale independent of trade union bureaucracies and the more bureaucratic/reformist sect of the social democrats. Drawing on the recent history of the workers' movement, from the striking textile workers of St. Petersburg in 1896/7 onwards, Luxemburg shows the importance of the mass strike as the expression of the organisational power that the proletariat possesses in and of itself. Opposing the mechanistic conception entertained by trade union bureaucracies, who held that the mass strike must be precisely regulated with regards to the size of trade union membership, the available funds and the opportune moment for striking - and, following from this, the notion that they could signal the time for a mass strike and thus mobilise a sufficient number of the working class at a moment's notice - Luxemburg argues that the development of class consciousness and revolutionary spirit depends most importantly on the organic, self-directed, mass organisation of the workers, in response to the growing antagonism of capital and labour which forms the daily economic conditions of working class life. Following from this, she dismisses the bureaucratic notions of 'premature' class struggle at inopportune moments by demonstrating that the spontaneous struggle of the workers over economic conditions lead organically to mass organisation and a continuing wave of mass strikes over a period of roughly a decade, which only increased in size and significance, winning more and more concessions from the heads of industry such as the shortening of the working day, the increase of wages, the abolition of piece work &c., culminating in the revolutionary movements of 1905. The key point is that 'the revolution' as an abstract moment on the horizon which will be predetermined according a specific set of conditions and factors is an obsolete notion - while the concrete critical analysis of the circumstances of and for revolution has of course proven a crucial element throughout history, it is rather something that the proletariat and the

social democrats must persistently fight towards through continuous, persistent, yet ever fluctuating struggle, the workers developing in strength and direction and education, an organic process in which the mass strike features prominently. She also counters the distinction between economic and political struggle, arguing that the two bear a reciprocal relation that demonstrably emerged from the mass strikes, with the beginning discontent over economic conditions leading to preoccupation with political questions, and vice versa, a kind of virtuous circle if harnessed conscientiously. I absolutely love how well she illustrates the real power of the proletariat and their capability for struggle and self-education through that struggle; one of my personal favourites from this work is how she contrasts Germany and Russia, where trade unionism is at a significantly more advanced stage in the former, but the most comprehensive and consequential class struggle of the period was occurring, rather, in the latter. But all of this isn't to say that she advocated spontaneism - I don't support that view and I think this work is good evidence to the contrary. I therefore disagree with Cliff on one front, but agree that what might seem to be her emphasis on the role of spontaneous struggle is a result of the context in which she did her most significant work, engaging in indefatigable polemics against the growing bureaucratic and reformist sect of the SPD who, in comparison to whatever accusations of spontaneism people might have for Luxemburg, were incomparably more guilty of centralism and devaluing spontaneous, independent workers' struggle. The fact that Luxemburg was so committed to questions of political organisation that she remained deeply and actively within the SPD for so long (how we wish this weren't so...) should be significant evidence to counter allegations of spontaneism. Past that, though, there are numerous points throughout the work where she characterises the social democrats as the vanguard of the working class revolutionary movement; this work is simply focused on the power of proletariat to work toward its own emancipation - a very necessary and refreshing focus in a time of bureaucratic, reformist nonsense. She was aware of the role that both the party and the proletariat play in the revolution; one interesting and compelling argument she makes is that trade unionists and social democrats only have access to a certain, narrow layer of the working class, and therefore any regulated, predetermined mass strike could only ever be capable of mobilising a commensurately narrow section. The proletariat, though, and particularly the most dedicated and conscious, are endowed with the unique capability of having access to infinitely greater numbers of workers, and, through them and by extension, ever greater sections of the working class. The role of the political organisations is to harness the formative discontent among the workers and temper it with orientation towards political questions, the aims and tactics of the revolutionary movement; this can't be achieved by a bureaucratic leadership either of trade unions or social democrats who wish to regulate the actions of the workers by mechanistic and fatalistic means and thus distort and misuse the immense potentiality that the working class can claim unique possession of.

Miquixote says

For Luxemburg, the increase in strikes that came after the Russian Revolution of 1905 was a sure sign of the revolutionary spirit of the working class. She pushed for mass strikes to be an important tool used by the SPD (the Social Democratic Party in Germany) in undermining capitalism, for it to be a party whose aim is to overthrow the entire political and economic system.

But her theory became threatening to all bureaucratic machines, first to the SPD and the trade union leaders, and later to the Communist International. (Luxemburg was not a fan of Lenin's propagation of a highly centralized party structure). It isn't that the SPD didn't support and indeed advocate mass strikes, it was that it had to be specifically under certain conditions. Contrarily, Luxemburg, in true participatory spirit, felt that in order for a mass strike to be an effective revolutionary weapon against capitalism it was imperative that the desire and drive for mass action came from the masses — who had been guided and influenced by the party. Needless to say, bureaucratic machines cannot tolerate being led by the desires and drives of the masses. She was later assassinated by the SPD.

At this point it should be evident that this is one of those few important works that clearly lay out the boundaries between real revolutionaries that are concerned with creating participatory democracies and those hypocritical, authoritative bureaucrats concerned only with parliamentary pursuits of power that contradict their rhetoric.

Daniel Jacobs says

everybody read this

Szerdahelyi Laszlo says

The Mass Strike represents an analysis of the tactic of the mass strike as a weapon against the state and capital, a look at the Revolution of 1905 in Russia and the ways Luxembourg sees the unfolding dynamic of revolution and the role of Socialist parties and trade unions in this process.

Luxembourg uses the example of the Revolution of 1905, with a detailed and beautiful chronological description of the events there to lambast the German social-democrats for their excessive cautions despite large numbers of members and organization and illusionary goals of the Bakuninist anarchist of one big mass strike that will bring about revolution. However, her main point lies in that the evolution of the strike and its successes and failures are part of a longer mechanism that will lead up to revolution. One mass strike does not suffice but rather it must be part of a longer series of upsurges against capital at which point the leaders of socialist movements should insert themselves to guide it down a successful path and prior to this to create the conditions for such outbursts by education and organization. Luxembourg emphasizes that the revolution must come from a genuine outburst of the will of the workers and it is the duty of the leaders to head the call and take action. She denounces any manipulations by party or trade union leaders that invoke the fact that the time is not right for a strike or that wish to play strategic political games with the fate of the workers.

There are certain serious doubts that one might cast, in hindsight at the vanguardism espoused in Luxembourg and the pitfalls of this approach and also of her dismissal of anarchism but her writing remains relevant and a represents a solid analysis of strike tactics and the need for organizational flexibility and the responsibility of leaders to know when to step in and to listen to the call of the people.

Will says

Rosa Luxemburg was a passionate socialist, dedicated to destroying capitalism and creating a society without worker exploitation. Before tackling any of her work, it's critical to remember the time when she wrote and the political and historical context. Luxemburg wrote The Mass Strike in 1906, a few months after the first failed Russian Revolution, which she saw as an escalation of the socialist movement that built on all previous efforts to end capitalism. In 1905 across Europe, capitalism really did look like it was about to breathe its last. Workers united, rose up against 12 hour working days and poverty-level wages to demand their rights, and died violent deaths. It's important to remember that if it had not been for revolutionary workers organized in unions, those in the West could still be stuck working in dangerous conditions for six days per week.

Luxemburg was a passionate leader and writer, but her passion doesn't detract from her impeccably constructed argument. In sum, Luxemburg argues that only through mass strikes of thousands of politically conscious workers can capitalism be vanquished. She eviscerates the argument of her detractors that the mass strike is ahistorical by establishing the historical revolutionary context that led to the proliferation of the mass strike. The mass strike cannot be orchestrated by unions or the party because every mass strike builds on the collected knowledge of workers from the last strike. The social democratic parties' role is to lead the political education of workers during the mass strike and organize workers.

Luxemburg lambasts the caution of trade unions, arguing that both unions and parties are not two different peaks of the labor movement, but must remain subservient to the will of the workers. Trade unionism is a part of social democracy, not separate, and the power of the unions is dependent on the ideology of social democracy. Luxemburg calls for the unity of trade union and party leadership because their conflict only hurts workers' movements. She advocates unity, constant progression of the struggle, and risk taking. The political and the economic aspects of the revolutions must unite because they build each other in a virtuous circle of historical progress. If workers play it safe or become satisfied with reform, capitalism will never fall.

While Luxemburg valorizes the deaths of workers, she often treats their sacrifice as a "necessary" step to ending capitalism, which is highly problematic. She does not seem to understand that most workers will not risk sacrificing their lives for the struggle, especially if through economic reform and trade unionism they continue to gain higher wages and to shorten the working day. As in Germany in 1906, as workers' rights improve, the argument for revolutionary upheaval becomes weaker, and Luxemburg, a firm believer that capitalism cannot be reformed, does make a compelling argument that capitalist exploitation will remain as long as capitalism remains. However, I think she overestimates workers' desire for revolution, and thereby does not understand that for most workers, they are not willing to sacrifice their lives and their families' livelihoods for the revolution. They just want decent wages and a shorter working day.

I am giving The Mass Strike five stars because of Luxemburg's thorough argument and wonderful turns of phrase. While she may be too idealistic, Luxemburg's works are still worth studying today for their critique of capitalism and their historical relevance.

[Here are some of my notes from my reading:](#)

(view spoiler)

