

Rough translation

LENIN, Collected Works, Rus. ed. Vol. 30, 1932

One Step Forward, Two Steps Back

(Lenin's answer to Luxemburg's "Organizational Questions of the Russian S-D", written against Lenin's pamphlet of the same name as the above article, and published both in the Neue Zeit, No. 42&43, 1904, and in Iskra, No. 69 July 23(10), 1904. Lenin's answer Kautsky refused to publish. The MS was found--state the notes to this volume--as a copy in the German language in an unknown handwriting, and corrected by Lenin)

The article of com. Rosa Luxemburg in #42 and 43 of Die Neue Zeit appears as a critique of my Russian book about the crisis in our party. I cannot but express thanks to the German comrades for their attention to our party literature, for their attempt to acquaint the Ger. S-D with this literature, but I must point out that the article of Rosa Luxemburg in "Neue Zeith" will not acquaint the readers either with my book, or with anything else. This is seen from the following examples.

Com. Luxemburg, for example, states that my book clearly and strikingly displays a tendency of "centralisation which takes nothing into account". Com. Luxemburg thus assumes that I defend one organizational system against some other. But in reality this is not so. Throughout the book, from the first to the last page, I defend the elementary postulates of ~~my system of an imaginable party organization~~. My book deals ~~with~~ not the question about the difference between one or another organizational system, but the question about how one should defend, criticize and correct any system, not contradictory to the principles of the party.

Rosa Luxemburg states further that "in correspondence with his (Lenin's) understanding, the C. C. has full authority to organize all local committees of the party." In reality this is not true. My view on this question can be documentarily demonstrated by the rule of the party organization which I introduced. In this project there is not a word about the right to organize local committees. The Commission, elected at the party congress for working out the rules of the party, included in it this right, and the party congress approved this project of the commission. In this commission, besides myself and another partisan of the majority, were elected 3 representatives of the minority of the party congress, consequently, in this commission which had assigned the CC the right to organize local committees, 3 of my opponents as it happens supported the top. Com. Luxemburg confused two different facts. Firstly, she confused my organizational project with the altered project of the commission, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, with the organizational rule adopted by the party congress; secondly she confused the defense of a definite demand of a definite paragraph of the rules (I was in no way "merciless" in its defense since at the plenum I did not speak against the corrections introduced by the committee) with the defence (is it not true, genuinely "ultra-centralistic") of the thesis that the statute, accepted by the party congress, must be carried out in life until such time as it will be changed by the next congress.

Com. Luxemburg says that in my opinion the "CC is the only active cadre of the party." In reality this is not true. I have never defended this view. On the contrary, my opponents (the minority of the 2nd congress of the party) accused me in their writings, that I do not adequately defend the independence, samostoyatelnost' of the CC and subordinate too much to it the ed. bd. of the C.O. and Soviet of the party which is abroad.

To this accusation I answer in my book that when the party majority had the top in the Council of the party, it never made any attempt to limit the independence of the CC; but this occurred at the moment that the Council of the party became the instrument of struggle in the hands of the minority.

Com. Luxemburg says that in the Russian S-D there exist no doubts of any kind about the need of a single party and that the whole dispute was concentrated around the question of greater or lesser centralisation. In reality this is not true. If Com. Luxemburg took upon herself the task of acquainting herself with the resolutions of the many local committees of the party which form the majority, then she would readily understand (this is especially clearly seen from my book) that the dispute among us was

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mainly about whether the CC or the CO should or should not represent the direction of the majority of the party congress. About this "ultra-centralism" and "purely Blanquist" demand ~~the~~ the respected comrade says not a single word. She prefers to declaim against the mechanical, blind obedience, and other like horrors. I am very thankful to Com. Luxemburg for her explanation of ~~the profound idea that slavish obedience is~~ fatal for the party, ~~but~~ I should like to know, whether the comrade considers normal, can she allow for, had she seen in any party that in the central organs, which call themselves party organs, there should predominate the minority of the party congress?

Com. R. Luxemburg attributes to me the thought that in Russia there are already all prerequisites for the organization of a big and extremely centralized workers party. ~~Against~~ there is a factual untruth. Nowhere in my book did I defend such a view, nor even express such an opinion. The thesis I elaborated expressed and expresses something different. And I specifically underlined the fact that on the face of it there are all pre-requisites for this, that the decisions of the party congress be recognized, and that the time is long past when the party collective be substituted by private (individual) ~~mass~~ circle. I brought proof of the fact that several party literati revealed their inconsistency and flightiness and they have no right whatever to shift their undisciplinability onto the Russian proletariat. ~~The Russian workers have already repeatedly,~~ under different circumstances expressed themselves for following out the decisions of the party congress. It is indeed laudable when Com. Luxemburg declares such a view to be "optimistic" (is it not necessary rather to consider it "pessimistic") and with this says not a single word about the factual basis of my stand (proposition). ~~Com. Luxemburg says that~~ I eulogize the educational significance of the factory. ~~This is not true.~~ Not I, but my opponent, asserts that I represent to myself the party in the form of a factory? As was necessary, I ridiculed this, demonstrating by his words that he confuses ~~two different aspects of factory discipline,~~ which, unfortunately, has also happened with Com. Luxemburg.

(The notes to the volume, under ed. of Adoratsky, Molotov and Savelev, state that the "opponent" to whom Lenin refers was author of the article "Re the question of our party tasks, About organization.", printed in supplement to Iskra #57, 1/28 (15)1904, and signed under the pseudonym "Practical" (M. Makadzyb)

Also: the article "RL against KM" was written by Ryadov (A.A. Bogdanov) and printed in the sbornik of articles of Galerki and Radov. "Our Misunderstandings" (Geneva, 1904, pp 46,59) reprinted on the sbornik of the Istpart "How the Party of the Bolsheviks was Born", pp. 167-184)

Com. Luxemburg says that in my definition of a revolutionary S-D as a Jacobin connected with the organization of the class ~~workers~~ conscious workers, gave allegedly a sharper characterization of my point of view than any of my opponents could have possibly given. Once again an actual inaccuracy. Not I, but P. Axelrod was the first to speak of Jacobinism. Axelrod was the first to compare our party groupings with the groupings at the time of the Great French Revolution. I only remarked that this comparison was admissible only in the sense that the division of contemporary S-D on a revolutionary and an opportunist corresponds to a certain degree to the division on the Mountain and the Girondists. A similar comparison was often made by the old Iskra which was accepted by the party congress. Recognizing precisely such a division, the old Iskra fought against the opportunist wing of our party with the direction of "Rabocheye Delo". R. Luxemburg confused here co-relation between two revolutionary tendencies of the 18th and 20th century with the identification of these same tendencies. For example, if I say that the Small Shaldeg in comparison to a is all the same as a two-story house in comparison to a four-story one, this does not yet mean that I identify a four-story home with a Youngrau.

A factual analysis of the different tendencies of our party has completely fallen out from the field of observation of Cd. Luxemburg.

*Cf. the Russian book, "Our Differences", article, R. Luxemburg, Against Karl Marx."

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And precisely to this analysis a big half of my book is devoted, which is based on the protocols of our party congress, and I pay special attention to it in the introduction. R. Luxemburg wishes to speak about the present situation of our party and completely ignores in this our party congress, which, sobstveno, laid the genuine fundament of our party. One must acknowledge that this is a risky undertaking! All the more risky inasmuch, as, I showed in my book, any opponents ignore our party congress and precisely because of this all their assertions are devoid of any factual basis.

Precisely such a basic mistake is accomplished also by R. Luxemburg. She repeats only naked phrases, not taking upon herself the task to explain their concrete meaning (smysl). She frightens with different horrors (bugaboos), not having studied the real basis of the dispute. She attributes to me general moods, generally known principles and considerations, absolute truths and tries to keep quiet about the relative truths concerning the strictly determined facts, which are the only things I work with. And she complains yet of stereotypes and in this appeals to the dialectic of Marx. And yet the article of the respected ed. contains exclusively invented stereotypes, and precisely her article contradicts the alphabet of the dialectic. This alphabet asserts that there is no abstract truth, that truth is always concrete.

Ed. R. Luxemburg majestically ignores the concrete facts of our party struggle and magnanimously occupies herself with declamations about questions which one cannot seriously consider. I will cite the final example from the second article of Ed. Luxemburg.

She quotes my words that this or another editorial board of the organizational statute can serve as the more or less strong means of struggle against opportunism. Regarding what formulations I spoke in my book and we all spoke at the party congress R. Luxemburg says not a word. What type of polemic did I lead at the party congress, against whom did I propose my propositions, with this the comrade does not concern herself whatever. Instead of this she graciously reads me a whole lecture about opportunism... in the countries of parliamentarism!! But about all particular, specific diversities of opportunism, about those nuances which it assumed with us in Russia and about which my book concerns itself--about this we find not a word in her article. The conclusion about all this, in the highest degree, ingenious considerations, is the following

"The statute of the party should be not some sort of self-sufficient (an sich) (??understand, he who can) weapon for the struggle with opportunism, but only the weapon for leading (conducting?provedeniya) outside of the leading influence of the factually existing revolutionary proletarian majority of the majority." Entirely correct. But how did the factually existing majority of our party become formed, about this R. Luxemburg is silent, and it is precisely about this that I speak of in my book. She is silent also about this, what kind of influence did I and Plekhanov defend with the help of this weapon. I can only add I never anywhere spoke such nonsense, that the statute of the party is a weapon "in itself".

The most correct answer to such a method of interpretation of my views would be the analysis of the concrete facts of our party struggle. Then it would be clear to each one, how strongly the concrete facts contradict the generalities and stereotyped abstractions of Comrade Luxemburg.

Our party was born in the spring of 1898 in Russia at a congress of representatives of several Russian organizations. The party was named the Russian S-D Workers Party. The central organ was "The Worker's Newspaper"; the Union of the Russian S-D abroad became the representatives of the party abroad. Soon after the congress, the CC of the party was arrested. "The Worker's Newspaper" ceased publication from the second number. The whole party was transformed into a formless conglomeration of ~~several~~ local party organizations (called committees). The only link connecting these local committees, was that of ideas, a purely spiritual ~~connection~~ connection. Inevitably there followed a period of discord, vacillations, splits.

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The intelligentsia, composing a considerably greater percentage of our party in comparison with Western European parties, were attracted to Marxism as to a new style. This attraction very quickly gave way to on the other hand, a slavish worship of the bourgeois critique of Marx, and on the other hand, to the purely professional labor movements (strike-ism-economism). The division between the intelligentsia-opportunist and proletarian-revolutionary tendency brought about the split abroad of the "Union". The paper "Worker's Thought" (Rabochaya Myel) and the paper abroad, "Worker's Deed" (Rabocheye Dyelo) (the latter a somewhat weaker) became the expression of economism, lowered the significance of the political struggle, rejected the elements of bourgeois democracy in Russia. The "legal" critics of Marx, Messrs. Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky, Bulgakov, Berdyaev and others, went completely right. Nowhere in Europe will we find that Bernsteinism so rapidly came to its logical end, to the formation of a liberal fraction, as it was with us in Russia. With us Mr. Struve began with "criticism" in the name of Bernsteinism, and ended with the organization of a liberal journal, "Freedom" (Svoboda), liberal in the European sense of this word.

Flekhov and his friends, leaving the union abroad found support from the side of the founders of "Iskra" and "Zarya". These two journals (about which even Cd. R. Luxemburg heard something) led a three year brilliant campaign against opportunist wing of the party, a campaign of the S-D "Gorya" against the S-D "Zhirndists" (this is the expression of the old "Iskra"), a campaign against "Rabocheye Delo" (Coms. Krichevsky, Akimov, Martynov and others) against the Jewish "Bund", against the Russian organization, inspired by this tendency (in the first place against the Petersburg so-called workers Organization and the Voronezh Committee).

It became clearer and clearer that the tie between committees purely of ideas was insufficient. All oshchutimeye became apparent the need for the formation of a party of genuine solidarity, that is, the execution of that which was only noted in 1898. Finally, at the end of 1902 there was formed the Organization Committee, the task of convoking the 2nd congress of the party. In this C.C. organized, in the main, by the Russian organization of the "Iskra", and it also included representatives of the Jewish "Bund". In the fall of 1903 the second congress, which finally met having accomplished on the one hand, the formal unification of the party, and on the other hand, the split into "majority" and "minority". No such division existed before the congress. Only a similar detailed analysis of the struggle which occurred at the party congress, can explain this division. Unfortunately, the partisans of the minority (including Cd. Luxemburg) cautiously evade such an analysis.

In my book which is so originally brought to the attention of the German readers by Cd. Luxemburg, I devote over 100 pages to a detailed analysis of the protocols of the congress (consisting of 400 pages). This analysis forced me to divide the delegates, or more accurately speaking, the votes (we had delegates who had one or two votes) into four basic groups:

(1) Iskra-ists of the Majority (partisans of the tendency of the old "Iskra"--24 votes, (2) Iskra-ists of the minority--9 votes, (3) centre (nicknamed nasmeshku also the "marsh"--10 votes and, finally, the anti-Iskra-ists, 8 votes. In all 51 votes. I analyze the participation of these groups in all the subjects that came up for discussion at the party congress and I show that in all questions (program, tactic and organization) the party congress became the arena of struggle of the Iskra-ists against the Iskra-ists with the various vacillations of the "marsh". To anyone who is at least a little acquainted with the history of our party it should be clear that it could not be otherwise. But all partisans of the minority (including also R. Luxemburg) modestly close their eyes to this struggle. Why? Precisely this struggle makes obvious the full falseness of the present political situation of the minority. During the whole time of this struggle at the party congress, on dozens of questions, in dozens of votes the Iskra-ists fought against the anti-Iskra-ists and the "marsh" who the more decisively was on the side of the anti Iskra-ists the more concrete the question under discussion was, the more positively it defined the basic thought of the S-D work, the more real it tried to bring to life (realize) the correct plans of the old Iskra.

The anti-Iskra-ists (especially com. Akimov and he who always agreed with him, the deputy of the Petersburg Workers Org., com. Bruker, almost always com. Martynov and

5 delegates of the Jewish Bund) were against the recognition (acceptance) of the tendency of the old Iskra. They defended the old private (individual) organizations, voted against their subordination to the party, against their fusion with the party (incident with the O.C., the dissolution of the group "Southern Worker", the major group of the "marsh", etc). They fought against the organizational statute, composed in the spirit of centralism (14th session of congress) and accused then all Iskra-ists that they wish to introduce "organizational lack of faith", "exclusive law" and other similar horrors.

All Iskra-ists, without exception, then laughed at this: it is remarkable that ed. R. Luxemburg accepts all these inventions for something serious. In the preponderant majority of questions the Iskra-ists won; they predominated at the congress, which is clearly evident from the above mentioned figures. But at the time of the second half of the sessions of the congress, when the less principled questions were resolved, the anti-Iskra-ists--some Iskra-ists voted with them--won. Thus it happened, for example, on the question of equality of languages in our program; on this question the anti-Iskra-ists almost succeeded in defecting the program commission and carry their own formulation. This happened again on the question of the first paragraph of the statute when the anti-Iskra-ists together with the "marsh" carried the formulation of Martov. In correspondence to this formulation, not only members of party organizations (such a wording Plekhanov too defended) but also all persons who work under the control of the party organization are considered members of the party.*

The same thing occurred on the question of the elections of the CC and the Ed. Bd. of the Central Organ. 24 Iskra-ists formed a serious majority; they carried through the long thought of plan of rejuvenating the Ed. B.: out of 6 old editors three were selected; into the minority came nine Iskra-ists, 10 members of the center and 1 anti-Iskra-ist (the remainder 7, anti Iskra-ists--the representatives of the Jewish Bund and Rabochey Dolo--left the congress earlier yet). This minority** was so dissatisfied with the ~~elections~~ elections that it decided to abstain from participation in the remaining elections. Com. Kautsky was entirely right when he saw in the fact of the rejuvenation of the ed. bd. the main reason for the following struggle. But his view that I (sic!) "excluded" 3 comrades from the editorship explained only by his complete lack of acquaintance with our congress.

First of all, non-election is not at all the same as exclusion, and I, of course, had no right at the congress to exclude any one, and, secondly, ed. Kautsky, it seems, does not suspect the fact that the coalition of anti-Iskra-ists, centre and a small part of the adherent of Iskra also had a political significance and could not but have an influence on the results of the elections. Who does not wish to close his eyes on what has occurred at the congress, he must understand that our new division into minority and majority is only a variant of the old division into proletarian-revolutionary and intellegentsia--opportunist wings of our party. This is a fact which one cannot get around with any sort of interpretation, any sort of jokes.

*Com. Kautsky, expressing himself on this formulation of Martov, stands in this from the point of view of expediency. First, this point was considered at our party congress not from the point of view of expediency, but from a principled point of view. The question was posed thus by Axelrod. Secondly, Ed. Kautsky deceived if he thinks that under the Russian police regime there exists such a big distinction between belonging to party organization and simple work under control of such an organization. Thirdly, it is especially false to compare the present situation in Russia with the situation in Germany under the Exceptional law against socialists.

** (The constant references to "minority" and "majority" seems strange in view of the fact that by now these terms, (Menshevik) and Bolshevik have a pure political meaning which does not appear in the above work.)

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Unfortunately, after the congress the principled significance of this split was obscured by dirty gossip on the question of cooptation. And precisely the minority did not wish to work under control of the central institutions unless three old editors should again be coopted. This struggle continued for two months. The boycott and disorganization of the party were the means of this struggle. 12 committees (out of 14 who expressed themselves on the subject) severely censured these methods of struggle. The minority even refused to accept our (coming from me and Plekhanov) proposition and to express its point of view in the pages of the Iskra. At the congress of the League abroad the matter went so far that the members of the C.C. were strewn with insults and abusive speech (autocrats, bureaucrats, gendarmes, liars, etc.) They were accused of stifling personal (individual) initiative and with desire to introduce absolute submission and blind subordination etc. The attempts of Plekhanov to classify this method of struggle of the minority as anarchist could not reach its aim. After this congress Plekhanov appeared with his article "What (Not) To Do" (No. 52, Iskra) which constitutes an epoch ~~mark~~ and is directed against me.

In his article he states that the struggle with revisionism ^{of the} does not always have to signify a struggle against revisionists, it was clear to all that for this he had in mind our minority. Further he said that sometimes it is not necessary to struggle with individual anarchism which is so deeply imbedded in the Russian revolutionary; some concessions are sometimes the best means to subordinate it and avoid a split. I left the editorial board since I could not share such a view and the editors of the minority were coopted.

Then followed the struggle over cooptation in the C.C. My proposal to conclude peace under the condition that the C.C. remains under the minority and the C.C. under the majority was rejected. The struggle continued, "principled" fights were carried on against bureaucratism, ultra-centralism, formalism, Jacobinism, shveizerianstvo (precisely they called the Russian Schweitzer) and other horrors. I ridiculed all these accusations in my book and remarked that this is either simple coopted ~~struggle~~ wrangle or (if this must be conditionally recognized as "principles" nothing other than opportunist Girondist phrases. The present minority repeats only that which Cd. Akimov and other recognized opportunists said at our congress against centralism, defended by all partisans of the old Iskra.

The Russian committees were indignant over the transformation of the C.C. into an organ of an individual circle, the organ of the coopted squabbles and party gossip. Many resolutions were passed that expressed the sharpest censure. Only the so-called "Petersburg Workers Organization", which we had already mentioned, and the Voronezh Committee (partisans of the tendency of Com Akimov) expressed their principled satisfaction with the direction of the new Iskra. Voices calling for the convocation of a 3rd congress multiplied.

The reader who will take the trouble to study the original sources of our party struggle will easily understand that the expressions of Cd. Luxemburg about "ultra-centralism", about the need of gradual centralisation etc. concretely and practically are a mockery of our congress, abstractly and theoretically (if one can here speak about theory) are a direct vulgarization of Marxism, a perversion of genuine dialectic of Marx, etc.

The final phase of our party struggle is noted for the fact that the members of the majority were partly excluded from the C.C., partly rendered harmless and reduced to zero. (This occurred thanks to the changes in the composition of the C.C. etc.) The advice of the party (which after cooptation of the old editors also fell into the hands of the minority) and the present C.C. ensured every agitation for the convocation of the 3rd congress and went over on the part of private (individual) agreements and talks with several members of the minority. Organization in the manner, for example, of collegiums of agents (mandated) of the CC who permitted themselves such a crime as agitation for the convocation of the congress were dismissed. The struggle for the council of the party and the new CC against the convocation of the 3rd congress was declared along the whole line. The majority answered this with the slogan: "Down with Bonapartism!" (such was the title of the brochure of Cd. Galerky who appeared in the name of the Majority). The number of resolutions

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in which the party institutions which carry on a struggle against the convocation of the congress, are called anti-party and Bonapartist increase.

How hypocritical all talks of the minority against ultra-centralism and for autonomy were is clear from the fact that the new publications of the ~~the~~ majority, issued by me and several comrades (where the above mentioned brochure of com. Galerky and others were published) was declared to be outside the pale of the party. The new publishing house offers the Maj. the only possibility of propagandizing its views since the pages of the Iskra are practically closed to them. And despite that, or, more correctly, precisely because of this the Soviet of the party carried out the above mentioned resolution on that formal basis that our publishing house is not mandated by a single party organization.

No point to speak about what zaborosa is at present the positive work, how strongly fell the prestige of the S-D, how strongly disorganized our party is, thanks to the change of all decisions, all elections of the 2nd congress, thanks to this struggle against the convocation of the 3rd congress, which the party institutions, reasonable before the party are carrying on.

Written in end half of Spt. 1904; 1st pub. in 1930 in "Leninsky Sbornik," XV.

The notes explaining the phrase "outside the pale of the party" state: The reference is to the following explanation of the Council of the Party published in Iskra #74, 9/14(1)/04 and directed against the publication house of the majority (B. Bonch-Bruевич and N. Lenin): "The Council of the party declares to the comrades that only that is party literature which is published under the authority and in the name of one of the party organizations. Therefore the title R. S-D K.F. cannot be placed on publications issued by individual members of the party. The Council asks all comrades, in view of the reiterated violations of this, self-evident rule of every party, to keep in mind this explanation." (Of. brochure by Orlovsky (V. Vorovsky) 'Council against the party' in the reprint in the sbornik of the Ispart "How the party of the Bolsheviks was born." 1925, p. 370.