Non-Linear pathways to social transformation: Rosa Luxemburg and the post-colonial condition

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Abstract Rosa Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital*, which spurred intense discussion and debate from the moment of its publication in 1913, has taken on new resonance in light of the global expansion of capitalism, the destruction of indigenous cultures and habitats, and capital's reconfiguration of public and private space. No less important is a series of additional works by Luxemburg that address these themes, but which have received far less attention. These include her notes and lectures on pre-capitalist society that were composed as part of her work as a teacher at the German Social Democratic Party's school in Berlin from 1907-14 and her *Introduction to Political Economy*, which first led her to confront the problem delineated in *The Accumulation of Capital*. These writings shed new light on the contributions as well as the limitations of her understanding of the internal and external limits to capital accumulation, especially insofar as the ability of non-capitalist formations and practices to survive the domination of capital is concerned. Luxemburg's understanding of the impact of capitalism in undermining non-capitalist strata has crucial ramifications for working out a viable alternative to capitalism today.

Keywords Colonialism, capitalism, indigenous peoples, Marxism, imperialism

I.

Rosa Luxemburg has earned an important place in the history of radical thought for her theoretical investigation of one of the most abstract aspects of value theory - the formulas on expanded reproduction at the end of Volume Two of Marx's *Capital*. In what is widely considered her greatest theoretical work, *The Accumulation of Capital*, she argued, on the basis of a critical reading of Marx's texts as well as the classical political economists, that the expanded reproduction of capital depends upon the colonisation and commodification of non-capitalist strata in the developing world. By tying the *internal* logic of capital accumulation to the securing of *external* markets in the non-capitalist world, she sought to develop a systematic explanation for the *necessity* of capitalism to engage in imperialist expansion.[1] In doing so, the book (by her own admission) focuses on a rather technical issue insofar as it takes issue

1. Elsewhere I have critically analysed the central claims of *The Accumulation of Capital*. See Peter Hudis, 'The Dialectic of Spatial Determination of Capital: Rosa Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* Revisited', *International Critical Thought*, 4, 4, December 2014, pp474-90.

2. Luxemburg referred to *The Accumulation of Capital* as a 'purely theoretical work about a complicated issue involving abstract scientific analysis'. See *The Accumulation of Capital, Or, What the Epigones Have Made Out of Marx's Theory - An Anti-Critique*, in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*: *Volume II, Economic Writings 2*, Peter Hudis and Paul Le Blanc (eds), London and New York, Verso, 2015, p348. (Hereafter *Complete Works, Vol II*.)

3. For the critics of Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital*, see Anonymous, [M.I. Nachimson] 'Die Akkumulation des Kapitals' in Dresdner Vokszeitung 16 and 17, 21 and 23 Jan, 1913; Anton Pannekoek, 'Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals: Ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus*', in *Bremer Bürger-Zeitung*, 29 & 30 Jan, 1913; Anonymous, 'Die Akkumulation des Kapitals', in *Frankfurter Völksstimme*, 1.2.13; Gustav Eckstein,

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with Marx's formulas at the end of Volume Two for supposedly failing to take into account foreign trade and the world market in delineating capital's drive for self-expansion.[2] Nevertheless, she certainly considered that it had important *political* implications - as seen in its very subtitle, 'A Contribution to the Economic Theory of Imperialism'.

Though the book caused a huge stir at the time its publication in 1913, and has given rise to numerous debates ever since, less well known is that her theoretical investigation of expanded reproduction came out of a prolonged and detailed *empirical* study of social and economic conditions in the non-Western world.[3] Evidence of this is found in Part Three of *The Accumulation of Capital*, which delineates 'The Historical Conditions of Accumulation'. However, in the Anglo-American world the extent and depth of her investigations into the non-capitalist world has been occluded by the fact that until recently one of its most important expressions, her *Introduction to Political Economy*, was only partly available in English, while an accompanying series of lectures, notes and manuscripts on non-Western societies (composed while she was a teacher at the German Social Democratic Party [SPD] school from 1907 to 1914) was completely unknown. Now that these writings have been discovered and made available in English in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, it has become possible to investigate the full expanse of Luxemburg's intense studies of non-Western societies.[4]

These studies are not only of historical or biographical interest. Luxemburg's detailed investigation of the indigenous communal social formations of Asian, African and Latin American societies, both before and after the intrusion of European imperialism, represent one of the most systematic discussions of their significance ever penned in the Marxist tradition. She insisted that communal relations of possessing and working the land - in northern India, southern Africa, and the Andean region of Latin America - were not signs of 'backwardness' or 'primitivism'. Instead, she held, they 'possessed extraordinary tenacity and stability' and were in many respects far in advance of capitalist social relations (*Introduction*, p227). In taking the trouble to absorb the latest anthropological and ethnographic studies in order to better understand these non-Western societies on their own terms, her work challenges the claim that Marxism privileges modernity and Enlightenment notions of 'progress' at the expense of appreciating non-Western and pre-capitalist modes of life.[5] In this sense, her work is an important reference point for challenging criticisms of the Marxist tradition that have been voiced by an array of postcolonial theorists.[6]

II.

Before substantiating these claims, we first need to ask *why* did Luxemburg

'Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Akkumulation des Kapitals: Ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus*', in *Vorwärts*, 40, 16.2.13; Otto Bauer, 'Die Akkumulation des Kapitals', in *Die Neue Zeit*, Year 31, 1912-13, 1, pp831-8, pp862-74; Max Schippel, 'Das Grundgeheimnis des Imperialismus', in *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, Year 17, 1913, 1, pp147-52.

4. These eight manuscripts and lecture notes were first discovered in the 1990s, thanks to the tireless efforts of Professor Narihiko Ito as well as Annelies Laschitza. The full text is now available in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg: Volume I, Economic Writings 1*, ed. Peter Hudis, London and New York, Verso, 2013, pp89-520. (Hereafter *Complete Works, Vol I.*) *The Introduction to Political Economy* itself (Hereafter *Introduction*), unfinished at her death, was first published by Paul Levi in 1925. References here are to Verso edition.

5. Luxemburg's insistence on such an approach is indicated in her approvingly quoting Henry Sumner Maine's comment, 'The characteristic error of the direct observer of unfamiliar social or juridical phenomena is to compare them too hastily with familiar phenomena apparently of the same kind' (in *Introduction*, p169).

engage in these studies of non-Western societies in the first place? Actually, it was not in order to flesh out or defend the theoretical problematic that is central to *The Accumulation of Capital*. Luxemburg actually begun composing the *Introduction to Political Economy* - over half of which consists of a detailed analysis of communal social relations in the Western and non-Western world - long before the thought of writing a work on expanded reproduction crossed her mind. She began studying and lecturing on the non-Western world in 1907, as part of her work at the SPD school in Berlin, and shortly after decided to develop her research in the book that was to become the *Introduction to Political Economy*. While working on the manuscript, at the end of 1911, she suddenly became aware of what she considered a 'puzzling aspect' that falls outside the scope of the book - namely, the internal and external barriers to the continued self-expansion of capital. Intrigued by this issue, she broke off work on the *Introduction* and began writing (in February 1912) *The Accumulation of Capital*. She was not to return to the *Introduction* until 1916, though she continued to lecture on the social realities in the non-Western world until the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

So what *did* prompt her to delve into a serious study of the non-Western world by 1907? The explanation may well lie in a crucial economic insight that is contained in one her most famous *political* writings - her 1899 *Reform or Revolution*. In the course of criticising Eduard Bernstein and other revisionists, who held that 'the movement is everything and the goal is nothing', she writes,

> The secret of Marx's theory of value, of his analysis of money, his theory of capital, his theory of the rate of profit, and consequently of the whole existing economic system is … the final goal, socialism. And precisely because, *a priori*, Marx looked at capitalism from the socialist's viewpoint, that is, from the historical viewpoint, he was enabled to decipher the hieroglyphics of capitalist economy.[7]

This is a rather extraordinary statement. It suggests that integral to Marx's ability to penetrate through capitalism's mystifying forms of appearance and grasp its essential nature is his examination of capitalism in relation to *non-capitalist* social relations. This is quite different from what many critics presume about Marx. Many have argued that since the object of Marx's critique is capitalism and capitalism alone, any comments of his on pre-capitalist societies are either peripheral or irrelevant to his theoretical project. And many more have presumed that he had little or nothing to say about a future post-capitalist society, since he clearly opposed indulging in 'utopian' speculation and 'blueprints' about the future. There is no doubt that Marx did not concern himself with providing a definite or determinate account of an emancipatory, post-capitalist society. But that does not mean he had little or nothing to say about the nature of social relations after capitalism. As I show through an exhaustive treatment of his work in *Marx's Concept of the*

6. For a response to these criticisms, see Vasant Kaiwar, *The Postcolonial Orient: The Politics of Difference and the Project of Provincialising Europe*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2016.

7. 'Social Reform or Revolution', in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, eds. Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2004, pp150-1.

Alternative to Capitalism, he had far more to say about life after capitalism than many presume.[8] At issue is whether these comments were likewise peripheral or irrelevant to his theoretical project or a critical part of it.

8. See Peter Hudis, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*, Chicago, Haymarket, 2013.

This issue is addressed in the famous section of Marx's *Capital*, 'The Fetishism of Commodities and its Secret'. Marx takes great pains to show that commodity fetishism is extremely difficult to dispel, since it is not a mere veil or ideological illusion that can readily be removed by enlightened critique. He explicitly states that for capitalists, as well as the producers, 'the social relations between their private labours appear as what they are, i.e. they do not appear as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things'.[9] Rather than a misrepresentation of reality that can be corrected on empirical grounds, commodity fetishism is a 'form of thought which is socially valid, and therefore objective, for the relations of production' that constitute societies dominated by capital (ibid, p169).

9. Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. I, trans. Ben Fowkes, New York, Penguin, 1976, pp.165-66.

This raises a critical question: if fetishism is adequate to the concept of capital, and if capital becomes such an all-dominating force in modern society that social agents 'look upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature' (ibid, p899), how is it possible not to succumb to its mystification? Marx certainly knows that it is possible to penetrate the false (but necessary) forms of appearance assumed by capitalist societies only if we proceed from the internal contradictions endemic to them. Yet that still begs the question: what is needed in order to fully discern those internal contradictions, given the obfuscating nature of commodity fetishism?

Marx provides an answer by writing that the mystery of commodity fetishism 'vanishes as soon as we come to other forms of production' (p169). The contrast of capitalism with non-capitalist modes of life breaks down the tendency to naturalise transitory historical formations. He contrasts capitalism with non-capitalist forms from two directions. He first turns to the *past* by surveying economic forms in which common ownership of the means of production prevail. Relations of personal dependence prevail in which there is 'no need for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from their reality' (p170). He will later delve deeper into this subject in his extensive studies of pre-capitalist societies in India, China, Russia, Indonesia, North Africa and among Native Americans, in his extensive notes and studies on these societies in the 1870s and 1880s.

In the section on commodity fetishism he then turns to the *future*, writing: 'Let us finally imagine, for a change, an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common' (p171). *Imagining the future* is brought to bear on the effort to grasp the internal contradictions of capitalist society. In this future socialist society, he writes, products are 'directly objects of utility' and do not assume a value form. Freely associated producers decide how to make, distribute and consume the total social product, without the mediation of exchange value and universalised commodity production. They

set aside one part of the social produce to renew the means of production and a second as means of subsistence. He adds, 'The share of each individual producer in the means of subsistence is determined by his labour time'. Relations between producers and their products are 'transparent in their simplicity' (p172), since *socially necessary* labour time - which imposes itself behind the backs of the producers - no longer prevails: it is *actual* labour time that serves as the measure for distributing the elements of production. A new mode of conceiving, relating to and organising *time* is posited as the cardinal principle of socialism.

Has Marx fallen prey to utopianism? No, because he has derived this vision of the future from what is intimated by ongoing struggles against value production. Marx had occasion to directly witness such a struggle shortly after publishing the first edition of Volume One - the 1871 Paris Commune. The contrast between existing society and the vision of the future that he discerned in the praxis of the communards led him to revise his discussion of commodity fetishism in the second German edition of 1872, which for the first time devotes a distinct section to it.[10] As Dunayevskaya argued:

> The totality of the reorganization of society by the Communards shed new insight into the perversity of relations under capitalism … The proletariat demonstrated how the *absolute new form of cooperation*, released from its value-integument, expresses itself. This was so clearly the absolute opposite of the dialectic movement of labor under capitalism, forced into a value form, that all the fetishisms were stripped off of capitalist production.[11]

This has nothing to do with imposing an external standpoint upon the critique of capital, since Marx's vision of the future is drawn from the revolutionary struggles that are immanent within capitalist society. By integrating these intimations of a new society into his critique of capital, Marx was able to deepen his understanding and presentation of commodity fetishism. This separates Marx from non-dialectical approaches, defined by the following: 'Because they do not see the future, the next social order, they cannot understand the present' (ibid, p111).

Luxemburg was therefore not at variance with Marx in proclaiming in *Reform or Revolution* that it is necessary to contrast capitalist with non-capitalist social relations in order to penetrate the false forms of appearance assumed by existing society. She was an astute enough reader of Marx to know that value production compels human relations to take on the form of relations between things. Products of labour can only enter into a quantitative relation with one another if they share a common *quality*. Abstract labour, the substance of value, makes it possible for products of labour to be universally exchanged. It is not the act of exchange that renders labour abstract; instead, labour assumes

10. The English editions of Volume One of Marx's *Capital* are based on the fourth German edition, which incorporated the changes introduced by Marx into chapter one in the second edition. Many readers are therefore probably unaware that the discussion on commodity fetishism was considerably different in the original 1867 edition.

11. Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 Until Today* [1958] Amherst NY, Humanity Books, 2000, p98.

a dual character, of concrete vs. abstract, in the very process of production once living labour is subjected to the discipline of socially necessary labour time. Yet it is only through the act of exchange, through the phenomenal form of appearance of value as exchange value, that the value of a commodity becomes manifest. Value takes on a form of appearance that conceals its origin in the peculiar form of labour that exists in capitalism. Since value can only show itself in a relation between one material entity and another, it *appears* that what connects products of labour - and increasingly people - is a quasi-natural property of the things themselves instead of a historically specific social relation of labour. Capitalism *has* to appear natural and immutable, precisely because it is a system of value production. The enveloping mist of the present can only be fully dispelled by mentally transporting ourselves to a different temporal horizon. Marx spoke to this directly in the *Grundrisse*, a work that was unknown to Luxemburg:

> Our method indicates the points at which historical analysis must be introduced, or at which bourgeois economy as a mere historical form of the production process points beyond itself towards earlier historical modes of production …These indications, together with a grasp of the present, then also offer the key to the understanding of the past … This correct approach, moreover, leads to points which indicate the transcendence of the present forms of production relations, the movement coming into being, thus foreshadowing the future.[12]

12. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* Vol. 28, New York, International Publishers, 1986, pp388-9.

III.

Despite her comment about analysing capitalism 'a priori … from the socialist's viewpoint', Luxemburg has little to say in her work about the content of a post-capitalist society. This was typical of the Marxists of her generation, which was dominated by the assumption that any effort to explore the future rendered one a merely abstract utopian. But this does not mean that she left aside her claim that the peculiar social forms that characterise capitalism could only be fully grasped from a temporal horizon that is not defined by the dominance of capital. Much of her work consists of contrasting capitalist society with pre-capitalist social formations, beginning with the *Introduction to Political Economy*: 'Let us place ourselves in time when the present world economy did not yet exist, when … in the countryside a natural economy still prevailed, i.e. production for one's own need' (p122). She first takes up the communal forms that characterise peasant economies of her day, such as the Bosnian *zadruga*, Russian *mir*, Indian village communities and the rural household communities of Scotland. She then turns further back into the past by examining the roots of some of these social formations in European feudalism.

In a lengthy manuscript on the Middle Ages (composed as part of her work

on the *Introduction*) that discusses (in part) the Carolingian period, she writes: 'The study of economic history has shown us that, as far as we have come, all economic forms [prior to capitalism] have been *organised* in one way or another, were *planned*…'.[13] One might think that European medieval society, with its seemingly chaotic and decentralised forms of governance, would not be characterised by a large degree of organisation or social planning. Yet she contends that the anarchic character of social relations that largely characterises modern capitalism is missing in feudalism, insofar as the various village communities - as well as the Carolingian state itself - planned out what was produced without the intervention of the impersonal mechanism of exchange value. She writes:

13. 'The Middle Ages. Feudalism. Development of Cities', in *Complete Works, Vol. I*, p406. (Hereafter 'Middle Ages'.)

> Physical labour has become the curse of some, idleness the privilege of others, with those who work even becoming the property of the non-workers. Yet here again, this relationship of domination involves the strictest planning and organisation of the economy, the labour process and distribution. The determining will of the master is its foundation, the whip of the slave overseer its sanction (*Introduction*, p133).

Nevertheless, these communal and 'planned' forms of social organisation in time became gradually dissolved from within, as exchange relations and commodity production took off in the later Middle Ages, accentuating its sharp class divisions. Private accumulation of wealth, especially through long-distance trade (as with the Hanseatic League) led to the appropriation of property and production relations at the expense of the community. In the end, with the 'collapse of the communistic regime and common property', there is 'the disappearance of any kind of authority in economic life, any organisation and planning in labour, any kind of connection among the individual members' (ibid, p241). Directly social labour gives way to indirectly social labour, in which human relations become mediated by an abstraction-exchange value.

Yet much further back, she argues, communal social formations existed in Europe (and elsewhere) that proved remarkably resilient for centuries - thereby giving the lie to the claim that the dominance of private property and atomised social relations were necessitated by the presumably fickle or ineffective nature of communal production. The strongest indication of this, she argues, was the original German 'mark community', in which the land was cultivated, partitioned, and worked in common with 'the strictest equality being observed' (ibid, p148). Building on the pioneering work of Maurer and von Haxthausen (which Marx was himself deeply indebted to), she writes that the mark community not only persevered for many centuries but represented a form of agrarian communism common to innumerable pre-capitalist societies worldwide. She writes, 'To understand this, let us take an example. We imagine a primitive-communist mark community. Only yesterday

it was living according to its planned and regulated relationships … In all previous societies production was organised in a planned way, and the same was true of the distribution of products' ('Middle Ages', p406). Indeed, she argues, 'It is impossible to imagine anything simpler and more harmonious than the economic system of the old Germanic mark':

> The entire mechanism of social life here is open to view. A strict plan and a tight organisation cover everything each individual does and place him as a part of the whole. The immediate needs of everyday life and the equal satisfaction of everyone is the starting point and endpoint of the whole organisation. Everyone works together for everyone else and collectively decides on everything. But what does this organisation spring from, what is it based on, this power of the collective over the individual? It is nothing other than the communism of land and soil, that is to say, the common possession of the most important means of production by those who work (*Introduction*, p198).

Capitalism is, for Luxemburg, an inherently anarchic and unplanned system, since social relations are not direct but mediated by abstract forms of domination such as money and market transactions. While 'fragments' of enterprises in capitalism can be planned to some degree, the social totality cannot, precisely because capitalism is a system governed by a law of value that operates 'behind the backs' of the producers (*Introduction*, p132). Matters are very different, however, in pre-capitalist societies that are not based on value production. Here we encounter communal social structures were 'strictly regulated economic communities with typical features of communist organisation' (ibid), which 'possessed extraordinary tenacity and stability' (p227). Directly refuting the claims that such formations are 'backward' or 'archaic', she sees in them an anticipation of social relations that will arise once capitalism is superseded - albeit divested of the internal class differentiations and contradictions that ultimately led to the dissolution of pre-capitalist communal forms.

Luxemburg was especially interested in the internal as well as external factors that led to the dissolution or break up of many of these earlier modes of production. In a series of fascinating lecture notes on slavery in the ancient Greek and Roman world, she takes issue with Engels's view of how the mark community gives way to societies based on a slave mode of production. His argument that exploitation defines societies once they experience the introduction of private property, she argues, 'cannot satisfy us'. This is because 'Slavery accelerates the dissolution of the communist association and goes hand in hand with the rise of private property. This stands in contrast to Engels, who saw slavery as arising only after the introduction of private property'.[14] Engels's monocasual approach (which characterises his *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*) fails to take account of the

14. 'Slavery', in *Complete Works, Vol. I*, p304.

internal complexities that pull the mark community apart - such as incipient hierarchies *within* the commune between leaders and led, which become accentuated over time as leadership positions become hereditary and warfare allows for surplus goods to be expropriated from neighbouring communities.

Luxemburg's difference with Engels on this issue has substantive *political* ramifications. If the emergence of domination and exploitation are mainly tied to the emergence of private property, it seems to follow that the abolition of private property is the *sine qua non* for establishing a classless society. On the other hand, if private property emerges coterminous with domination and servitude, it follows that a deeper, more fundamental social transformation is needed to put an end the existence of classes and class society.

Although Luxemburg does not pursue this matter further in her notes, she does focus on a vitally important issue: namely, that with the emergence of a slave society a 'total separation of mental and manual labour took place'. Knowledge becomes separated from the immediate process of production, as a distinct aristocratic class appropriates for itself the instruments of knowledge and culture. The secret of Greek cultural creativity therefore lies in its reliance on slave labour. Luxemburg is not simply exploring this issue for historical purposes, but with an eye to better understand the nature of socialism. She writes, 'In socialist society, knowledge will be the common property of everyone. All working people will have knowledge' (ibid, p312), since they will consciously direct the production and reproduction of everyday life through a freely associated plan. Overcoming the separation of the labourers from the objective conditions of production therefore goes hand in hand with sublating the division between mental and manual labour.

This concern also characterises her discussion of ancient Incan society. Luxemburg largely used (apparently without her knowledge) the same source for studying Incan civilisation as Marx - the work of the Russian sociologist Maxim Kovalevsky. She refers to Incan society as 'an age-old agrarian communist constitution', that 'offers a faithful copy of the German mark community in all its essential characteristics' (*Introduction*, pp154, 200). Communal associations of possessing and working the land, along with communal forms of distribution - all without a monetary economy and indirect forms of social organisation - contain elements that intimate the concept of a future socialist society. She even cites an unnamed German writer of the time who held that 'the greater part of what the Social Democrats strive for today as their conceived ideal, but at no time has achieved, was carried out in practice' by Incan civilisation.[15]

At the same time, she points to what she considers a unique feature of Incan society -the imposition of one communal society upon earlier communal ones through military conquest and domination. 'What we have here, as it were, is two social strata, one above the other yet both internally communistic in their organisation, standing in a relationship of subjugation and subordination' (*Introduction*, p201). Over time, this subjugation leads,

15. Ibid, p154. Heinrich Cunow cited this remark in his pathbreaking study, *Die Soziale Verfassung des Inkareichs, Eine Untersuchung des altoperuanischen Agarkommunismus*, Stuttgart, Dietz Verlag, 1896. It is a shame that so little of Cunow's studies of pre-capitalist societies - all done from a Marxist perspective - is known in the English-speaking world.

she contends, to increased class polarisation that posits inequities in status and wealth that begin to erode the community from within - long before the Spanish arrive on the scene. In her analysis of the Incas, she no doubt overstated the case in arguing that its hierarchical nature (as well as that of other centralised states of the time) flowed from 'limited control over nature' and an 'inadequate development of labour productivity' (ibid, 203), since it is now known that in some areas the Incas attained a higher level of output per acre than modern industrial farming.[16] Indeed, the Incas may have been the first centralised state in history to decisively overcome endemic poverty and hunger. She was closer to the mark in suggesting that the tendency of Incan officials over time to obtain private control over the social surplus generated internal differentiations of rank and privilege that ultimately helped lead to their demise by the Spanish conquistadors.

16. For some recent studies on this, see Miguel Altieri, 'Indigenous Knowledge Re-Valued in Andean Agriculture', *ILEIA Newsletter*, 12, 1, pp7-11; and Stephen B. Brush, 'Ethnoecology, Biodiversity, and Modernization in Andean Potato Agriculture', *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 12, No. 2, Winter 1992, pp161-185.

IV.

But why was Luxemburg so interested in these earlier societies? Was she interested in writing a Marxist history of pre-capitalist economies? And if so, what would have been the purpose of doing so? Clearly, the main reason for Luxemburg's interest in these pre-capitalist forms was not so much to provide an historical account of the past as to better understand the nature of social relations in the non-Western world of her day. The Introduction *to Political Economy* contains detailed analyses of communal forms of production in indigenous societies existing in her time, such as the Kabyles and Arabs of North Africa, the village communities of northern India, Australian aborigines, the Iroquois and Seri of North America, the Botocudo and Bororó peoples of South America, the Aka, Twa, and Chewa of central Africa, the Mincopie, Kubu, and Aeta peoples of South and East Asia, among many others.

She was interested in these diverse societies because their communal land tenure arrangements and modes of production and distribution were based on the collective power and decision making of its populace, in sharp contrast to commodified forms of life associated with Western capitalism. Since these formations had existed for millennia, they clearly served a vital social purpose and could not be so quickly written off as 'antiquated'. Moreover, their forms of association demonstrated that a consciously ordered society based on human needs is far from utopian. The planned and organised nature of pre-capitalist societies, she states in a series of studies, characterises even what many consider the most 'primitive' ones. Basing herself on the most recent ethnographic studies of her time, she argues that the hunter-gatherer societies of Australian aborigines embody forms of production that are 'in fact extremely complicated, and worked out in the utmost detail'.[17] She adds, 'All the groups together form an ordered and planned whole, and each group also conducts itself in a quite ordered and planned way under

17. Luxemburg especially relied on the pathbreaking work of Walter Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen, who produced a sympathetic portrait of aboriginal culture and society.

a unitary leadership' (*Introduction*, p178). She sums up her research on the Australian aborigines as follows:

> Above all, among the Australian aborigines - perhaps those humans who have remained most backward - it is not only production but also consumption that is planned and organised as a common social affair; and secondly, this plan evidently aims at the provisioning and security of all members of society, according both to their needs in terms of food and to their productive power. Under all conditions, special care is taken of old people, who in turn look after the small children along with the mothers. The entire economic life of the Australian aborigines - production, division of labour, distribution of foodstuffs - has thus been planned and organised in the strictest way from earliest times by way of firm rules (ibid, p180).

This level of social organisation is also characteristic of Native American societies:

> We may assume with a high degree of certainty that also among these Indians off the Californian coast the secret cult of totemic animals and the division of the tribe into corresponding groups expresses nothing other than the survivals of an age-old, strictly organised system of production with a division of labour, that has ossified into religious symbols … This 'gluttonous feast', therefore, and the noisy 'gorging in darkness', which Professor Bücher would certainly note as a sign of purely animal behavior, is actually very well organised - its ceremonial character is sufficient proof of this. The planned character of the hunt is combined with strict regulation of distribution and consumption (ibid, p181).

Even some of the most isolated groups of Native Americans living in the harshest of environments - such as the Inuit in the far North and the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego in the far South - exhibit, she notes, a highly developed form of social organisation based on communal association and deliberation. Responding to Charles Darwin's rather dismal portrayal of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, she writes:

> People here are still completely tied to the apron strings of external nature, and depend on its favor and disfavor. But within these narrow limits, the organisation of the whole small society of some hundred and fifty individuals prevails. Concern for the future is only expressed in the wretched form of a stock of putrid whale's blubber. But this putrid stock is divided between everyone with due ceremony, and everyone similarly participates in the work of seeking food, under planned leadership (ibid, p133).

It is hard to read such passages and come away with the sense that Luxemburg

was viewing these pre-capitalist cultures from a 'modernist' or 'orientalist' lens. On the contrary, the *Introduction to Political Economy* contains searing critiques of the sociologists and anthropologist of her day - from Ernst Grosse to Max Weber - for tending to measure the contributions of non-Western societies by Western standards.

Luxemburg reserves some of her most important discussion in the *Introduction* to a discussion of the persistence of pre-capitalist forms in Asia, especially northern India. She is especially attentive to how they are being interpreted by the leading lights of Western imperialism. She points to the communal relations of possessing and working the land in India as in many respects superior to the destruction of the social property of the direct producer that characterises capitalism. In doing so, she takes sharp issue with James Mill and John Stuart Mill's claim that the absence of private property in land means that the 'despotic' sovereign is owner of all immovable property. This cornerstone of the theory of 'Oriental despotism' is firmly rejected by her on the grounds that it 'completely fails to understand the agrarian relations of the indigenous population' (ibid, p156). The claim that the sovereign is owner of the land, she contends, is little more than an ideological fiction used by the British to justify their destruction of the communal forms and impose private property relations.

Nevertheless, she acknowledges that, unlike the relatively egalitarian Native American and Australian societies, 'The direction and execution were the work of an authority that stood above the individual village marks' (p215). This centralised form of social control, she writes, is a result of the large role played by irrigation in many Asian societies. Though she does not use the term, her discussion echoes, at some points, what Marx called the 'so-called Asiatic Mode of Production'. She calls attention to how the 'despotic law of the government' co-existed with long-lasting communal land-tenure formations. However, she does not point out - as did Marx - that for this reason it is imprecise to refer to ancient Indian and Chinese societies as 'feudal'. Marx himself developed the designation of the co-called 'Asiatic Mode of Production' in order to counter the claim that Indian society should be read through the spectacles that define the European Middle Ages. In referring several times to northern India as 'feudal', however, on at least this issue Luxemburg seems too willing to apply European categories to non-European peoples, something that Marx explicitly avoided in his 'Notebooks on Kovalevsky'.[18]

Despite her overall praise of pre-capitalist forms, Luxemburg is by no means uncritical of them. She contends that even some of the most egalitarian forms are characterised by some kind of *internal* hierarchy:

> In reality the primitive communist structures had [little] to do with general freedom and equality … As far as blood ties and common ownership reached, so too did the equality of rights and solidarity of interests.

18. For more on this, see Hudis, 'Accumulation, Imperialism, and Pre-Capitalist Formations: Luxemburg and Marx on the non-Western World', *Socialist Studies/Etudes socialistes*, 6, 2, 2010, pp75-91.

> Whatever lay beyond these limits … was foreign and could even be hostile. Indeed, each community based on economic solidarity could and necessarily was periodically driven into deadly conflicts of interest with similarly constructed communities because of the low level of development of production, or because of the scarcity or exhaustion of food sources due to an increase in population (*Introduction*, pp202-3).

This is most of all developed in her discussion of the communal forms of Russia, the *mir*. The incipient class hierarchies within the *mir*, she argues, over time led to their erosion from within - making it more or less inevitable they succumbed to capitalist forms of organisation as the demand for private ownership wins out over communal solidarity. Once capitalism enters the scene - most often through the venue of colonial or imperialist expansion - the communal forms find themselves unable to resist its 'process of suction' (to use a phrase of Marx). This forms one of the major reasons for Luxemburg's study of the non-capitalist world: she wanted to show that, despite their resilience and longevity, the contract with capitalist commodification is universally destructive.

That Luxemburg did not turn a deaf ear to the human suffering produced by this process is evident from all of her writings on the non-Western world. An uncompromising *humanism* defines all of her studies. As she put it in one of her letters,

> What do you want with this theme of the 'special suffering of the Jews'? I am just as much concerned with the poor victims on the rubber plantations of Putumayo, the Blacks in Africa with whose corpses the Europeans play catch. You know the words that were written about the great work of the General Staff, about Gen. Trotha's campaign in the Kalahari desert: 'And the death rattles of the dying, the demented cries of those driven mad by thirst faded away in the sublime stillness of eternity'. Oh that 'sublime stillness of eternity', in which so many cries of anguish have faded away unheard, they resound within me so strongly that I have no special place in my heart for the [Jewish] ghetto. I feel at home in the entire world, wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.[19]

19 See *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, eds. Georg Adher, Annelies Laschitza and Peter Hudis, Verso, London and New York, 2011, p376.

V.

Luxemburg held that the dissolution of the bonds connecting the individual to the 'natural workshop' of the soil is a lengthy and gradual process in the case of the rise of capitalism in Western Europe. But the process of dissolution in the non-Western world is far more rapid and bloody - precisely because it is promoted by European colonialism and imperialism. The latter manages to take over, undermine and destroy in short order the communal formations that have existed for millennia. Hence, while she credited pre-

capitalist communal formations for their level of solidarity, reciprocity and social planning, she also held that every one of them was doomed to destruction. Once they come into contact with capitalism, she contends, the 'encounter is deadly for the old society *universally and without exception* … tearing apart all traditional bonds and transforming the society in a *short period of time* into a shapeless pile of rubble'.[20] As I have detailed elsewhere, this distinguished Luxemburg's position from that of Marx, who did not share the unilinear evolutionist assumption that pre-capitalist communal formations were 'anywhere and everywhere' 'doomed to destruction' upon contact with capitalism.[21] Marx had a more nuanced approach that envisioned the possibility of their persisting in altered forms - a view, I contend, that has been upheld by subsequent developments, as especially seen in the persistence of communal forms of organisation in the Bolivian Highlands, parts of Indonesia, and southern Mexico.

20 Ibid, pp227-8. My emphasis.

21. See Hudis, 'Accumulation, Imperialism …'.

To be sure, Marx views capitalism as grounded in the logic of abstraction due to the very nature of the labour process. The distinct feature of the capitalist labour process, according to Marx, is the growing preponderance and dominance of *abstract labour*. It is a solvent that tends to dissolve all it comes into contact with - be it the particular skills or preferences of the individual labourer or contingent factors of the social or natural environment. This clearly has deadly ramifications as capital spreads into non-capitalist areas and strata. As Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, 'abstract labour [is] a key to the hermeneutic grid through which capital requires us to read the world'.[22] But does this lead to the inference that abstract labour *completely* and *immediately* dissolves all that it comes into contact with? Surely, it fails to do so even within the capitalist labour process, since the very existence of abstract labour is based on the persistence of concrete labour. Labour cannot be reduced to and dominated by an abstraction without the concrete exertion of labour power. No less is this the case when it comes to its impact on factors endogenous to the capitalist labour process. As Chakrabarty notes, such contingencies represent 'the excess that capital, for all its disciplinary procedures, always needs but can never quite control or domesticate'.[23] Marx was extremely sensitive to such considerations. While he often calls attention to the destructive and negative tendencies of capitalist penetration, he does not presume (especially in his writings of the 1860s and 1870s, in which he developed a much more nuanced understanding of the non-Western world) that they are inevitably destined in all cases to succumb to the logic of capital. As he wrote in his draft letters to Vera Zasulich, 'Those who believe that the dissolution of communal property is a historical necessity in Russia cannot, at any event, prove such a necessity from my account of the inevitable course of things in Western Europe'. He concludes:

22. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p55.

23. It should be noted that several chapters of the *Introduction to Political Economy* - including the one on value - have been lost. It is likely that parts of the manuscript were destroyed when the Freikorps ransacked Luxemburg's apartment after her murder in January 1919.

> To save the Russian commune, there must be a Russian Revolution … If the revolution takes place in time, if it concentrates all its forces, if the

> intelligent part of Russian society, the Russian intellect, concentrates all the living forces of the country to ensure the unfettered rise of the rural commune, the latter will soon develop as a regenerating element of Russian society and an element of superiority over the countries enslaved by the capitalist regime.[24]

24 Marx-Zasulich correspondence: letters and drafts', in *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and 'the Peripheries of Capitalism'*, ed. Teodore Shanin, New York, Monthly Review, 1983, pp100, 117.

Luxemburg held to a very different position. She held that the *mir* - like all communal forms of production - were doomed to disappear upon contact with capitalism-imperialism. The postcolonial critique of unilinear evolutionist positions that make short shrift of difference, contingency and local conditions may not carry much weight when it comes to Marx, but it does apply in many respects to post-Marx Marxists.

Why was Luxemburg so beholden to the assumption that pre-capitalist forms would vanish upon contact with capitalism? One reason is that she was a product of the Second International, whose entire purview was based on economic determinism and a unilinear evolutionist view of history. Marxists after Marx largely adopted a stagified view of development that, while presumably based on 'materialist' premises, actually rested on metaphysical foundations. Slave societies gave way to feudalism; feudalism gives rise to capitalism; and capitalism will eventually lead to socialism. With such a neat and tidy model in hand, it was easy to fall into formulaic generalisations about various cultures without bothering to analyse the specific formations that may not so readily fall prey to the relentless march of 'history'. In this sense, the emphasis on difference and contingency that has been emphasised by postcolonial thinkers in recent decades does represent, at least in part, a refreshing alternative to the monochromatic formalism that dominated (and still dominates) much of orthodox Marxism. What is missing from the purview of many postcolonial theorists (including Chakrabarty) is that Marx significantly modified his understanding of historical development in the last decades of his life by suggesting that it may be possible, in certain contexts, for non-capitalist societies to reach socialism without undergoing an extended period of capitalist industrialization - *even after many of them come into direct contact with capitalism*.[25]

25. See Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, New York, International Publishers, 1975: 'Even the equality of wages, as demanded by Proudhon, only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labour into the relationship of all men to labour. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist'.

There is, however, an additional reason for Luxemburg's diffidence about the survivability of pre-capitalist formations when they come into contact with capitalism. It concerns her effort to demonstrate that socialism is not merely a utopian ideal or wish but is *necessitated* by the social relations of capitalism. It is often assumed by contemporary theorists (especially of a poststructuralist persuasion) that master narratives of colonialism rest upon teleological and determinist perspectives that neglect the role of indeterminacy and unpredictability. But this is clearly not always the case. Standpoints that stress indeterminacy and chance can be also used to defend imperialism and colonialism. A clear example is the German sociologist Ernst Grosse, who is critiqued at length in the *Introduction to Political Economy*. Grosse acknowledged

that communal forms characterised pre-capitalist societies, but he held that this offered no evidence for the viability of socialism, since history moves neither in cycles nor in linear patterns. History is purely a matter of accidents and contingency; therefore, there is no necessity for socialism to emerge, let alone constitute a return, on a higher level, to the communal formations that characterised the past. Nor is there any reason, he held, to consider such pre-capitalist formations as being more advanced than those found in contemporary capitalism. Luxemburg writes:

> Grosse is not only an express opponent of Morgan and primitive communism, but of the whole developmental theory in the realm of social life, and pours scorn on those childish minds who seek to bring all phenomena of social life into a developmental series and conceive this as a unitary process, an advance of humanity from lower to higher forms of life. This fundamental idea, which serves as a basis for the whole of modern social science in general, and particularly for the conception of history and doctrine of scientific socialism, Herr Grosse combats as a typical bourgeois scholar, with all the power at his command. 'Humanity', he proclaims and emphasizes, 'in no way moves along a single line in a single direction; rather, its paths and goals are just as varied as are the conditions of life of different peoples'. In the person of Grosse, therefore, bourgeois social science, in its reaction against the revolutionary consequences of its own discoveries, has reached the same point that bourgeois vulgar economics reached in its reaction to classical economics: the denial of the very lawfulness of social development ('Middle Ages', p409).

Luxemburg understood, as did Marx, that a 'higher' form of life - socialism - could only arise on the basis of the social relations provided by capitalist modernity (whether *every country in the world* needs to experience capitalism before reaching socialism is a different matter). But if society is seen as mere accident, chance and caprice that operates without any determinative patterns and laws, what grounds is there for supposing that a different world from the existing one will ever come into being? Bourgeois ideology, which certainly wants to deny the possibility of socialism, can easily live with notions of indeterminacy and chance *as long as such a standpoint deflects attention from the law of motion of capitalism* that, according to Marx and Luxemburg, governs not only its historical *development* but also its tendencies towards crisis and *dissolution*.

VI.

Although Luxemburg assumed that pre-capitalist communal forms will all be dead and gone by the time the new, socialist society comes into being, she held that the working class can gain insight into what is to come in the future by

looking back at the past. By gaining a clearer understanding of earlier societies based on communal forms of association, the working class can better grasp its capacity to overcome capitalist atomisation and alienation. In other words, an examination of 'primitive communism' reveals, by negative contrast, how 'the alienation of means of production from the hands of those who work … is the common foundation of all class society, since it is the basic condition of all exploitation and class rule'. She therefore held that it is 'indispensable for workers to bear in mind the great milestones of history that divide the ancient communistic society from subsequent class society'. Moreover:

> Only by being clear about the specific economic peculiarities of primitive communist society, and the no less particular features of the ancient slave economy and medieval serfdom, is it possible to grasp with due thoroughness why today's capitalist class society offers for the first time a historical leverage for the realization of socialism, and what the fundamental distinction is between the world socialist economy of the future and the primitive communist groups of primitive times (ibid, p195).

Clearly, Luxemburg was not interested in looking at history for the sake of tracing the origins of capitalism, the rise of class society, etc. She had a far more ambitious agenda than trying to produce a Marxist historiography. She was looking at the past in order to clarify to the minds of workers the content of the new society.

So what, for her, is the 'fundamental distinction' between primitive communism and socialism? Both have much in common: collective ownership of the means of production, no separation of the labourer from the objective conditions of production, and a planned organisation of production and distribution that augments human needs instead of being subjected to exchange value. But how will the new society be different from earlier communal societies? She suggests the following. First, the productivity of labour will be much higher than in 'primitive' communism, negating the necessity for internal hierarchies, the conquest of surrounding communities, etc. Second, social planning will be democratically and '*consciously* organised by the whole working class' (ibid, p144). And third, *universal* principles of equality and freedom, which first arose in capitalist society - albeit in alienated form - will dominate, *not social solidarity based on mere kinship ties*.

This is a surely magnificent vision. But does it have some limitations? As we can see from the last chapters of the *Introduction to Political Economy* ('Commodity Production' and 'The Tendencies of Capitalist Production'), Luxemburg had little to say about how a socialist society represents the abolition of value production. She was certainly aware of the central importance of abstract labour and exchange value in the Marxian critique of capitalism. She also had a keen understanding of the capitalist law of value.[26] But the expansiveness of her vision of the future was circumscribed

26. It should be noted that several chapters of the *Introduction to Political Economy* - including the one on value - has been lost. It is likely that parts of the manuscript were destroyed when the Freikorps ransacked her apartment after her murder in January 1919.

by the tendency (held by many at the time) to identify capitalism with 'market anarchy' and socialism with 'organised planning'. In capitalism, she held, there is the 'disappearance from the economy of any kind of plan or organisation' - a problem that will be overcome by socialism. In the same breath, she acknowledged that the modern factory *is* based on 'the most refined planning'. Yet if that is so, how can capitalism be 'completely unorganised'? How can 'anarchy [be] the life element of the rule of capital' if production relations are characterised by 'the strictest organisation'? Faced with this contradiction, she concluded that the 'order' of the factory is missing from the *market*, in which 'no plan, no consciousness, no regulation prevails' (*Introduction*, p134). True enough - in her day, at least. But the logical conclusion is that socialism will extend the plan of the factory into relations of exchange and the market - a far cry from Marx's own view, which held that if the 'despotic plan of capital' at the point of production were extended to the whole of society we would have complete totalitarianism.[27]

In sum, while Luxemburg was surely right that pre-capitalist societies have a degree of conscious, self-directed social control that is not present in capitalism, in which social relations take on a life of their own and impose their will irrespective of the will of the human subject, her insistence on posing 'social planning' and 'market anarchy' as the absolute opposites tends to obscure the specific social relations of value production - such as alienated labour, the split between concrete and abstract labour, and the predominance of socially necessary labour time - that need to be abolished in order for any society to make an effective transition out of capitalism. She insists that 'in the unplanned economy that which is socially necessary is always determined after the fact' whereas 'in an organised [that is *socialist*] society the distribution of the products is regulated in a planned way' (Middle Ages, p409), and in so doing fails to take account of the fact that capitalism is also compatible with a high degree of planning - including when it comes to relations of distribution. Indeed, the history of the regimes that *called* themselves socialist of communist over the past one hundred years shows that it is possible to lessen or even eliminate the 'anarchy of the market' without abolishing alienated labour and abstract forms of domination that are rooted in value production.

There is one more limitation that is evident in Luxemburg's writings on the non-Western world. While she firmly opposed imperialism, affirmed the value and importance of pre-capitalist indigenous formations, and reviled the destruction wrecked upon native peoples by capitalist intrusion in the developing world, she never viewed the inhabitants of the colonised world as self-developing subjects of revolution in their own right. They were victims of imperialism; but the end of imperialism, she held, would come from the proletariat in the developed capitalist world that would make a revolution against capitalism. It is true that she held that the eventual exhaustion of non-capitalist strata through imperialist expansion would render impossible the expanded reproduction of capital. But if that were to be the case it

27. See Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 3, New York, International Publishers, 1975, p280.

would not be a subjective force immanent to the developing world but an objective power imposed upon it that sets the limits to capital accumulation. Of course, she held that 'long before' that day comes, the proletariat *of the West* will rise to its historical mission by putting an end to the system.[28] But that makes it all the clearer that a subjective revolutionary role is denied to dispossessed of the non-Western world. As is evident from her objection to all calls for national self-determination as 'diversionary' from the class struggle, Luxemburg heralded one and only one subject of revolution - the proletariat. The others barely even play a supporting role.[29]

Despite her profound appreciation for spontaneity and rank and file initiatives, Luxemburg detached objective from subjective when envisioning the overcoming of global capitalism. In the decades after her death, in contrast, the work of thinkers such as Frantz Fanon overcame this discordance by developing a perspective that posited the dispossessed of the developing world as integral to anti-capitalist transformation.[30]

This is not to deny that Luxemburg *did* develop an expansive - and critically important - conception of the nature of a socialist society in some of her other writings, such as her 1918 booklet on *The Russian Revolution*. Her insistence in it and other works on the inseparability of socialism and democracy marks her as one of the most relevant Marxist thinkers, especially in light of developments before and after 1989. However, the realities of the past one hundred years indicate that we need to take the critique of capitalism deeper than the contrast between 'market anarchy' and 'planned production', at the same time as we need a broader and deeper conception of subjects of revolution than that affirmed by Luxemburg herself. We have, after all, lived to see something that Luxemburg never envisioned - the rise of Stalinism from *within* the revolutionary movement. In light of the damage done by efforts to abolish the 'anarchy of the market' and private property without, however, surmounting the capitalist law of value, we need to rethink the Marxian critique of capitalism anew. Moreover, the fact that race and racism more than ever remain at the inner core of the logic of capital requires that we develop a concept of a post-capitalist future that goes far beyond issues of distribution or change of property forms by addressing the need for fundamentally new human relations between the races and genders as well as between labourers at the point of production itself.

Despite her shortcomings, Luxemburg remains a beacon for our time because she understood the importance of treating Marx's work as a still-to-be discovered continent of thought that has yet to be fully mastered. That she sharply criticised Marx for his elaboration of the formulas of expanded reproduction at the end of Volume Two of *Capital* should not be taken as a sign that she thought the time had come to go 'beyond' Marx. As she wrote in the *Anti-Critique*, in the midst of the horrors of World War One in 1916:

That theory alone is not enough; that one can sometimes connect the

28. See *The Accumulation of Capital: An Anti-Critique*, p444.

29. See Luxemburg's speech to the fifth congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (1907), in *Witnesses to Permanent Revolution: The Documentary Record*, ed. and trans. Richard D. Day and Daniel Gaido, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2011, pp561, 564: 'I completely denied any role on the part of the peasantry … peasant movements are completely unable to play any independent role and are subordinated in every historical context to the leadership of the other classes that are more energetic and more clearly defined'.

30. For a fuller discussion of this, see Peter Hudis, *Frantz Fanon, Philosopher of the Barricades*, London and New York, Pluto Press, 2015.

best theory with the worst practice is shown by the present collapse of German Social Democracy. This collapse did not occur as a result of Marxist theory, but in spite of it, and it can only be overthrown by bringing the practice of the labour movement into harmony with its theory. In the class struggle as a whole, as in each important part of it, we can only gain a secure foundation for our position from Marx's theory, from the buried treasures found in his fundamental works.[31]

31 *The Accumulation of Capital: An Anti-Critique*, *Complete Works*, Vol. II, p392.

Change the 'collapse of German Social Democracy' in 1914 to 'the collapse of established Marxism' that we confront in much of the world today, and every word rings as true as when it was written one hundred years ago.

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