

Lenin's "Second Face": Imagining Democratic Leadership in Revolutionary Movement

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Abstract

What is the way through which the vanguard comes into being? Consciously or unconsciously, Lenin and Luxemburg considered this issue. However, they failed to conceptualize a concrete method to solve the problem, which pre-determined their limitations. As I will discuss in this paper, while Lenin was limited in his blindness to the working class's capability of understanding other classes' grievances and, based on that, forming the class alliance with them, Luxemburg was problematic for embracing the masses' initiatives without considering the chance of "being misled." By engaging with Lenin's theory of class alliance, this paper aims to reveal Lenin's "second face." I will point out, an egalitarian aspect of Lenin's political thought is covered by his strong elitism. However, this democratic component of Lenin's political writings is significant since it implies the possibility of cultivating revolutionary leadership among the revolutionary masses, which refers to what I call the vision of "democratic leadership."

Keywords

Lenin, elitism, class alliance, revolutionary leadership, democracy

It should not be imagined that Party organization must consist solely of professional revolutionaries. We need the most diverse organization of all types, ranks and shades, beginning with extremely limited and secret and ending with very broad, free, *lose Organisationen*.

Vladimir Lenin (1977b, p. 498).

The unconscious comes before the conscious. The logic of the historic process comes before the subjective logic of the human beings who participate in the historic process.

Rosa Luxemburg (1961, p. 93).

1. Introduction

In one of the essential footnotes added to *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin mentioned an intriguing conversation he had with a worker from the factory:

"I spent many weeks 'examining' a worker, who would often visit me, regarding every aspect of the conditions prevailing in the enormous factory at which he was employed. True, after great effort, I managed to obtain material for a description (of the one single factory), but at the end of the interview the worker would wipe the sweat from his brow, and say to me smilingly: 'I find it easier to work overtime than to answer your question'" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 148).

This private conversation was worthy of notice because it characterized Lenin's attitude toward the masses. Lenin understood the significance of their participation. However, this confirmation did not mean Lenin's unconditional approval of the masses, led by the working class, as the mature political subject. We are familiar with Lenin's preference for elitist leadership and, in particular, his criticism of the working class's political consciousness. What can be added to this conversation based on Lenin's experience examined here is the observation that the working class, in Lenin's eyes, was even incapable of knowing the so-called "general conditions" of working beyond its labor (Lenin, 1978b, p. 148). This observation justified Lenin's firm belief in founding an all-Russian political newspaper whose function was collecting

and disseminating the information that was often "scattered in petty newspaper reports and in special industrial, medical, Zemstvo, and other publications" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 148). In short, this personal experience showed that Lenin's elitist position remained stubborn.

However, the far-reaching implication of Lenin's experiences was not limited to this. It was also inspiring since it suggested the necessity of building a connection with the "other class," which was one of the essential tasks for the Russian revolutionaries. The country, as Marx mentioned, was "the only European country in which the agricultural commune has maintained itself on a national scale up to the present day" (Shanin, 1983, p. 110). Given this social reality, although Lenin was interested in talking with the workers, his attention in *What Is To Be Done* was never centered around their pure spontaneity. Not just their limited political consciousness but also the small population they occupied pre-determined that this group could not undertake the revolution independently. For Lenin, the coming revolution would require participation from the divergent strata of society¹. Although the leadership of the proletariat was foremost, its composition was still open². So, to better reinforce the proletariat's struggle, the revolutionary party had to "organize really nation-wide exposures" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 88) as much as possible to "attract other classes" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 81). Besides, it was essential to "fit together specific grievances into some more comprehensive picture of what is wrong and of how to remedy it and some systematic means of translating this vision into reality" (Callinicos, 2007, p. 38). In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin more than once reminded his comrade of the necessity of affecting and mobilizing the "other classes." As he said,

"We must 'go among all classes of the population' as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organizers. No one doubts that the theoretical work of Social-Democrats should aim at studying all the specific features of the social and political condition of the various classes" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 81).

For Lenin, this endeavor aimed to arouse other classes' attention and participation. In his words, "they will come to us with their complaints only when they see that these complaints can really have effect, and

that we represent a political force" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 88). Such an emphasis on political mobilization occupied the central position in Lenin's political philosophy. Firmly, Lenin held that the proletarian revolution could not achieve success merely through the proletariat's effort.

However, a closer review suggests that Lenin implied two contrasting ways to engage with the so-called "other classes." The citation quoted above emphasized that the revolutionary party, taken by Lenin as the central unity of the vanguard, undertook the work of mobilizing other classes' anger and political energy, which becomes more evident when Lenin explained the party's composition:

"In order to be able to provide the workers with real, comprehensive, and live political knowledge, we must have 'our own people', Social-Democrats, everywhere, among all social strata, and in all positions from which we can learn the inner springs of our state mechanism" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 86).

Lenin highlighted the identity of "we," the Social Democrats when stressing the party's mission of knowing and collecting information from all social strata and the state. In other words, the revolutionary party was indispensable for advancing the Russian proletarian revolution. The Social Democrats for Lenin were indeed not equal to common proletariats, given their intellectual superiority³. So, by making this clear distinction, Lenin, once again, "opposed spontaneous consciousness and Social Democratic consciousness and stretched this opposition to the limit" (Lazarus, 2007, p. 259).

More importantly, Lenin envisioned a revolutionary army for the revolution's victory.

"It is necessary to have a staff of expert writers and correspondents, an army of Social-Democratic reporters who establish contacts far and wide, who are able to fathom all sorts of 'state secrets,' who are able to penetrate 'behind the scenes' - an army of people who must, as their 'official duty' be ubiquitous and omniscient" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 145).

"Army" stands for hierarchy, order, and discipline. Notably, Lenin applied this image to capture a highly organized and trained revolutionary party composed of countless professional revolutionaries with different occupations⁴. As he articulated, members of Social Democrats may come from various aspects of society (Lenin, 1978b, p. 86). Nonetheless, as soon as they acquire the party membership, their work is submitted to the order of the party's central. That is to say, their political energy is re-forged under the training of the party, which better supports their work to communicate with and mobilize the other classes. Such a reliance on the party reflected Lenin's concern for the political organization necessitated by the revolutionary movement. As Sheldon Wolin said: "Lenin was the first to seize the implications of transforming politics, political theory, political action - all that we have subsumed under the 'political' - to the plane of organization" (Wolin, 2016, p. 378).

2. Revolutionary leadership in the worker-peasant alliance

2.1 Lenin's "second face"

Nonetheless, a careful reading of Lenin's political writings finished between 1903 and 1905 tells the existence of Lenin's "second face," which points to a different way for proletariats to build a connection with other classes. Here, I am dealing with a pro-egalitarian conception of leadership provided by Lenin in opposition to his well-known elitism that constituted what I called Lenin's "first face." In my view, this relatively democratic aspect of Lenin's political ideas is hidden in his discussion of the Russian Revolution's strategy.

"If the Russian autocracy...is not only shaken but actually overthrown, then, obviously, a tremendous exertion of revolutionary energy on the part of all progressive classes will be called for to defend this gain." For Lenin, those who understood the social transformation as something "in the shape of a straight line moving slowly and steadily upwards" successively through the hands of the liberal big bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie, and the proletariats, belonged to what he called, the "virtuoso of philistinism" (Lenin, 1977c, p. 299). By contrast, in his writing titled "To the Rural Poor," finished in

1903, Lenin offered a microscopic explanation for the necessity of overthrowing the existing tsarist system while moving forward without a gap in the direction of socialist transformation. His attention was on the land issue. As he said,

"The land can never pass to labor, that is, to the poor working man, because land has to be paid for with money. But the poor never have any money to spare. The land can go only to the rich, moneyed peasants, to capital, to those people against whom the rural poor must fight in alliance with the urban workers" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 382).

The question of peasants was dominant in imperial Russia. Within this context, Lenin found if the land served the capital in a way that the rich peasants would take the side of the property owners, close to what Marx described in *Manuscripts of 1844*, it naturally became the obstacle to the liberation of proletariats in the long term⁵ (Lenin, 1977b, p. 384). As Lenin noticed, in his time, bourgeois relations had developed and almost taken shape within the village commune (Lenin, 1977b, p. 443). Given this social reality, the workers needed to work with the rural poor⁶. And the struggle against absolutism and reactionary social estates and institutions was necessary only when serving as "the means of facilitating the struggle against the bourgeoisie." In other words, "the worker needs the achievement of the general democratic demands only to clear the road to victory over the working people's chief enemy...capital" (Lenin, 1977a, p. 291). This consideration lays the basis of Lenin's conception of a revolutionary alliance between rural poor and urban workers.

According to Lenin, the selection of delegations to the authentically "free peasant committees" was the essential step. Notably, while allowing the rich peasants' participation⁷, Lenin showed much sympathy to the rural poor to raise their political voice and improve their economic conditions. And when conceptualizing the possibility of this class alliance, Lenin's discussion contained two essential perspectives. First, seen from the position of the rural poor, this class alliance should begin with the peasants' self-organizations. To some extent, Lenin's understanding resembled Marx's analysis of the political potential of the Russian rural commune repressed by state oppression in his correspondence with

Zasulich (Shanin, 1983, pp. 116-117). The free peasant committees, in his view, would help the peasants to "reach agreement among themselves about their needs," and in particular, "recognize those who are really able to stand up for the rural poor and for an alliance with the urban workers" (Shanin, 1983, p. 415). In short, the new peasant committee could thoroughly release the political energy of the rural poor by getting rid of interference from the officials. Second, for the urban workers, the class alliance between them and the poor peasants would no less require their active participation in communicating to transform the political consciousness of their rural allies. According to Lenin, peasant uprisings in history often failed because they were no more than the rebellions of "an ignorant and politically unconscious mass...without clear and definite political demands, i.e., without the demand for a change in the political order" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 423). So, for the victory of the proletarian revolution, the workers should politicize the peasants further by bringing new and revolutionary ideas to them. As Lenin explained,

"Every step in the struggle of the urban workers, every Social-Democratic pamphlet or newspaper, every speech made by a class-conscious worker to the rural proletarians will bring nearer the time when the insurrection will be repeated and end in victory" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 424).

This early discussion in Lenin's writings is significant mainly because it indicates an alternative way for the revolutionary proletariats to build a political alliance with the other class. Although the activity of Social-Democrats, still mattered, Lenin left much space for the creativity and initiatives of the workers themselves. In particular, given Lenin's views, the party seemed to merely offer suggestions or warnings to the revolutionary masses with no intention of absorbing all their spontaneity into its unified leadership. As Lenin said on the question of the free peasant committee, when the urban workers come close to the peasants, they carry themselves with the "Social-Democratic pamphlet or newspaper." The emphasis is that the political alliance between the two classes hinges on ordinary workers' daily work and contribution. In other words, the party would not act in a Blanquist way by establishing a class alliance "for" the workers. In this sense, Lenin's second face seemed to envision the possibility that the party was more like the "midwife" for the proletarian revolution⁸.

Accordingly, in a theoretical sense, Lenin opened up a more egalitarian way to mobilize political exposure. What is substituted by Lenin's second face is the perspective we rely on to understand the revolutionary movement. With his first face, Lenin spared no effort to stress the importance of "the more complete the domination of the above-minded 'leaders'" (Lenin, 1974b, p. 372). His attention was more on the "few" at the center instead of the "many" at the bottom. Because of this vision, Lenin was blind to the common participants of the revolutionary movement, not to mention their contribution to its final victory. More importantly, restricted by this focus on the "illuminated few," Lenin left contemporaries with the impression that only the party machine, as a whole, could see and expose the other classes' grievances and, based on that, arouse political mobilization. In other words, the party's function plays a dominant role in the revolutionary movement. By contrast, Lenin showed an alternative way to pursue the class alliance by pointing out the chance of forming a pro-egalitarian relationship established by the workers and the peasants themselves. Although led by the working class, the poor peasants now enter a new political space with their urban allies and can freely express their political concerns. Meanwhile, for the urban workers, such a connection, primarily through the form of "free peasant committees," also let them have close communication with the peasants so that their revolutionary activity could receive support from the rural regions. Here, Lenin was quite humble when articulating the party's significance to this new peasant committee. Echoing his later reaction to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies of 1905, Lenin deliberately limited the party's role to some degree. As he said, at this unique conjuncture of the Russian countryside, the first and only step Social Democrats can take now is to help the rural proletariats consolidate their union with the urban proletariats and nothing more. As for the second and third steps, we cannot say today once and for all since they hinge on the concrete situation emerging in the future (Lenin, 1977b, p. 420). It is essential to note that Lenin's attitude was close to Luxemburg's consideration of socialist transformation in *The Russian Revolution*. In short, Lenin, in 1903, suggested that the party lying behind the masses still exists, but its discipline, political training, and tight control over the members are no more outstanding. What is highlighted by Lenin's second face is the work of the common proletariat, which challenges his well-known elitism, showing the possibility that the proletariats, as the political subject, are mature enough to establish a political alliance with the other class on their own. The party's

organization does not replace their participation and creativity. The large amounts of the work are left to them to finish collectively.

Intriguingly, Akimov's interpretation of the Union of Russian Social Democrats Abroad's 1898 resolution titled "Instructions for the Editorial Committee" characterized this function of the party revealed by Lenin's second face. As he argued, when the Union pronounced the task of the Social Democratic Party was to "hasten the transition of the spontaneous mass movement into a conscious class movement" (Frankel, 1969, p. 353), the word "party" did not refer to a centralized and disciplined party like Bolshevism. Instead, the main idea conveyed by this resolution was that the socio-political movement was developing "under the Social Democratic banner" instead of the party's unquestionable instruction (Frankel, 1969, p. 353). Like the implication when Lenin mentioned "every Social-Democratic pamphlet or newspaper" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 424), Akimov tried to describe a time in Russian revolutionary history when the party did not yet exist as a unified organization (Frankel, 1969, p. 353). In my view, this particular political form of the party resembles the image of what Lenin's second face conveys⁹.

Such a pro-democratic component of Lenin's political ideas was even shown in *What Is To Be Done*, "the organizational 'Bible' of Communist Parties throughout the world today" (Elliott, 1965, p. 329), though being easily overlooked in recent scholarship¹⁰. Lenin's second face seemed to survive under the elitism that usually characterized his public image. In *What Is To Be Done*, the vision of Lenin's second face lies in the aspect that Lenin speaks less about the leadership of the few and begins using a relatively horizontal perspective to conceptualize the revolutionary movement, among which the fusion of the line between the leader and the led is the most outstanding. As Lenin once said,

"The organization of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession. In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organization, all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, must be effaced" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 109).

For Lenin, within a revolutionary party, the line between the intellectual and non-intellectuals was no more critical. More importantly, holding that ordinary party members with different social backgrounds could undertake revolutionary works implied that Lenin's elitist understanding of the superiority of the intellectuals now became questionable. Since Russia is huge in population and size, the revolutionary army envisioned by Lenin would necessarily require the support and actual participation of the people outside of intellectuals. When realizing this, the privileges of the intellectual elite, like offering "political knowledge" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 74) to the working class as Marx and Engels did, faded in Lenin's mind. Lenin astonishingly subverted his elitism in the following way: "It should not be imagined that Party organization must consist solely of professional revolutionaries. We need the most diverse organization of all types, ranks and shades, beginning with extremely limited and secret and ending with very broad, free, *lose Organisationen*" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 498). Theoretically, the vanguard party changes from a conspicuously elitist organization into a more horizontal organization whose survival depends on the dedication of every ordinary party member. Eagleton undoubtedly captured this democratic component of Lenin's political ideas.

"The distinction between intellectual and nonintellectual is not homologous with that between middle-class and working-class. Indeed, the form that was traditionally seen as suspending this distinction was known as the party. Intellectuals in general are specific functionaries within social life, and revolutionary intellectuals are functionaries within a political movement. They need to be neither geniuses nor genteel" (Eagleton, 2007, p. 45).

Based on this thinking, Lenin, more or less, pondered the chance of cultivating revolutionary leadership among the masses. He used to complain that "society produces very many persons fit for 'the cause,' but we are unable to make use of them all" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 125). By mentioning this, he addressed the question of the revolutionaries' formation. Lenin once argued that although Marx and Engels did not belong to the working class, their social identity did not prevent them from offering knowledge of scientific socialism to the latter (Lenin, 1978b, p. 32). However, the problem is that Marx and Engels

were extraordinarily historical figures for their contribution to the doctrine of socialism, and it is unrealistic to expect that these leaders could be provided steadily from the outside for the revolutionary movement. The proletariat needs to find a way to constantly cultivate their leaders among themselves, which is fundamental to the survival of the revolutionary movement in the long run. Lenin's second face suggests that Lenin was aware of this urgent issue. In his political writings, we could find that he even allowed this selection of proletarian leaders to be open to the class "outside" of the working class even though they were generally not seen as the revolutionary vanguard.

"I assert that it is far more difficult to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools...As I have stated repeatedly, by 'wise men', in connection with organization, I mean professional revolutionaries, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 121).

The question of the vanguard is so complicated in Lenin's discussions. Its kernel refers to the determination of whether professional revolutionaries "are produced spontaneously by the masses, or they must already be a well-disciplined unit to whom, at moments of political crisis, the masses will spontaneously turn" (Eagleton, 2007, p. 44). My sensitivity to Lenin's second face shows that Lenin, at least for a moment, refused to take the revolutionary elites or leaders as something given. He knew the need and the possibility to cultivate such figures among the masses. For this reason, we encounter two different "Lenin-in-becoming" (Žižek, 2002, p. 553). While the first one is elitist, the second one is relatively egalitarian.

However, the frustrating fact is that Lenin's firm tone of elitism prevented him from giving fully democratic consideration to the revolutionary activity, which was manifested in two aspects. First, Lenin never spoke of how the masses could steadily cultivate the leaders among themselves. He broadly argued that "the spontaneously awakening masses will also produce increasing numbers of 'professional revolutionaries' from their own ranks" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 108). However, this general confirmation can not substitute the more detailed consideration of the way to achieve such a goal. Second, Lenin's disdain for the masses' consciousness constantly brought his attention back to the vision of elitism and hindered him

from developing the democratic components of his thinking into a mature conception. He used to articulate the need for the elitist intervention in the manner of the worker: "The intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and 'economic experience'" (Lenin, 1978b, pp. 73-74). For him, the revolutionary elites, regardless of their origins, were indispensable to awakening the Russian masses' political consciousness. And this belief explained why he insisted on the following proposal:

"A worker-agitator who is at all gifted and 'promising' must not be left to work eleven hours a day in a factory. We must arrange that he be maintained by the Party; that he may go underground in good time; that he change the place of his activity, if he is to enlarge his experience, widen his outlook, and be able to hold out for at least a few years in the struggle against the gendarmes" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 130).

In short, Lenin held a rigid understanding of the revolutionary party, taking it as unparalleled for its essential role in educating the mass. For him, there is always a limit to the masses' creativity. Although Lenin's political writings conceptualized the possibility of cultivating revolutionary leadership among the masses, the egalitarian vision vanished with increasing emphasis on the authoritarian and top-down alternative. Because of this, the elite was taken for granted in Lenin's lifelong thinking¹¹. Accordingly, understanding other classes' grievances and distributing such information to the whole society becomes the party's work, the vertical political organization composed of professional revolutionaries with unidentified origins.

2.2 When Lenin became a Leninist

Perhaps, Lenin's following words best characterized his authentic view of the working class's political potential.

"Demagogues are the worst enemies of the working class. The worst enemies, because they arouse base instincts in the masses, because the unenlightened worker is unable to recognize his enemies in men who

represent themselves, and somethings sincerely so, as his friends. The worst enemies, because in the period of disunity and vacillation, when our movement is just beginning to take shape, nothing is easier than to employ demagogic methods to mislead the masses, who can realize their error only later by bitter experience” (Lenin, 1978b, p. 120).

Compared with his earlier articulations, Lenin further articulated the mass's political immaturity. The Russian working class, seen by Lenin as the vanguard of the proletariats, not only had the necessity of being illuminated by the elite but also was easily confused when such illumination was absent. The masses, not limited to the working class, are more likely to be unreliable and immature in political potential. In some sense, Lenin depicted the masses' mentality as an empty place under the shaping of any outsider. And the final result of this shaping partially depends on the nature of the elite¹², which involves the possibility that the masses may become counter-revolutionary under specific conditions.

Does the revolution have to be the hardship we must endure or the hardship over which the revolutionary vision cast its shadow (Žižek, 2002, p. 559)? In fact, Lenin's strong elitism compels us to question the legitimacy of using anti-democratic means to achieve Communism. As Lenin became Leninist by abandoning his democratic components, he naturally reduced the revolutionary movement to a tool instead of an existence valued for its own sake. Democracy and political freedom permitted by Communism seemed to be postponed to a distant future based on a linear conception of history. In some senses, Lenin's blindness to the masses' spontaneous activity made him subordinated to poor pragmatism that "ultimate aims were scarcely discussed or questioned, meaning in effect that organizational methods became ideological ends" (Boggs, 1993, p. 45).

Meanwhile, due to such underestimation of the mass's political energy, the possibility of cultivating revolutionary leadership among the masses lost the attractiveness to Lenin and thereby no longer occupied the central place in his later political writings. Especially after the regime's founding, Lenin stressed the power of the few more than ever. He spared no effort to talk about the urgency and the importance of submission to the leadership of the few, even though sometimes it triggered tensions from

within. In the "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," drafted in 1918, Lenin listed the rights legitimately claimed by the worker.

"The masses must have the right to choose responsible leaders for themselves. They must have the right to replace them, the right to know and check each smallest step of their activity. They must have the right to put forward any worker without exception for administrative functions."

However, his focus was centered around what he said later:

"But this does not at all mean that the process of collective labor can remain without definite leadership, without precisely establishing the responsibility of the person in charge, without the strictest order created by the single will of that person" (Lenin, 1974a, p. 212).

Intriguingly, Lenin's two faces emerged in one passage. However, his emphasis was unquestionably clear. Instead of being the true vanguards that are "self-abolishing," what Lenin pursued after the 1917 Revolution tended to be "self-perpetuating" (Eagleton, 2007, p. 47). The masses were excluded when the illuminated few became the agents of the socialist project.

Lenin's elitism became particularly evident when contrasted with Economism. As he said, "the origin of Bolshevism is inseparably linked with the struggle of what is known as Economism against revolutionary Social-Democracy" (Lenin, 1978a, p. 485). One of the essential features of Economism was that "parallel with the conspiratorial organization of the revolutionaries emerged workers' organizations devoted entirely to 'economic' issues" (Frankel, 1969, pp. 243-244). I argue that when Lenin retreated from the vision of his second face and firmly embraced his elitism, he naturally paid much of his attention to the leadership of revolutionary elites and no more questioning its formation. Accordingly, Economism, due to its "subservience to spontaneity" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 102), opposed Lenin's emphasis on the more deliberate power exercised by the few. In particular, Economism is problematic for intending to improve the working condition without initiating any broader political transformation. Besides, it was limited in its

inclination to confine the revolutionary activity to an isolated field assigned to a fixed class. Therefore, it may mislead the revolutionary movement by overlooking the immense political energy released by a firm class alliance. For these considerations, even in the late years, Lenin considered Economism as the "childish vulgarization of Marx's views on historical materialism" (Lenin, 1973, p. 400).

However, the limitation of Economism does not mean that Leninism's way of making a revolution was flawless. In general, Leninism is questionable on two essential issues. First, by endowing the intellectuals with immense authority, Lenin took this particular group of people for granted without pondering over their formation. However, the revolutionary movement could not expect brilliant minds such as Marx and Engels to appear spontaneously and, therefore, still necessitates an uninterrupted selection of experienced leaders among the masses. Second, since lacking enough consideration for the democratic basis of leadership, Lenin underestimated the problem of corrupted elites. Lenin once said that the small revolutionary circle would necessarily exclude supervision from the outside. For secrecy, any restrictions on the professional revolutionaries, the illuminated few, come merely from within (Lenin, 1978b, p. 138). However, if so, the egalitarianism of any revolutionary movement is in danger due to the lack of accountability.

Therefore, is there any alternative way of thinking about leadership based on the legacies of Leninism and Economism? Can revolutionary leadership be centralized on the one hand but still accountable to every follower on the other? In my view, Lenin had offered a promising direction regarding this question. By arguing a "vanguard" is likely to become a "rearguard" for fearing "to put forward a bold 'plan' that would compel general recognition" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 84), Lenin, with his second face, suggested that being a vanguard means nothing but the continuous effort to win the leadership position. In particular, when stressing making "all the other contingents admit that we are marching in the vanguard" (Lenin, 1978b, p. 83), Lenin demystified revolutionary leadership by holding that activists emerging from society must demonstrate their competence before bearing the role of leaders instead of taking it as a privilege. Additionally, Lenin's articulation of the close communication between urban workers and the rural poor made it clear that an ideal revolutionary leadership should be open to accountability. The right to "freely

and fearlessly express opinions and wishes" (Lenin, 1977b, p. 416) was indispensable to the revolutionary movement. Given this understanding, I tentatively presuppose the idea of democratic leadership, that is, all participants of the revolutionary movement are equal to each other in the sense that all of them have to compete to lead the movement.

3. The "key" to the higher consciousness: a reply to Luxemburg

This new conception of revolutionary leadership also sheds new light on our understanding of a challenge confronted by Luxemburg. Theoretically, in contrast with Lenin's well-known elitism, Luxemburg developed a more resilient and horizontal relationship between the elite and the mass. From her view, Lenin's limitation would inevitably lead to the consequence that the proletariats are marginalized not only in the revolutionary course but also in the new socialist state. Ultimately, failing to "prefigure in their conduct and relationships some of the values of the society they are striving for" (Eagleton, 2007, p. 48), the Leninist way of leadership quickly turned the proletariats, who ought to be the active agent of revolution, into passive and manipulated objects. In her criticism of Lenin's idea of the socialist state, Luxemburg identified its indebtedness to Lenin's elitism.

"Lenin says: the bourgeois state is an instrument of oppression of the working class; the socialist state, of the bourgeoisie... This simplified view misses the most essential thing: bourgeois class rule has no need of the political training and education of the entire mass of the people, at least not beyond certain narrow limits. But for the proletarian dictatorship that is the life element, the very air without which it is not be able to exist" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 68).

As Luxemburg observed, in Lenin's political ideas, the entire political training of the masses to enable their participation gives way to the need for obedience. This mistake is not just Lenin's limitation. Instead, "the basic error of the Lenin-Trotsky theory is that they too, just like Kautsky, oppose dictatorship to democracy" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 76). More importantly, the negative consequence triggered by this confusion was that "the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people," or "unlimited

democracy" (Luxemburg, 1961, pp. 76-77), became irrelevant to socialist construction, which corrupted the practice of the dictatorship of the proletariat in post-revolutionary Russia.

In contrast, the authentically type of revolutionary party for Luxemburg should be sensitive to the degree of its power-exercising. The revolutionary leadership of the party is required. However, it has to be more relative and sensitive to the specific political situation. In particular, Luxemburg's concern for leadership refers to the identification of the historical conjuncture when the guidance of the elite becomes necessary and hugely affects the goal of the revolution.

"Socialist must always know how to subordinate the anguish, rancor, and hope of this motley aggregation to the supreme goal of the working class. The Social Democracy must enclose the tumult of nonproletarian protestants against existing society within the bounds of the revolutionary action of the proletariat. It must assimilate the elements that come to it" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 104).

As Luxemburg argued, instead of "puzzling their heads with the technical side, with the mechanism, of the mass strike" (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 149) shaped by the whole revolutionary period, the commanding organs of the party ought to assume the proper role of leading. Such an observation resembles Althusser's emphasis on "ruptural unity" (Althusser, 2005, p. 99). In Althusser's words, the revolutionary party has to decide the conjuncture when the "circumstances" and "currents" accumulate in a way that "produce the result of the immense majority of the popular masses grouped in an assault on a regime" (Althusser, 2005, p. 99). In a word, when thinking about revolutionary leadership necessitated by the revolutionary movement, the critical issue is that the leader has to offer the necessary leadership to the masses on the one hand and show full respect for their spontaneous initiative on the other. In the former sense, Luxemburg was a Leninist, while in the latter sense, she demonstrated a vision that was in tension with the Bolsheviks.

However, despite her dialectical thinking, Luxemburg's understanding of leadership remained ambiguous, given its silence on the method that guarantees the intervention of the elites is consistent with the masses'

needs without oppressing the latter. Essentially, this is to seek a way that could enable the movement to be egalitarian on the one hand and reinforced with conscious leadership from the elites on the other. In my observation, Luxemburg's difficulty represented a task that historically challenged the twentieth century's Communist revolutions. For Luxemburg herself, because of such overlooking, her conceptions of revolutionary movement and socialism were problematic, especially when confusing the "class consciousness" and the "revolutionary consciousness." Apparently, she missed answering that what if the wrong and even counter-revolutionary consciousness misled the revolutionary masses? Is there any remedy for them to overcome this dilemma?

So, if the disagreement between Lenin and Luxemburg rested on the question of to what extent the proletariat, the working class as the most advanced, could develop revolutionary consciousness on their own, Luxemburg's problem was that her rejection of Lenin's elitism did not successfully solve the issue that once compelled Lenin to turn to elitism. In other words, in her hostility to Lenin's "ultra-centralism" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 94), Luxemburg did not make her own response by explaining the rationale behind her belief in the masses' adherence to the right or revolutionary consciousness. She placed much emphasis on class consciousness to the degree that it "reduced all forms of revolutionary cognition to it" (Hudis, 2021, p. 43)¹³. Affected by this understanding, Luxemburg downplayed the elite's role, as Lenin advocated. It seemed that spontaneous struggle for her would naturally cultivate a shared feeling among the masses. More importantly, combined with their self-trainings in the "living political school" (Luxemburg, 2008, p. 130), they could know the right direction of the movement. And if this is the case, it naturally follows that "a philosophy of revolution that can give spontaneous revolts a direction becomes completely superfluous" (Hudis, 2021, p. 43).

In some senses, Luxemburg was not blind to the elites' illuminations when stressing the "conscious leadership" in a sense close to Leninism¹⁴, which suggests that revolutionary consciousness was still perceived as different from class consciousness in her deep mind. However, the essential question for her is: What form does this leadership take to truly serve the interests of the masses' movement rather than

undermine it? Luxemburg's limitation was clearly shown on this question, even though her criticism of Lenin's elitism envisioned a new prospect of the revolutionary movement. As scholars noticed,

"Luxemburg's term 'spontaneity' is problematical...Not only are workers capable of immense leaps in consciousness and organization, and of moving towards socialist ideas independently of parties, but also, 'spontaneously,' whole sections of the working class regularly manifest conservative tendencies as well, giving electoral and other support to their rulers" (Barker, 2013, p. 57).

It is not difficult to note that Luxemburg highlighted the significance of the masses' spontaneous actions in broadening the boundary of political action. Based on the revolutionary experience of Russia roughly from 1894 to 1904, she argued, "the most important most fruitful change in its tactical policy during the last ten years have not been the inventions of several leaders and even less so of any central organizational organs" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 91). Besides, she was aware of the negative effect of the party's tight control on the masses' movement demonstrated by the Leninist organization. "Nothing will more surely enslave a young labor movement to an intellectual elite hungry for power than this bureaucratic strait jacket, which will immobilize the movement and turn it into an automaton" (Luxemburg, 1961, p. 102). However, this pleading of the masses' initiatives missed articulating the way enabling them to equip themselves with the necessary elites' leadership consistent with their mutual egalitarian political relationship. In her later political thinking concerning the socialist transformation, the unresolved question became "how to ensure that the spontaneity and dynamism reflected during the revolution are retained and can remain self-correcting also when the revolutionaries are in power" (Ypi, 2021). Nonetheless, the kernel is still the same: How does this "self-correcting" function with the advice of the elites?

In fact, the conception of democratic leadership based on the legacy of Lenin's second face could make a positive response to Luxemburg's challenge as such. The competition among the revolutionary masses is significant because it helps identify the "right" versus the "wrong" consciousness. For Luxemburg, this means the antagonism between socialist and bourgeois consciousness. While today, due to the

decomposition of class¹⁵, it refers to the determination of the proposal that better serves the anti-capitalist assembly or movement as concerned by today's radical thinkers¹⁶. Critics of Luxemburg have implied that Luxemburg was more inclined to cover the "preexisting fault lines within the proletariat" with the class consciousness she articulated. Unlike that, democratic leadership admits such preexisting fault lines¹⁷. Based on that, it suggests that intellectuals, workers, peasants, etc., are encouraged to compete by raising their political proposals. Accordingly, none monopolizes the right of leadership by nature. The competition among them would decide the candidate who bears the role of leading the revolutionary movement. In some sense, it cultivates one kind of public sphere where everyone has an equal chance to access the views of others and, more importantly, deliberate on the "mature" proposal. In this way, Lenin's second face overcomes Luxemburg's confusion between class and revolutionary consciousness. The revolutionary movement is likely to be "self-correcting" by incorporating the elements of competition.

4. Conclusion

This paper studies the limitations of Lenin's and Luxemburg's ideas about the revolutionary movement. As I found, Luxemburg's blindness to the self-correcting capability of the masses was no less problematic than Lenin's elitism in the sacrifice of the masses' initiatives. Ultimately, both were unsuccessful in conceptualizing one kind of revolutionary leadership that could satisfy the masses' demand for elite leadership while keeping their internal egalitarian political relationship alive. To overcome this challenge, the dominant component of this paper reveals the so-called "Lenin's second face." Lenin's discussion of class alliance arouses my special attention. In my view, his belief in the democratic potential of the workers and peasants alliance was inherited and developed further by him, which ultimately presented an egalitarian perspective of socialist transformation formed in *The State and Revolution*. In a theoretical sense, paralleling his earlier emphasis on the class alliance, the profound reforms brought by the revolutionary regime after seizing the national power involve the same degree of participation from the masses. Through the "abolition of the standing army, with all officials to be elected and subject to recall," the socialist commune would produce a "gigantic replacement of certain intuitions by other institutions of

a fundamentally different type" (Lenin, 2014, p. 80). In particular, this new political achievement would confine the functions of "state" administration to the organization of the proletarians as the ruling class that will hire merely workers, foremen, accountants, etc (Lenin, 2014, p. 86). Consequently, the newborn socialist regime runs through the work and the contribution of every common proletariat, with the demise of the previous exploitation imposed by the bourgeois. Although admitting this transformation is realized based on the legacy left by the pre-existing capitalist order, Lenin's emphasis rests on the participation of proletariats allowed by the commune democracy, which radicalizes democratic practice by making it meaningful to the poor first time in human history. For this reason, this paper ends with a defense of a democratic reading of Lenin's theory of socialist transformation.

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Notes

1. Lukács believed that for Lenin, "the deeper the crisis, the better the prospects for the revolution. But also, the deeper the crisis, the more state of society it involves, the more varied are the instinctive movements which criss-cross in it" (Lukács, 2009, p. 29).
2. Analysis of class composition was a central task of the Communist Revolution. Mayer believed that due to its essentialist interpretation, Lenin's theory of class pre-determined his authoritarian politics after the October Revolution (Mayer, 1997).
3. Lukács insisted that Lenin's "strictest selection of party members on the basis of their proletarian class-consciousness" guaranteed the class alliance was on the right path. And the second pillar of the Bolshevik Party was the "total solidity with and support for all the oppressed and exploited within capitalist society." In contrast, the Mensheviks, in Lukács's view, moved in the opposite direction by shutting themselves "off from broad state of the exploited masses" and uniting "in the party the most diverse interest groups" (Lukács, 2009, p. 30).
4. Duverger emphasized the military characteristics of the Leninist party (Duverger, 1959, pp. 154-155). Ulam even argued by using this metaphor of "army," Lenin not only cried out for leaders but also for "the leader," which was something new in Russian revolutionary thought and tradition (Ulam, 1998, p. 182).
5. Marx sharply pointed out that modern capitalism made the distinction between capitalist and land rentier meaningless simply because "the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes - the property-owners and the propertyless workers" (Tucker, 1978, p. 70).
6. Lenin's consideration of the peasant question was sensitive to his analysis of the components of the peasants based on their income and wealth. For him, the rural poor was the firm ally of the urban workers since they shared similar exploited status. And the middle and rich peasants were easily misled by the bourgeois's lies. However, Lenin still left the hope to affect the position of the middle peasant and earn their support (Lenin, 1977b, p. 395).
7. This paper's inquiry notes Lenin's skepticism and later hostility to the *kulaks*, i.e., rich peasants. However, this change in Lenin's position should not prevent us from seeing the democratic components of his political ideas. For his discussion on the *kulaks* after the 1917 Revolution, see Lenin (1974b, pp. 58, 303-304). Harding observed the change in Lenin's attitude to the peasantry (Harding, 1983, p. 217).

8. Henry Topper used the term "midwife" to reinterpret the "democratic components" in Lenin's political ideas on revolutionary leadership and socialist construction (Topper, 1990).
9. Scholars have identified this aspect of Lenin's early political ideas. For example, Pipes pointed out an "Economist" conception of the Social Democratic strategy offered by Lenin (Pipes, 1963, p. 109). Also, Ulam reckoned that Lenin's emphasis on "the leader" (no leaders) was, at least, still hidden in 1902-03 (Ulam, 1998, p. 182).
10. The conception of "authoritarian and military Lenin" dominates the imagination of recent scholarship. For example, Chantal Mouffe took Leninism as the opposition to a modern pluralist democracy (Mouffe, 2013, p. 133). Likewise, Negri believed Lenin provoked a "short circuit between mass action and the command of the party" (Negri, 1999, p. 291). Also, Budgen, Kouvelakis, and Žižek held Lenin was extraordinary for his unwillingness to compromise or find a middle path (Žižek, 2007, p. 3).
11. Duverger even held that Leninist conception of party overlapped with Fascist doctrines because both pursued an elitist party which is "made up of the best, the most faithful, the most brave, the most suitable" (Duverger, 1959, p. 70).
12. I am not suggesting that the masses' mentality is similar to *tabula rasa*. I only want to show the masses' openness to any influence from the outside, either socialist or bourgeoisie. However, the equally important thing is that the masses have their subjectivities, making the ultimate level of their consciousness hard to predict. Therefore, what we need is a strategic analysis (Shandro, 1995, p. 290).
13. On this question, Bologna considered that one of Lenin's contributions was to reveal different levels of development of spontaneity (Bologna, 1972, p. 19).
14. Negri once argued that Luxemburg and Lenin pursued what he called the "communist project's biopolitical character." As he said, "the curve of Luxemburg and the straight line of Lenin intersect in regarding the life of the masses and the entire articulation of their needs as a physical, corporeal potential that alone can ground and give content to the abstract violence of revolutionary intellectuality" (Negri, 2007, p. 299).
15. Wang Hui argued that this decomposition leads to the result that "the connotation of class barely differs from the notion of stratification in contemporary sociology, which pivots around the state and regards social strata as objective structures without any impetus for the political" (Wang, 2014, p. 223).

16. Laclau-Mouffe's standpoint was illuminating when it adopted the idea of "articulation" to make the political subject of the left-wing hegemonic project unfixed and plural. As Laclau and Mouffe said, "struggles against sexism, racism, sexual discrimination, and in the defense of the environment needed to be articulated with those of the workers in a new left-wing hegemonic project" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. xviii). However, their limitation is explicit: Influenced by post-modernism, they over-emphasized the plurality even in sacrificing the necessary uniformity that matters to the success of the revolutionary movement. I believe this uniformity comes from the competition for leadership among the revolutionary masses.
17. Refer to Khachaturian's explanation behind his comparison between Luxemburg's divergence with Du Bois (Khachaturian, 2021, p. 185).

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