

# ROSA REMIX



**ROSA REMIX**



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The New York Office serves two major tasks: to work around issues concerning the United Nations and to engage in dialogue with North American progressives in universities, unions, social movements, and politics.

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# CONTENTS

## 1

### **NEW TAKES ON A LONGTIME CLASSIC** 7

An Introduction to Rosa Remix 8  
STEFANIE EHMTSEN AND ALBERT SCHARENBERG

Rosa Luxemburg: A Revolutionary Life 13  
RORY CASTLE

## 2

### **SPONTANEITY AND ORGANIZATION** 21

The Mass Strike and Rosa's Theory of Spontaneity 22  
JASON SCHULMAN

The Global Protest Wave of 2011–12 25  
ETHAN EARLE

## 3

### **ROSA LUXEMBURG AND FEMINISM** 31

Rosa Luxemburg: A Legacy for Feminists? 32  
NANCY HOLMSTROM

Pick-up Artists, Ashley Madison,  
and Lifestyle Feminism 37  
AMBER A'LEE FROST

Heroine of the Revolution 43  
ALHELÍ DE MARÍA ALVARADO-DÍAZ

## 4

### **RED ROSA: A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY OF ROSA LUXEMBURG** 51

Writing (and Drawing) Rosa 52  
KATE EVANS

Red Rosa: The Making of a Graphic Novel 62  
PAUL BUHLE

# 5

## **SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM** 65

An Unoriginal Plan to Save the Planet 66  
BHASKAR SUNKARA

Socialism or Whole Foods: Luxemburgian  
Answers to our Climate Crisis 70  
ALYSSA BATTISTONI

It's the End of the World as We Know It:  
Militarism Then and Now 75  
SANDRA REIN

# 6

## **ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL** 81

New Perspectives on Neoliberal Finance 82  
RAPHAËLE CHAPPE

The Accumulation of Capital: Remixed for  
Modern-day Southern Africa 87  
PATRICK BOND

One Hundred Years of Capitalism's Global  
Relocation 98  
RICHARD D. WOLFF

# 7

## **INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION** 103

A Life Worth Revisiting: Looking Back on  
(and Publishing) Rosa's Complete Works 104  
PETER HUDIS AND PAUL LE BLANC

Selected Resources 115

Author Bios 117



1

**NEW TAKES ON A  
LONGTIME CLASSIC**

STEFANIE EHMTEN  
AND ALBERT SCHARENBERG

# AN INTRODUCTION TO ROSA REMIX

**R**osa Luxemburg was a shining star of the early socialist movement. As an economist and political theorist, a teacher and public speaker, a comrade and rebel, a revolutionary and martyr of the German Revolution, she was many things to many people. Her legacy today reflects that, stretching across a broad spectrum of the international left.

Luxemburg's theoretical work includes important contributions on the tension between reform and revolution; the relationship between capital accumulation at home and imperial conquest abroad; and the power of the strike as a tool against capitalist oppression. Perhaps equally important were her many letters, polemics, and public debates, with the most prominent leaders of the time, on the key tactical and strategical considerations of socialist revolution in early twentieth-century Europe. In addition to their undoubted contribution to her period, these works are buoyed by a universal quality that makes them every bit as relevant today.

But Rosa's theoretical work only partially explains her position as a guiding star to so many on the contemporary left. Many are also drawn to the fierce humanity and determination with which she lived her life, overcoming many odds in the process. She was one of the few women active in politics at a time when women could not even vote. She obtained a doctoral degree in economics at a time when few women went to college. She did not live her life as someone else's wife—at a time when this was considered to be an extraordinary provocation. And she faced hardship and discrimination—at a time when being Polish and Jewish could make your life doubly miserable in German exile.

As a political agitator for the Second International, Rosa tirelessly crossed the continent to support revolutionary movements. By turns careful teacher and reckless romantic, she lived a public life, leaving a lasting imprint on friends, enemies, students, comrades, and lovers alike. During her various periods of imprisonment, she wrote thousands of letters that developed not just her political theories but also an affinity for nature—particularly botany—and, more broadly, a glimpse into her inner world that allowed readers a certain closeness, or familiarity, to the point that, today, millions of people refer to her simply as “Rosa.”

That said, we must also acknowledge that to read her work today is not as simple as picking up a dime-store romance. The language of the early twentieth century, translated from Polish—often passing through German—to English, can itself act as a barrier to an unaccustomed reader. Then there is the subject matter itself, which is often dense and sophisticated political-economic theory, laced with allusions to the other important works of her time. She is a writer for whom a teacher is preferable, if not necessary, for a vast majority of readers, and she is a thinker whose radical politics preclude her from the vast majority of “traditional” economic courses. Nonetheless, in the current moment of political and economic upheaval—with neoliberal capitalism having become a zombie-system in the wake of the Great Recession; ideologically quite dead, while in practice quite well indeed—Rosa’s theories are potentially of even greater importance than at any time since she wrote them. This is the



underlying reason that she has recently become so popular across this wide cross-section of the international left.

With this in mind, the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office hosted a conference, from August 21–22, 2015, titled “Rosa Remix: New Takes on a Longtime Classic,” to discuss Rosa’s work as it pertains to current political struggle. Held at the New School and co-hosted with Verso Books, a diverse group of academics, activists, and journalists considered questions including: the relevance of her masterpiece, *The Accumulation of Capital*, one hundred years after its publication; her theory of the dialectic between spontaneity and organization as it relates to current social movement struggles; her treatment of war in the context of the current trend toward asymmetrical warfare; and what she might have thought about feminism and climate change. This encounter sparked so much enthusiasm, so much critical and forward-looking discussion, that we decided to turn its fruits into a book.

It helped, of course, that our organization has taken Rosa Luxemburg as our namesake as well as a guiding star for the work we do. Based out of Germany and affiliated with that country’s Left Party (*Die Linke*), the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung is a policy and civic education foundation that supports international left dialogue and collaboration through its (currently seventeen) regional offices around the world. The New York office, which opened in 2012, works on a wide range of political topics concerning the United Nations and the transatlantic left by convening public and closed-door gatherings, producing and commissioning research and theory, and acting as a liaison between different political tendencies, sectors, and geographies. One of our many projects is to bring Rosa’s ideas to the contemporary left, something we have also done by publishing, most recently, *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*, and more expansively, a new translation of her complete works, both in tandem with Verso Books. Rosa Remix represents a continuation of this ever-deepening project.

This book is divided into seven short sections. The first, titled “New Takes on a Longtime Classic,” includes this introduction plus a biographical sketch of Rosa Luxemburg’s tumultuous and fascinating life, written by Rosa scholar Rory Castle.

Section Two also includes two pieces. The first, Jason Schulman’s “The Mass Strike and Rosa’s Theory of Spontaneity,” outlines what

Rosa means when she writes of the “dialectic of spontaneity and organization” and provides details about how she applied this to the concept of the mass strike, and the historical implications in early twentieth-century Europe. Ethan Earle’s piece “The Global Protest Wave of 2011-12” then applies this theory to the current political conjuncture, with emphasis on Occupy Wall Street and the state of the U.S. left.

The third section, “Rosa Luxemburg and Feminism,” includes three pieces. In the first—“Rosa Luxemburg: A Legacy for Feminists?”—Nancy Holmstrom outlines the tenets of socialist feminism and argues that Rosa’s work fits within this theoretical legacy. Her piece is followed by another by Amber A’Lee Frost, titled “Pick-up Artists, Ashley Madison, and Lifestyle Feminism,” which applies Rosa’s work to a series of current events that reveal important lessons about where the feminist movement finds itself today. Finally, “Heroine of the Revolution,” by Alhelí de María Alvarado-Díaz, looks deeply into Rosa’s body of work, finds important threads of what we may call pre-feminist theory in her work, and ties this to her broader legacy as a radical revolutionary.

Section Four is composed of two pieces, both on the making of the recent *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*, published in 2015 by Verso, in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office. The first piece, aptly titled “Writing (and Drawing) Rosa,” gives us a glimpse into the mind of the graphic novel’s writer and artist Kate Evans. Editor Paul Buhle continues in “Red Rosa: The Making of a Graphic Novel,” arguing for the political power of comics and graphic novels, and placing *Red Rosa* into the longer history of this art form.

The fifth section, “Socialism or Barbarism,” includes three pieces. The first, by Bhaskar Sunkara and titled “An Unoriginal Plan to Save the Planet,” lays out the argument linking capitalist excess to climate crisis, and discusses how Rosa’s theories of small reforms and class collaboration can make us better understand the types of alliances we need to seek. “Socialism or Whole Foods: Luxemburgian Answers to our Climate Crisis,” written by Alyssa Battistoni, brings in references to Rosa’s *The Accumulation of Capital*, and specifically her work on capitalism’s imperialist dynamic, to more fully understand how we may move beyond the personal, bourgeois politics of mainstream environmentalism. In the section’s

last piece, “It’s the End of the World as We Know It: Militarism Then and Now,” Sandra Rein shifts to the topic of militarism to reinforce the argument that our only two choices are socialism or barbarism.

Section Six, “One Hundred Years of the Accumulation of Capital,” presents three takes on Rosa Luxemburg’s masterwork, 100 years after its first date of publication. In the first piece, “New Perspectives on Neoliberal Finance,” Raphaële Chappe explains Rosa’s work on international finance and applies it to the recent battle between Greece’s leftist government Syriza and the so-called Troika of big capital interests in Europe. Next, in “The Accumulation of Capital: Remixed for Modern-day Southern Africa” Patrick Bond provides a comprehensive overview of the crude capital accumulation that has accompanied the post-apartheid political-economic transition. Finally, Richard D. Wolff, in “One Hundred Years of Capitalism’s Global Relocation,” takes a wider-lens view on capital’s expansion and transformation of the hinterlands.

In the final section, “Instead of a Conclusion,” Peter Hudis and Paul Le Blanc present “A Life Worth Revisiting: Looking Back on (and Publishing) Rosa’s Complete Works,” in which they do, and talk about doing . . . well, just what the title says. *Rosa Remix* then closes with a resource page and author biographies.

With this unique collection of short essays, we hope to truly *remix* Rosa’s body of work, in an eclectic and accessible fashion, carrying forward her indomitable spirit and invaluable political and economic theories for a new generation of activists and engaged citizens. Enjoy! 

RORY CASTLE

# ROSA LUXEMBURG: A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE

**R**ozalia Luxenburg was born on March 5, 1871, in the small Polish city of Zamość, which was then part of the Russian Empire. Róża, or Rosa, was the youngest of five children and the Luxenburgs were part of Zamość's large Jewish community. Rosa's parents, Edward and Lina, were among the wealthier section of the population and were both well-educated. Rosa's father was a merchant and had studied in both Warsaw and Berlin, while her mother spoke at least three languages (Yiddish, Polish, and German) and was descended from a prominent rabbinical family. The Luxenburgs spoke Polish at home and were strongly influenced by the *haskala*, or Jewish Enlightenment. They considered themselves to be "Poles of the Mosaic faith" and raised their children as patriotic Poles. Nevertheless, the family remained firmly part of the Jewish community and played an active role in it.

When Rosa was two years old, her family moved to Warsaw, the bustling center of Polish (and Polish-Jewish) life. She was raised in a tightly-knit, loving family with whom she maintained close relations throughout her life, especially with her siblings: Anna (a teacher), Mikołaj (a businessman who emigrated to England), Maxymilian (a businessman), and Józef (a doctor). Despite a hip ailment which left her with a permanent limp, Rosa had a happy childhood surrounded by family, friends, and neighbors. Nevertheless, she was deeply affected by the everyday injustices and inequalities in the Russian Empire under Tsar Alexander III. Tsarist Russia was an autocratic state which suppressed political, intellectual, cultural, and national freedom. After the failed 1863 Polish national rising (in which Rosa's father participated), a vigorous policy of "Russification" was imposed on the Poles, suppressing their language, culture, and autonomy. At the same time, existing anti-Semitic policies were expanded. In 1881,

Warsaw was the scene of a violent pogrom which shook the city's Jewish population. As a Pole, a Jew, and a woman in the Russian Empire, Rosa felt keenly the restrictions, limitations, and prejudices which surrounded her.

Like many Poles of her class and generation, Rosa became involved in anti-Tsarist circles as a student. A romantic revolutionary, she once wrote in a letter to a friend that her perfect society was one which "allows one to love everybody with a clear conscience. Striving after it, defending it, I may perhaps even learn to hate." Around the same time, she wrote an angry poem which concluded "I want all the sufferings / all the hidden, bitter tears / to burden the consciences of the affluent / [and] to pay them back for everything with terrible revenge." From a young age, Rosa's compassion for the poor and exploited was accompanied by a deep loathing for the rich and powerful. Both remained with her throughout her life. After graduating from school, Rosa joined a revolutionary socialist group in Warsaw which was soon repressed by the authorities. In early 1889, she joined the familiar trail of Polish revolutionaries and left her homeland for exile in Switzerland, where she joined her older brother Józef at Zurich University.

## ZURICH-PARIS-BERLIN

In Switzerland, Rosa studied, worked, and lived alongside her fellow east European émigrés. Soon after her arrival, she began a romantic and political relationship with Leo Jogiches, a wealthy Jewish revolutionary from Lithuania. It was at this time that she adopted a new spelling of her name—Rosa Luxemburg. She and Jogiches worked in close collaboration for the rest of their lives and co-founded a new political party, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP) in 1893. The SDKP was an internationalist Marxist group which opposed all attempts at regaining Polish independence from the three occupying powers which had partitioned Poland at the end of the eighteenth century—Austria, Germany, and Russia. Instead, the SDKP strove for international working class solidarity and saw the future for Poland as part of a multi-national European socialist state. Rosa Luxemburg represented her party at congresses of the Socialist International, the body which brought together various socialist parties from across the globe, and she edited the party

newspaper in Switzerland and Paris. In 1897, she was awarded a doctorate in Zurich for a thesis on the industrial development of Poland, in which she set out her argument that Poland had been economically incorporated by the three occupying empires, making the struggle for independence anti-historical and doomed to failure. The following year, she arranged a marriage-of-convenience with a German émigré to obtain a German passport and moved promptly to Berlin.

## **SOCIALISM, REVOLUTION, AND MASS STRIKE**

Launching herself into the German labor movement (at that time the strongest in the world), Luxemburg soon made a name for herself as a radical and determined opponent of attempts to “revise” Marxism by socialists like Eduard Bernstein. She remained committed to the goal of socialist revolution and viewed “reformists” and “revisionists” as misguided at best and traitors to the socialist movement at worst. Writing to Leo Jogiches, Luxemburg explained that she wanted to “affect people like a clap of thunder [...] not by speechifying but with the breadth of my vision, the strength of my conviction, and the power of my expression.” Collecting her ideas, Luxemburg produced a series of articles which were later published as *Social Reform or Revolution?* Over the next few years, Luxemburg became a leading figure on the left of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and developed close relationships with party leaders including Karl Kautsky, August Bebel, and Clara Zetkin. At the same time, she remained the leading theorist of the Polish party which, following a merger with its Lithuanian counterpart at the turn of the century, became the SDKPiL.

In 1905, a revolution swept across the Russian Empire, including Luxemburg’s native Poland. For her, it was the realization of a dream nurtured since youth. For most of that year, Luxemburg acted as a popularizer and proponent of the revolution in the German socialist press and called on German workers to adopt “Russian methods”—including the mass strike, as she outlined in *The Mass Strike, the Party and the Trade Unions* (1906). At the end of 1905, when the revolution was still raging in Russia and Poland, Luxemburg returned to her native Warsaw and spent three months participating in the revolution alongside her old comrades, including Leo Jogiches, as well as spending time with her family. Luxemburg and Jogiches were

arrested by Tsarist police and imprisoned in the infamous Warsaw Citadel. As a result of her high profile status in Germany, Luxemburg was released after a few months and allowed to return to Berlin, while Jogiches was sentenced to Siberian exile.

## TEACHER, JOURNALIST, AND ACTIVIST

From 1906 until 1914, Rosa Luxemburg lived and worked in Berlin, where she taught at the SPD Party School, wrote for the socialist press, and produced a number of important Marxist studies. She remained a leading figure on the left-wing of the SPD, whilst at the same time remaining deeply involved in Polish affairs. In 1913, she produced arguably her most important work, *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*, a study which built on a perceived problem found in volume two of Karl Marx's *Capital*. Luxemburg argued that capitalism was bound to expand into non-capitalist territories in order to survive and that once these territories were exhausted (or rather, before that moment) capitalism would be plunged into crisis and collapse. In response to criticism of her work, Luxemburg subsequently published an *Anti-Critique* in 1915.

During these years, Luxemburg was increasingly preoccupied with imperialism and the threat of a world war, predicting a global crisis which would offer only two roads: leading either to socialism or barbarism. She was among the authors of the "Stuttgart Resolution"



at the International Socialist Congress held in that city in 1907, in which European socialist leaders promised to campaign against war and to hasten the downfall of capitalism and autocracy. In 1913, Luxemburg made a powerful speech calling on German workers to refuse to shoot their French or British brothers in the event of war. For this, she was put on trial and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Her conduct at the trial made her a heroine of the German left: when labelled a flight risk by the prosecutor she responded defiantly "Sir, I believe you, you would run away; a social democrat does not.

He stands by his deeds and laughs at your judgements. And now sentence me!”

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR

At the outbreak of war in summer 1914, the German SPD—like its counterparts in France, Britain, and elsewhere—decided to support their national government and the war effort. For the minority of socialists who retained the pre-war position and opposed the war, it was a lonely and dispiriting time. Rosa Luxemburg fleetingly considered suicide in protest against her party’s position but instead quickly began forming the tiny anti-war *Gruppe Internationale* (which later evolved into the Spartacus League), which gathered in her Berlin flat and attempted to issue pamphlets and messages to sympathizers. She engaged in these anti-war activities with pre-war comrades like Clara Zetkin, Franz Mehring, and Leo Jogiches, as well as the radical socialist parliamentarian Karl Liebknecht, and all of them suffered isolation, persecution, and imprisonment as a result. From February 1915 to February 1916, and again from July 1916 until the end of war, Luxemburg was incarcerated. From her cell, she followed the news, wrote letters to friends and comrades, and produced a number of works, including the anti-war *Junius Pamphlet* (1915) in which she proclaimed “War is methodical, organized, gigantic murder.” Still in prison in early 1917, Luxemburg welcomed the February Revolution in Russia and offered critical support to the Bolsheviks following their seizure of power that October. In August 1918, she completed *The Russian Revolution*, a critique of the Bolsheviks which challenged their land and nationality policies, the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty, and Lenin and Trotsky’s suppression of democracy and of their opponents. In this work (which was not published until 1922), Luxemburg wrote her most famous line: “Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party—however numerous they may be—is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively the freedom for the one who thinks differently” and wrote prophetically:

“Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and

boundless experience direct and rule [...] a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat, however, but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians.”

## THE GERMAN REVOLUTION

In November 1918, the German war effort collapsed and a revolution swept the country, overthrowing Kaiser Wilhelm II and leading to the declaration of a republic. Rosa Luxemburg was released from prison, like all political prisoners, and returned to Berlin immediately to set to work. During autumn 1918, she and Karl Liebknecht led the small Spartacus League as a radical faction within the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), which had split from the SPD in 1917. Governmental power was handed to the Social Democrats, and under the leadership of Friedrich Ebert (a former pupil of Luxemburg’s) the Armistice was signed, ending the war after four long years of bloodshed. Ebert’s government had the support of most Germans, as well as of the army, navy, and the majority of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils which were being formed across the country. Initially, Ebert was also supported by the USPD, with only the Spartacus League opposing the government from the left. Luxemburg and her comrades called for the deepening and widening of the revolution, arguing in favour of nationalization, the arming of the workers, the removal of pre-revolutionary civil servants and military leaders, and support for Bolshevik Russia.

On New Year’s Eve, 1918, the Spartacus League finally split from the USPD and formed a new party, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), under the leadership of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Less than a week later, armed fighting broke out in Berlin. On one side stood the government of Ebert and special divisions of soldiers loyal to it (known as *freikorps*) and on the other side stood armed demonstrators sympathetic to various left-wing groups including the USPD, the revolutionary shop stewards, and the KPD. After several days of heavy fighting, the “Spartacist Uprising”—as it was dubbed by the government and the press—was crushed. On 15 January 1919, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were arrested and interrogated by government forces before being brutally murdered. Luxemburg’s body was dumped in a canal, not to be recovered until six months later. Her last words, written the night before her murder, were “Order reigns in Berlin! You stupid lackeys! Your ‘order’ is built

on sand. The revolution will raise itself up again clashing, and to your horror it will proclaim to the sound of trumpets: *I was, I am, I shall be.*” The anniversary of the murder became an annual left-wing mass demonstration, which it remains to this day.

## LEGACY

Rosa Luxemburg was the most important theorist of both the German and Polish communist movements, despite the perversion and distortion of her ideas by Communists after her death, especially during Stalin’s reign. And yet she was so much more than this. She was a keen botanist, a lover of literature and culture (she translated Vladimir Korolenko’s autobiography in her prison cell), and a beloved sister, aunt, friend, and lover. Luxemburg’s life and thought have inspired a broad range of individuals, groups, and movements throughout the twentieth century, and her ideas about socialism and capitalism, democracy and dictatorship, war and peace, nationalism, imperialism, and women’s rights continue to be relevant and stimulating in the 21st century. Luxemburg’s ideas have outlived the Soviet experiment in Russia and Eastern Europe and she continues to be both revered and reviled in Germany long after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Her writings, theories, and ideas are studied and discussed on every continent. At the time of writing the third volume of the English-language *Complete Works* is being prepared for publication and there are plans afoot in Beijing for a ground-breaking Chinese version. Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas—and sometimes merely the mention of her name—continue to provoke, to inspire, and to challenge “like a clap of thunder.” This is surely what she would have wished for. ■■■



# 2

## SPONTANEITY AND ORGANIZATION

JASON SCHULMAN

# THE MASS STRIKE AND ROSA'S THEORY OF SPONTANEITY

Rosa Luxemburg has often been accused of advocating a “theory of spontaneity” that diminishes the role of the Marxist party as the leader of the class struggle, overestimates the role of the unorganized working class, and denies the importance of premeditated and organized political action.

It would be more accurate to say that for Luxemburg spontaneity and organization are not separable or separate activities, but different moments of a single political process—that one does not exist without the other. These beliefs arose from her view that class struggle can evolve from an elementary, impulsive state to a higher political level. As she wrote in *What Next?* in 1910:

“The working classes in every country only learn to fight in the course of their struggles. [...] Social Democracy [...] is only the advance guard of the proletariat, a small piece of the total working masses; blood from their blood, and flesh from their flesh. Social democracy seeks and finds the ways, and particular slogans, of the workers’ struggle only in the course of the development of this struggle, and gains directions for the way forward through this struggle alone.”

Luxemburg’s 1906 pamphlet *The Mass Strike, The Party and the Trade Unions* was itself inspired by a series of spontaneous protests that began in Baku in 1902, spread to Kiev, Odessa, and St. Petersburg, and ultimately consumed the entire Russian Empire in 1905. The mass strike first expressed itself locally in towns and cities through the actions of workers and then spread to the countryside. In the process, liberal-democratic political aims unified the working

class with the most progressive elements of the capitalist class and, ultimately, led to the first parliament in Russian history, the Duma.

Unlike the right wing of German Social Democracy, Luxemburg did not believe that the mass strike should be limited to a purely defensive measure, nor should it be seen as an isolated incident. In Lea Haro's words, for Luxemburg the mass strike was "the sign" of the class struggle, which in Russia had developed through years of underground work by trade unionists and political activists. Luxemburg was not claiming that the mass strike led to revolution, but rather a revolutionary period created the economic and political conditions that made mass strikes possible. Such "spontaneous action" by the masses could not be contained by a political party, nor planned by it.

## **SOCIAL DEMOCRACY, THE GERMAN SPD, AND THE MASS STRIKE**

Nonetheless, Luxemburg fully intended for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to play an important role in the leadership of mass strikes in Germany. She did not believe that its leadership could decide when the mass strike should occur; rather, the toiling masses would have to decide for themselves when the critical moment would be. She did, however, believe that the political disposition of the SPD would play a decisive role in determining the character and the course that the strikes would take during a revolutionary period:

"To fix beforehand the cause and the moment from and in which the mass strikes in Germany will break out is not in the power of Social Democracy, because it is not in its power to bring about historical situations by resolutions at party congresses. But what it can and must do is to make clear the political tendencies, once they appear, and to formulate them as resolute and consistent tactics. Man cannot keep historical events in check while making recipes for them, but he can see in advance their apparent calculable consequences and arrange his mode of action appropriately." (*The Mass Strike, the Party and the Trade Unions*)

The conditions for "spontaneous" action in Russia did not simply appear from nowhere, nor did workers randomly decide to start a mass strike. The economic and political conditions needed were

already extant. And in Germany it was not only necessary for the SPD to play a leading role in schooling and preparing the proletariat for its historical role in the overthrow of the capitalist order; the party itself was a prerequisite for a successful revolution.

However, we need to remember the historical context in which Rosa's pamphlet appeared. As Mike Macnair of the *Weekly Worker* (UK) has pointed out, the SPD had survived illegality in the 1880s and built itself during the years that it claimed to be a revolutionary party but not one that set out to seize state power immediately. Its claim was that capitalism itself was heading for a general collapse, *Zusammenbruch* or *Kladderadatsch*; until this transpired, the party's task was to build the organized workers' movement as the largest, strongest possible social force. When the collapse came, the SPD and the broader workers' movement aligned with it would be able to take political power amidst the wreckage of (German) capitalist society. Given Luxemburg's active role in the SPD, one might credibly argue that she took for granted the party, its existence as a vast mass movement, and its fundamental strategic orientation.

But one should not exaggerate. Luxemburg believed that spontaneous mass action would play a vital role during the coming revolutionary period. But she maintained that without the necessary pre-conditions even the most carefully thought-out and disciplined mass strike would not differ from a typical struggle for higher wages, and could potentially end in tragedy. In order for a mass strike to be an effective weapon for revolution, it was necessary that the aspiration and drive for mass action should come from workers who had been guided and influenced by a Marxist party. Luxemburg was not simply teaching German socialists "Russian lessons" about what would happen in a genuine revolutionary crisis but rather was making it clear that capitalism's general collapse—the reasons for which she would later expand upon in *The Accumulation of Capital*—was coming closer, and the SPD needed to be ready for it. ■

ETHAN EARLE

# THE GLOBAL PROTEST WAVE OF 2011–12

**W**e've read a bit about Rosa Luxemburg's personal history, as well as her theories on the question of the mass strike and revolutionary spontaneity. I'm now going to bring us fully into the present to discuss spontaneity in the context of the wave of protests that swept much of the world during 2011 and 2012, and specifically concerning Occupy Wall Street (OWS).

As Rosa Luxemburg expert Stephen Eric Bronner has argued, speaking about the Arab Spring, but which I'll widen to include this broader wave of protests—from Iran through much of the Middle East, the Movement of the Squares in Greece, 15M in Spain, the student protests in Québec and Chile, and also OWS—Rosa's thoughts on spontaneity and democratic consciousness provide an excellent analytical framework to help us understand this particular moment in our history.

In OWS we saw a sudden, wholly unexpected massification and radicalization of collective action in a very short span of time and across a very broad cross-section of the United States, geographically and otherwise. Within just a couple weeks there were hundreds of occupations and, in one way or another, hundreds of thousands of people at some point got involved.

## OCCUPY WALL STREET AND THE MASS STRIKE

Historical particularities aside, we can see many similarities between this and Rosa's description of revolutionary spontaneity in *The Mass Strike*, *The Party and The Trade Unions*. I'll point out four strikingly similar aspects: 1. the years of quiet, largely invisible organizing work that suddenly burst into the public arena in very unexpected ways; 2. how the wave of occupations (or strikes,

in Rosa's case) rapidly took on a life and logic of its own; 3. how this surge of spontaneity served as a radically democratic platform for the political education (in many cases self-education) of countless thousands of previously politically disengaged people; 4. the total inefficacy of so-called cadre organizations to shape the course of events once they had begun—here as an aside I'll comment briefly on Europe, where we saw this in both Spain and particularly Greece, where SYRIZA's greatest move was to enter the flow of protest without trying to take it over, while the Greek Communist Party made a huge error in alternately trying to belittle and lead what was happening, crankily wandering into the Movement of the Squares and proclaiming that they had been telling everybody about these issues for years and years.

So I think there's a strong argument that Rosa's theory of spontaneity has a useful role in understanding this recent wave of protests. What's more contested and interesting is the question of the relationship between spontaneity and organization, and the role of this dynamic in understanding what's been going on in recent years.

For many involved in horizontalist and direct-action wings of OWS, the occupations—the moment of spontaneity—were the revolution, the end in itself. This viewpoint tends to counter-pose spontaneity and organization as two separate, non-complementary dynamics. I disagree with this position, which I think is reductionist and succumbs to a fetishization of the masses as a never-ending well of revolutionary energy. People get jobs, they take lovers, they grow tired, they go home. But Rosa's work has been brought back to defend variations of this line, and it's true that, particularly in *The Mass Strike*, she has a tendency to equate the strikes with the capital-"R" revolution. Nonetheless, I think to read her in this way is to misinterpret her work which, if taken as part of a broader intellectual current, displays greater balance between spontaneity and organization, not in opposition but rather as dialectical complements in revolutionary struggle.

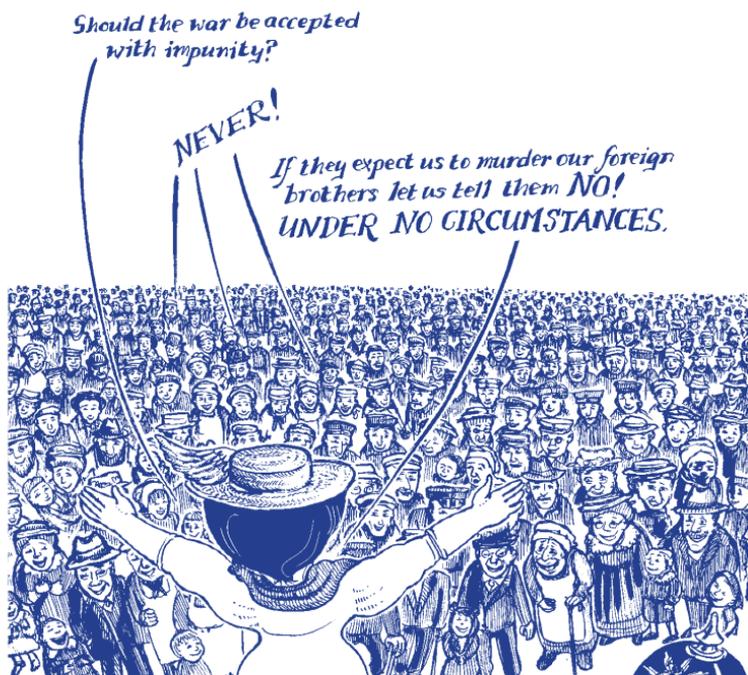
In arguing for the importance of organization in understanding Occupy, we have positions as different as noted anarchist scholar and activist David Graeber, who has written extensively about the anti-globalization movement and its relationship to the early organizing of OWS, and the Trotskyist International Socialist Organization—I'm thinking here about a piece written by Jennifer Roesch, who

likewise points to the individuals that shaped the major contours of OWS even if they didn't acknowledge their role as leaders.

## SPONTANEITY AND ORGANIZATION AS NECESSARY COMPLEMENTS

I think both of these positions actually undersell the primacy of spontaneity during the height of Occupy in their attempts to flesh out this dialectic. Certainly we can see, as Rosa put it, a sort of “crystallization of unacknowledged subterranean activism,” but this degree of focus on specific organizing and its causal relationship to OWS only works to describe specific moments in certain encampments and falls far short of explaining the creative spontaneity that drove the broader phenomenon. To say it another way, the dynamic generated during the period of occupations was completely incommensurate with the sum of these supposed parts of pre-existing organization and under-acknowledged leadership.

Still, I think that probing this dialectic is the right direction for us to take here, as critical thinkers and also as political actors, and it



behooves us to spend serious time exploring both spontaneity and organization as a necessary complement of the other. Crucially, here we're forced to examine the question of organization in the period after spontaneity subsides; how best to capture these energies and harness them to create focused, sustainable organizations capable of challenging existing power structures and bringing us forward to the next outburst of spontaneity. In the immediate post-occupation period we saw a multi-furcation of those energies into projects as diverse as Occupy Sandy, Strike Debt, and Occupy Our Homes; into direct-action wings of progressive reformist struggles, worker coops, left sharing-economy projects—the list goes on and on. It's not clear if these energies will reconstitute at a mass level in recognizable form, but it is clear that we've seen an important injection of radical thought and action, and also imagination, into U.S. civil society.

Of course, when discussing the possibilities of organization, the 500-pound gorilla in the U.S. remains state power, and we have seen some interesting left challenges in this arena. While not being able to show causation between them and OWS, we can certainly see correlation—and I'm being broad here, ranging from Seattle City Councilwoman Kshama Sawant, to former Jackson, Mississippi, Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, to Mayor Ras Baraka in Newark, but also including progressive Democrats like New York's Bill de Blasio—but we are nonetheless left far short of a situation in which one could imagine any real challenge for control of the Democratic Party in the near future.

Here it's worth giving special mention to the very recent phenomenon that is the presidential campaign of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. I tentatively argue that this unexpected campaign, which has generated a huge amount of enthusiasm around the country, actually represents a period of spontaneity—not so much the campaign itself as the reaction of the American people. Experienced leftists should remain attentive to this phenomenon, engage it, and seek to understand how to best structure the quiet organizing that will inevitably follow the phenomenon's decline. Openings are being created by the amount of attention given to this self-described democratic socialist with ideas far outside “traditional” dominant political discourse, and we need to pay attention to how we can take advantage of them to further develop the left in this country.

At roughly the same time—and I also advance this tentatively because it's happening in real time, and I'm not one to rush to judg-

ment—we've seen a tighter dialectic of spontaneity and organization emerge in the development of the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM), with its performative politics that spiral closely around a clear agenda and set of demands to create real strategic intentionality around how to concretely engage existing power structures. Because of this, it is also much more fitting to use the word “movement” when discussing BLM, as opposed to OWS, and I think that with some critical distance we will later be able to identify BLM as a continuation of the energies unleashed during Occupy and as a maturation of the U.S. left social movement sphere.

## CONCLUSION

Rosa Luxemburg's theory of spontaneity is very relevant to current analyses of mass political phenomena, but it's incomplete—and Rosa was aware of this—without more analysis of the dialectic between spontaneity and organization. Spontaneity creates mass *moments* and new openings in the popular imaginary, but the energy that it releases is always unsustainable. Organization, at its best, helps us to carry forward this spirit of political opposition in a more focused and sustainable way, but organizations move slowly and inevitably become stagnant, fall behind the times, and require a new period of spontaneity to shake them up, either blowing fresh air into them or in some cases simply sweeping them aside.

I think there's a real immediacy to this current world political moment, and while we can't plan spontaneity, we can analyze and come to better recognize it. And in so doing we can also better understand which forms of organizing best distill the zeitgeist as represented by that moment of spontaneity, and which distillations of our collective energies have the greatest potential to subvert and transform existing political and economic structures going forward. ■■■



**3**

**ROSA  
LUXEMBURG  
AND FEMINISM**

NANCY HOLMSTROM

## ROSA LUXEMBURG: A LEGACY FOR FEMINISTS?

**C**ertainly Rosa Luxemburg is a model for feminists of all times in her passionate commitment both to understanding the nature of our oppressive system and, most importantly, to changing it. She is also a model for feminists for pursuing her political and her personal life without concern for what women were and were not supposed to do.

But does Luxemburg leave feminists a theoretical and political legacy? That is, does she give us any theoretical guidance as to how to understand women's oppression? If so, what is it? What would she have to say about theoretical debates among socialist feminists today? Was she even a feminist in this sense? Was her position on women's oppression similar to her position on national oppression? And on the practical political questions facing feminists today, does Luxemburg's work give us any guidance?

Luxemburg wrote next to nothing about women and was not active in the women's movement. Some have inferred from this that she was not a feminist, or in any case, that she was not interested in women's issues. Obviously they were not her primary area of interest, but why should they have to be? We can have a division of labor.

### ROSA AS SOCIALIST FEMINIST

Clara Zetkin, Luxemburg's close comrade and friend, is well known for her work with working-class women, including forming groups, similar to the consciousness-raising groups of the 1970s, which made Lenin distinctly uneasy. I know of no evidence that Luxemburg disagreed with her work. On the contrary, in some of her last letters of November 1918, she asks Zetkin for an article on women—"which is so important now, and none of us here understand anything about

it.” She then invites her to edit a women’s section of the Spartacus paper, saying “It is such an urgent matter! Every day lost is a sin.”

Based on this correspondence and on her short writings on women’s issues, it should be abundantly clear that Luxemburg was a Marxist feminist, or a socialist feminist as we use the terms today. First I will say very briefly how I characterize a socialist feminist, some of whom are Marxists, and some are not, and then try to say where Luxemburg would stand on the debates among us.

All socialist feminists see class as central to women’s lives, yet at the same time none would reduce sex or race oppression to economic exploitation. And all of us see these aspects of our lives as inseparably and systematically related. In other words, class is always gendered and raced. The term “intersectionality” has come to be used for this position. Luxemburg certainly held to this perspective in her recognition of some kinds of oppression as common to all women and others varying by class and by nation.

While the special needs of working women were Luxemburg’s priority, she also supported positions some might see as merely bourgeois demands, viz., the end to all laws that discriminated against women and women’s suffrage, which she advocated both as a matter of principle and for pragmatic political reasons. Bringing women into politics would help combat what she called “the suffocating air of the philistine family” that affected even socialist men and would build the ranks of the social democratic forces. These positions were actually in advance of the bourgeois women’s organizations of the time. On one occasion, she critiqued social democrats willing to compromise on women’s suffrage to make an electoral alliance with liberals. The most radical of socialists were oftentimes also the best feminists.

## **IN DEFENSE OF THE ONE-SYSTEM THEORY**

Within the broad definition of intersectionality, however, there are differences regarding how we should understand these kinds of oppression and how they are related. Some socialist feminists see capitalism and sexism (usually called “patriarchy”) as two distinct, though intersecting, systems with equal explanatory importance. (Other systems to account for race/ethnic oppression are usually part of the picture, but I will ignore that here). Just as capitalism is constituted by relations of oppression and exploitation between

capitalists and workers, patriarchy is a system in which men oppress women. Some also say men exploit women, which they explain in different ways. This is known as a dual systems position. On the other hand, some Marxist/socialist feminists believe there is only one kind of oppression and exploitation, in the current period, that actually constitutes a system with full explanatory powers—and that is capitalism. However, other distinct kinds of oppression, like sexism, play more or less important roles within the framework of that system at different times and places.

One system or two—or more—is a highly abstract theoretical question. But it is often connected to a practical political one: What kind of political organizing should take priority? Should it always be class issues, labor struggles, and other economic issues not differentiated along gender lines? Or is it legitimate from a socialist point of view to give equal importance to distinctly women's issues? Dual systems theorists will invariably give equal political importance to organizing around class or sex (or race) issues. Why would they not?

But what political implications should be drawn from the one-system theoretical position, which I accept? In my opinion—and I want to stress this—it does not follow that struggles around sex (or race) oppression should necessarily have a lower political priority. Socialist feminists try to integrate the two, whatever their views on the abstract question of one or two systems. For example, contemporary socialist feminists support the legal right to abortion, like liberal feminists, but they combine that with the right to birth control, medical care, childcare, better and equal pay (certainly more than \$15/hour)—all the things necessary to give working-class women a genuine choice over their reproduction.

Luxemburg, I am pretty sure, assumed the one-system position, giving theoretical primacy to capitalism as a framework in which other kinds of oppression operate. On the practical political question, I can't say for sure, but I would like to think she would hold the flexible position regarding political priorities (perhaps because that is my view).

## **WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND CLASS STRUGGLE**

In "Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle" of 1912, Luxemburg makes an important theoretical argument relevant to current debates. She writes the following:

“Only that work is productive which produces surplus value and yields capitalist profit—as long as the rule of capital and the wage system still exists. From this standpoint the dancer in a café, who makes a profit for her employer with her legs, is a productive working woman, while all the toil of the woman and mothers of the proletariat within the four walls of the home is considered unproductive work. This sounds crude and crazy, but it is an accurate expression of the crudeness and craziness of today’s capitalist economic order.”

I have used this quote more than once to clarify the meaning of (un)productive work in capitalism and to distinguish oppression from capitalist exploitation. Some feminists are very offended by the Marxist position that housework is unproductive labor, and some argue for “wages for housework.” But as the quote from Luxemburg makes clear, designating housework as unproductive is hardly an insult, nor is it sexist. A carpenter who works for the government is equally unproductive in capitalist terms, though both, obviously—and very importantly—are productive in a general sense. It’s crucial to understand what “productive” means in capitalist terms, viz., the production of surplus value, because it is this that makes the capitalist system tick. There is more to be said about the domestic labor debate, but one important point is that even in 1912, as Luxemburg wrote, “millions of proletarian women [...] produce capitalist profit just like men—in factories, workshops, agriculture, homework industries, offices and stores. They are productive therefore in the strictest economic sense of society today. Luxemburg used this as an argument for suffrage; it showed that patriarchal conceptions of women’s proper role had simply become ridiculous.

I agree with Luxemburg on this theoretical point and on its importance. However, I think we must be careful not to overstate its political importance. Even if housework were productive of surplus value it wouldn’t follow that organizing housewives should be a priority for socialists. Compare guards in private prisons who produce surplus value. Though exploited by capital, they certainly would not be promising candidates for socialist organizing. On the other hand, while public sector workers are not productive in this sense, they are a key sector for labor organizing today and should be, given the attacks on the public sector. Where socialists should put their best energies depends on many factors and we need to be alert to changing conditions.

Luxemburg's stress on the meaning of "productive" labor in this crazy capitalist system also helps to explain why capitalism is leading to the destruction of our planet and why we need to build a society based on production for human needs, not profit. Organizing around this issue has to be central to everyone today.

Luxemburg argued for a working women's organization independent of the bourgeois women's movement, so they could better fight for their specific needs, while at the same time supporting universal women's interests. More controversially, she also supported independent self-organization within the working class and even among socialists, encouraging Zetkin to found a women's section of the Spartacus League. This position, I would point out, is ahead of many Marxists today.

So in conclusion there is much that Luxemburg's life and work can offer to contemporary socialist feminists. We need not look to her for all the answers, and we might find some areas of disagreement, but no more than we would likely find among the contributors to this volume. ██████████

AMBER A'LEE FROST

## PICK-UP ARTISTS, ASHLEY MADISON, AND LIFESTYLE FEMINISM

“**T**he personal is political” has become one of the more popular feminist slogans since its popularization in the late 1960s by Second Wave feminists. In recent years, though, it seems to have lost its way. As pop psychology and the politics of consumption have come to stand in for analysis of political economy, “the personal” is presumed to be “the individual,” and questions of “liberation” seem to depend on personal choices, usually aesthetic, linguistic, or via some application of woman-friendly etiquette. Go to the Internet, look up to the top hits of popular feminist writers, and you will see an ocean of individualism, from interpersonal testimonials (“How to Have a Feminist Wedding!”) to interpretations of popular culture (“Why Beyoncé’s Latest ‘Feminist’ Move was so Problematic”). Yes, lifestylism is the feminism of our day, and it’s often defended under the old adage, “the personal is political.”

At this point a necessary clarification must be made: “the personal is political,” popularized by radical feminist Carol Hanisch in an essay of the same name, was very much a tirade *against* a feminism that navigates the world as is, and was actually a variation on “the *private* is political.” Hanisch and others actually called for political solutions to personal problems, and not (as has since been assumed) the reduction of political problems to the psychological level, and the subsequent reduction of feminism to a sort of “talk therapy.”

I can imagine that Rosa Luxemburg herself would agree with Hanisch’s words: “The very word ‘therapy’ is obviously a misnomer if carried to its logical conclusion. Therapy assumes that someone is sick and that there is a cure, e.g., a personal solution. I am greatly

offended that I or any other woman is thought to need therapy in the first place. Women are messed over, not messed up! We need to change the objective conditions, not adjust to them. Therapy is adjusting to your bad personal alternative.”

Some critics of Luxemburg have accused her of glossing over the question of women, often arguing that she reduces women’s oppression to “economism,” (an amusing charge to make of an economist, and one I’m sure male economists are rarely faced with). While it’s true she wasn’t a social reformer, (though she was incredibly supportive of Clara Zetkin’s work with women), I would argue that not only did Luxemburg offer some very meaningful insights into feminist struggle but that she addressed the very personal (or private) lives of women under capitalism through such an incisive economism.

## MALE LUST AND WOMEN’S LIBERATION

For a case study, I suggest we revisit the recent events that surround the hacking of the Ashley Madison website since I believe it provides a perfect example of how Luxemburg informs us on love and romance.

If you managed to remain mercifully ignorant of this media spectacle, Ashley Madison is a website for married people looking to have affairs without their spouse’s knowledge (for a subscription fee, of course). Recently their database was hacked, and the name of every user was made public. Right-wing Republicans were outed as hypocrites, the safety of gay men in homophobic countries was suddenly potentially at risk, and a million hot takes peppered the Internet.

Strikingly, even in 2015 infidelity is still (correctly) read as a very gendered phenomenon.

To wit, the site was used almost entirely by men, and (as was quickly revealed in a *Gawker* investigation) most of the “female” profiles were actually bots—accounts intended to scam the hapless male patrons. And regardless of the total lack of sex that Ashley Madison appeared to provide, *The Observer* ran an article on the leak featuring a stock photo intended to represent the archetype of the extra-marital affair: depicted by Lego mini-figurines, there is a bestubbed man (the picture of male LEGO virility, if you will) with a ponytailed blond, and of course his dowdy, nagging wife is pursuing him with a frying pan.

This image is certainly sexist, but it taps into deeply recognizable patriarchal ideas of male lust, the devaluing of older women, and mandatory feminine domesticity—I mean, she’s holding a frying pan!

So what can Rosa tell us about such a modern, tawdry, and intimate clash of the sexes?

Simply put, Luxemburg perceived the emancipation of women in direct relation to the emancipation from the bourgeois family and bourgeois love, social conditions that are the direct result of capitalism itself. Excerpts from *Rosa Luxemburg’s Contribution to the Movement of Women’s Emancipation*, from Zhou Shangwen and Zhang Zhiya, offer us her most salient words on the subject.

“In the view of many vulgar guys and the bourgeois civil law, whoever owns bread rules the house. [...] The history of the family pattern is indeed the history of women’s enslavement.”

Well, there’s your frying pan, right there: you have a gendered division of labor in which women don’t actually even rule the domestic sphere, but merely inhabit it. But how does that connect to the actual emotional betrayal at the heart of infidelity and the interpersonal nature of relationships?

Luxemburg’s ideas of freedom and independence in romantic partnership are pretty well-documented. When her best friend and comrade, the aforementioned Clara Zetkin, refused to leave her troubled marriage long past its expiration date, it deeply affected their friendship until Zetkin finally got divorced. Luxemburg believed marriage was to be an institution not only of equality but of conditions; she believed that once the love was gone and the relationship irretrievable, it was the responsibility of both parties to withdraw.

Luxemburg navigated her own marriage under the same standards. Bourgeois marriage was, for her, ultimately a means to citizenship, though she was by no means anti-romance, once saying, “If I feel by intuition that he doesn’t love me anymore, I will immediately fly away like a stricken bird.”

“Stricken” certainly leaves room for pain and grieving, but the flight? Luxemburg knew that it was only an economic independence that allowed her to do so.

Feminist reformers in the United States especially have managed to bypass the economic nature of intimacy. Most famously, the Equal Rights Amendment was stalled by reactionary forces until it eventually died, but less frequently mentioned is the universal child-care program that was vetoed by Nixon. At the time state childcare was suggested as a means to combat child abuse—largely because sociological data pointed to class as the major factor—but the emancipatory potential of such a policy most obviously would have benefited women, who suddenly would have found themselves more financially able to go to work and perhaps even (gasp) leave their men, despite having small children to care for. Obviously Nixon’s veto cited the “communization” of the country and the degradation of the traditional family, so government initiatives to combat child abuse were redirected toward therapeutic and “cultural,” rather than economic, solutions.

As the result of these major defeats, feminists themselves have adopted the position of social reformer. The discourse is no longer centered on liberation or independence; it’s concerned with educating women on how to live their lives and educating men on how not to treat women poorly. When it comes to romance, the only insight the recent incarnations of individualist feminism have had to offer can be summed up with an easy moralism: “men must do better.” But why would they? Are women who desire men really just supposed to hope for the triumph of a more feminist culture?

## BE KIND, OR I WILL LEAVE

Luckily, the sentiments of Rosa Luxemburg have not been completely retired, as materialist feminist brilliance still shines on the realm of the intimate. Take “Cockblocked by Redistribution: A Pick-up Artist in Denmark.” In this article in *Dissent* magazine, Katie JM Baker reviews “Don’t Bang Denmark,” the account of a “pick-up artist” (a man who prides himself on picking up women through manipulation) named Roosh. Roosh is most famous for a series of travel books that essentially amount to sex tourism guides. He tells you how to hit on women in what country, but he’s decidedly not fond of social welfare!

“Fans of the travel writer will be disappointed that ‘pussy literally goes into hibernation’ in this ‘mostly pacifist nanny state,’

where the social programs rank among the best in the world. Roosh's initial admiration for those resources is almost charming, if you're able to momentarily forget that this is a man who considers deactivating teenagers a sport.

'A Danish person has no idea what it feels like to not have medical care or free access to university education,' an awed Roosh reports. 'They have no fear of becoming homeless or permanently jobless. The government's soothing hand will catch everyone as they fall. To an American like myself, brainwashed to believe that you need to earn things like basic health care or education by working your ass off, it was quite a shock.'

Shock turns into disbelief and then rage when Roosh is rejected by heaps of 'the most unfeminine and androgynous robotic women' he's ever met. 'Not a feminine drop of blood courses through their veins,' Roosh rants. He concludes that the typical fetching Nordic lady doesn't need a man 'because the government will take care of her and her cats, whether she is successful at dating or not.'

He's not (totally) wrong! Denmark enjoys some of the most robust welfare programs in the world—exactly the sorts of programs that would allow a woman to ignore the lecherous or abandon the unfaithful. Welfare does not debate sexism; it does not plead or bargain. Welfare allows women the option of an ultimatum: "Be kind, or I will leave."

The only true Marxist theory of romance is something that legitimately proves that the personal is political, as the phrase was

*Abolish the aristocracy. Confiscate all private wealth above a certain level. Use this to fund the overhaul of the food, housing, health and education systems. The economy? Repudiate national debt and war loans ~ we need a clean slate. Nationalise the banks, mines and heavy industry. Take over the public transport system. Occupy large landed estates and farm them collectively. A six-hour working day.*



*How do we achieve this? The people elect workers' and soldiers' councils. The central council of these bodies meets every three months and this directs the work of the executive committee. What else? Ah, yes, complete social and legal equality of the sexes.*



originally intended to mean. The only “answer” to the intimate transgressions of cheating or lechery or male condescension is the total emancipation of women as a class, and that means economics—things like full childcare, healthcare, housing, retirement, education, etc. Then and only then will something like infidelity exist as merely a human foible, rather than something socially and politically weighted by patriarchy. (Moreover, without patriarchal context, we can also be more forgiving of those foibles, should we so choose.)

Rosa Luxemburg’s so-called economism is the very foundation for our intimate lives. It is what enables women to fly away, whether stricken, or merely just disgusted. ■

## ALHELÍ DE MARÍA ALVARADO-DÍAZ

# HEROINE OF THE REVOLUTION

To the question of whether Rosa Luxemburg was a radical revolutionary, we can only answer in the affirmative. Luxemburg was not only a revolutionary but also a visionary and the *agent provocateur* of early 20th century radical politics. Her approach to socialism exemplified a refined sense of critical thinking and loyalty to the teachings of revolutionary theory and ethics. Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis celebrated her spirit by baptizing their group “Socialisme ou Barbarie” upon its foundation in the late 1940s. Hannah Arendt, in the article “A Heroine of the Revolution” (*New York Review of Books*, October 6, 1966), referred to her as “the most controversial and least understood figure in the German Left movement.” The founder of Marxist-Humanism in the United States, Raya Dunayevskaya, portrays her as an autonomous intellectual, fearless in her explicit disagreements with revolutionary legends like Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin. Rosa’s controversies, during and after her lifetime, offer a test on the evolving definitions of revolution, justice, and the recurring question of how to translate political theory into effective social practice. Critical of compromise, institutional politics, established notions, and double standards, Rosa Luxemburg led a relentless battle against the internal authoritarianism of a predominantly male political leadership and against the overall attitude of an obsolete Left, out of touch with the problems of the masses. Her theories on the power of the mass strike, as well as on the problem of imperialism and the connections between empire and international wars, cost her exclusion from political legitimacy within revolutionary institutions well beyond her death. Rosa’s autonomy and her indifference to the opinion of her critics constitute a revolutionary legacy in both theory and practice. It was her attitude of intellectual independence and courage to think for herself, which made Rosa

Luxemburg not only a pragmatist and a political iconoclast but also an independent woman in the context of her age. In this sense, Rosa was a different type of feminist, above all in her attitudes toward intellectual work and political writing, as well as in her way of acting in a world monopolized by the arrogance of ideological dogmatism and a recurrent fear to adapt and update revolutionary theory to the changing realities of new generations.

## ROSA'S REVOLUTIONARY LEGACY

In "A Heroine of the Revolution," Hannah Arendt also refers to Rosa's ethics, her authentic interest in the making of true revolutions, and her belief in the power of the masses above party politics and intellectuals. According to Arendt, working-class revolutions taught Rosa how workers' solidarity and unity preceded official revolutionary organization. Rosa recognized that "the organization of revolutionary action 'can and must be learnt in revolution itself, as one can only learn swimming in the water,' that revolutions are 'made' by nobody but rather break out 'spontaneously,' and that 'the pressure for action' always comes 'from below.'" Here Arendt stresses the moral stature of Luxemburg, whom she depicts as a realistic, critical, and perhaps between-the-lines populist thinker given her "faith in the capacities of the masses." Rosa's recognition of civil disobedience as a power to overthrow the state and to boycott corrupt political leadership placed her at the forefront of a new revolutionary leadership that would center its political program on the mobilization of the masses. Mao Zedong and Ernesto "Che" Guevara based their guerrilla warfare strategy on this principle. Revolutionary leadership was necessary, but the masses were in reality the true protagonists of history.

Rosa's revolutionary theory transcends Marx's original expectations of the working class as an historical force of social change. In her November 1918 text "The Beginning," Rosa calls for a re-designing of society's power structures, a decentralization of political debate away from the state's institutions, and a total "demolishing of the capitalist class rule." She methodically lists the necessary steps to give birth to a radical revolutionary republic, a new society that makes no compromises with the old ways of life, the *ancien régime* of exploitation and inequality. She writes with passion and conviction that there is no other way to make a revolution but to welcome

the irresistible force of the masses' anger, their impatient demands, and their desire to exercise power. Professional activists, leaders, and intellectuals must all give their place to the former slaves of capital's exploitation, now liberated through revolution. As Rosa wrote in "The Beginning," in November 1918:

"Every step, every act by the government must, like a compass, point in these directions: [...] regularly scheduled meetings of these representatives of the masses and the transfer of real political power from the small committee of the Executive Council into the broader basis of the W. and S. (workers' and soldiers') councils [...] immediate convocation of the national council of workers and soldiers in order to establish the proletariat of all Germany as a class, as a compact political power, and to make them the bulwark and impetus of the revolution [...] suppression of the old organs of administration, justice and the army of absolutist militarist police State."

Note Rosa's use of categorical language and her imminent sense of timing in her recurrent use of the adjective "immediate." Her linguistic choice is not random, but rather consistent with her negative vision of political delegation and delay in taking away power from previous rulers. To a great extent, Rosa develops an ethics of impatience by insisting on the risks and the irreversibility of waiting for the "appropriate moment" or for "the transformation of the masses into professional politicians." Rosa denounces the cowardice of her comrades who collaborate in "leaving the administrative organs of the State intact from top to bottom, in the hands of yesterday's pillars of absolutism and tomorrow's tools of the counter-revolution [...] doing nothing to demolish the continuing power of the capitalist class rule [...] in doing everything to placate the bourgeoisie, to proclaim the sacrosanctity of private property, to safeguard the inviolability of the distribution of capital."

## A SPIRIT OF RUPTURE AND SELF-CRITICISM

In her work *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, Raya Dunayevskaya locates Rosa Luxemburg's spirit of rupture and self-criticism within the revolutionary tradition. Going against the dominant reproaches to Luxemburg's lack of an overt feminist militancy, Dunayevskaya points to values that

place her in a revolutionary position against the condescension of her male counterparts. Her essay “The Break with Kautsky, 1910–11” describes Rosa’s resistance in the following terms:

“Put differently, Luxemburg was against the trade union leadership not only because they were conservative, but because they were concerned only with organized workers, whereas the unorganized workers, she showed, were every bit as revolutionary and important. [...] It had been her principle always to ignore any sign of male chauvinism, not even letting the word pass her lips. It isn’t that she wasn’t aware of its existence, but she held that since it was due to capitalism, it could be abolished only with the abolition of capitalism. Just as she had learned to live with an underlying anti-Semitism in the party, so she learned to live with what in our era has been challenged by name—specifically, male chauvinism. She took no issue with it, though it was obvious that the polemics against her, now that she openly disagreed with the core of the orthodox leadership, had an extra-sharp edge which no male opponent had to suffer.”

Dunayevskaya’s point about Rosa’s determination to question the views of her own ideological comrades reasserts her condition as crusader for a critical form of thinking in coherence with true revolutionary action and against any form of opportunism. She clearly denounces the mildness of her fellow militants, expressing concern over the reconciliatory attitudes of German socialism, inciting her audience to radical action and to an honest confrontation with the socialist project in its non-institutional raw state. In her 1900 essay “Reform or Revolution” she clearly states:

“But since the final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labor movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order—the question: ‘Reform or Revolution?’ [...] equals for the Social-Democracy the question: ‘To be or not to be?’ [...] everybody in the Party ought to understand clearly it is not a question of this or that method of struggle, or the use of this or that set of tactics, but of the very existence of the Social-Democratic movement.”

For Rosa Luxemburg, revolution and social democracy meant the creation of a new order in which the masses were not merely empowered through a delegation of professional revolutionaries and politicians, but were effectively incorporated into the theoretical debates of the movement, ceasing to exist as means and puppets of the movement and becoming the protagonists of history. Rosa concludes “Reform or Revolution?” with the following claim:

“It is, therefore, in the interest of the proletarian mass of the Party to become acquainted, actively and in detail, with the present theoretic knowledge remains the privilege of a handful of ‘academicians’ in the Party, the latter will face the danger of going astray. Only when the great mass of workers take the keen and dependable weapons of scientific socialism in their own hands, will all the petty-bourgeois inclinations, all the opportunistic currents, come to naught.”

Making choices was at the heart of Rosa’s vision of political revolution and universal ethics. One issue that remains debated in the history of her trajectory is the degree of her feminism and the overall cause of the empowerment of women. To conduct a fair assessment of Rosa’s legacies on the question, it may be necessary for us to reflect on two recurring issues: the definition of feminism and the scope of our expectations as thinkers and critics of our political and philosophical predecessors. Rosa Luxemburg was in no way indifferent to the situation of women in her time. It may not have been the headline issue in her militant agenda, but her concern over gender standards was clearly present throughout her lifespan. Coherent with her campaign against opportunism, Rosa’s refusal to depict herself as a victim of gender inequality gives her greater stature as a woman who chose not to invest time in useless discussions with men whom she knew were incapable of transforming their own viewpoints on the question. Rosa chose to make her political career an example for other women to follow, showing that it was possible to be a woman, a revolutionary, and a thinker, regardless of the social prejudices of the times.

## **THE BRAND OF ROSA’S FEMINISM**

In her 1912 essay “Women’s Suffrage and Class Struggle,” she confronts the issue and states:

“Women’s suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but is a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat. Germany’s present lack of rights for women is only one link in the chain of the reaction that shackles the people’s lives. And it is closely connected with the other pillar of the reaction: the monarchy. In advanced capitalist, highly industrialized, twentieth-century Germany, in the age of electricity and airplanes, the absence of women’s political rights is as much a reactionary remnant of the dead past as the reign by Divine Right on the throne.”

And she adds:

“A hundred years ago, the Frenchman Charles Fourier, one of the first great prophets of socialist ideals, wrote these memorable words: In any society, the degree of female emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation. This is completely true for our present society. The current mass struggle for women’s political rights is only an expression and a part of the proletariat’s general struggle for liberation. In this lies its strength and its future.”

It may be unfair for us to impose our expectations and our contemporary definitions of feminism in judging Rosa Luxemburg’s qualities as a feminist militant. The brand of Rosa’s feminism was different and unique to her context and to the reality of her own trajectory as activist, as a minority and an autonomous thinker. Instead of complaining and measuring Luxemburg’s militancy against our own set of standards, we should value the sharpness and audacity of a woman who was a ferocious writer, an independent thinker, and the founder of an important radical group, the Spartacus League. Like many of her comrades and like most of us, she made mistakes—there were shortcomings in some aspects of her militant strategies and, as usual, more could have been done. But in the larger spectrum of history, Rosa’s legacy outlives the contradictory aspects in her work. One could even argue that her contradictions, her process of constant and open self-reflection, her flexibility and anti-dogmatism, were above all assets and virtues to be emulated by women and revolutionaries regardless of sex. Rosa existed beyond the provinces of nationality and gender, which is the clearest evidence of her universalism and the reason that

she is being discussed and reinterpreted today, in our company, almost a century after her death. A radical revolutionary and a fighter in the name of liberation in all its forms, Rosa Luxemburg's attitudes and intelligence can inspire a new generation of militants to rescue the ideals she herself fought for: justice, equal rights, and individual autonomy without compromises. Of course, it is up to us to take up the challenge and, like Rosa, to make the best choices that can take us away from obsolete dogmatism and futile ideological dead-end streets. It is up to us to wade beyond the shallow waters of reform, and to take the leap of faith into the radical revolution of critical thinking. ■■■



4

**RED ROSA:**

**A GRAPHIC BIOGRAPHY  
OF ROSA LUXEMBURG**

KATE EVANS

# WRITING (AND DRAWING) ROSA

October 2012, an email pings into my inbox. “Would you be interested in drawing, also scripting as much as you’d like, a graphic bio of Rosa Luxemburg?”

Rosa Luxemburg? I ponder, name sounds familiar. She’s one of those people like Emma Goldman or Mikhail Bakunin that I should really find out more about. I dash off an enthusiastic: “I love doing historical/anarcho-/biographical stuff. I would like to be able to script as well as draw whatever you choose to commission from me. I could make time for this and turn the artwork around to a tight deadline. Thanks! Yes!”

Only then do I google who Rosa Luxemburg is. And I begin to get an inkling of what an amazing brief I’ve just landed.

Three years and multiple missed deadlines later the book is launched. *Red Rosa: a Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*, by Kate Evans, edited by Paul Buhle, published by Verso (\$16.95 or £9.99 since you asked) and supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office. This is my review of the process of writing *Red Rosa*.

## CONDENSING THE WORK OF AN EXPANSIVE LIFE

The brief was 120 pages of artwork. I managed to condense Rosa Luxemburg’s story into 179. This is a woman who has written multiple volumes of economic theory, revolutionary agitation, and personal correspondence. How to do it? In a sense, my job was made easier because I was working with her works in translation, and because, as a woman, her theoretical achievements have been undervalued, and so only a limited amount of her work is available in English. I read everything I could that she’d written, but it helped that I couldn’t read it all.

At the core of the representation of Rosa that I arrived at is the most valuable primary source material, Verso's 500-page volume of *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. I read this first (only discovering at the end that there's a glossary of personal names at the back which would have made it much easier to understand to whom she's writing). My breathless marginalia attest to the points where I grasped that Rosa Luxemburg is a true poet, whose words would be a pleasure to illustrate. "Lovely lovely lovely" is scribbled in pencil down the edge of page 425. Rosa is writing from prison: "The swallows had begun their every-evening's flight in full company strength, and with their sharp, pointy wings snipped the blue silk of space into little bits, shot back and forth, overtaking one another with shrill cries, and disappearing into the dizzying heights." By chance, I'd recently lived in a farmyard where swallows did just that. I knew exactly how to draw it.

Luxemburg's letters give a wealth of personal detail—her vibrant personality leaps off the page. She writes to her lover "I'm going to take you in my claws so sharply that it will make you squeal,



you'll see." One of her deservedly more famous quotes is "I want to affect people like a clap of thunder, to inflame their minds, not by speechifying but with the breadth of my vision, the strength of my conviction and the power of my expression." How to capture such a woman? And with such tight restrictions on space—only six frames to a page, with only a few phrases of text in each.

Verso sent me the PDF of her *Letters* so I had a searchable document from which I could cut and paste. I then instinctively began to pick quotes from them and arrange them by theme. I now had a bunch of Word documents on subjects such as "parenthood" (Sample quotes: "Suddenly something came over me. I had the desire to pick up that child and quickly run home and keep it as mine." p. 114); or "mass strike" ("the mass strike is not a mechanical recipe for being on the political defensive but is an elementary form of revolutionary struggle" p. 190); or "servants" or "surveillance" or "war." I arranged the romantic letters to Leo Jogiches in one folder, those to Kostya Zetkin in another, and Hans Diefenbach in a third. My favorite section was "physical details." Rosa sends "hearty handshakes to all" on page 23, and tells her lover "I kiss you strongly, right on the kisser" on page 119. A little vignette from page 409: "I was making dubious and vain attempts in the antechamber to get my jacket down from the hat and coat stand, cursing my own Lilliputian stature." Writing from prison again: "All alone, sitting in my little 'den' at around midnight—I broke into cascades of laughter, the way you know I do." I had no idea whether these documents would be useful while I was compiling them, but I referred back to them repeatedly—they seemed to form modular building blocks that the story grew around.

## LIKE A CLAP OF THUNDER

Of course, the most important thing about Rosa Luxemburg is not her inability to get coats off high hooks; it's her theories of revolutionary spontaneity, capitalist crises, and primary accumulation. I had already been toying with the idea of writing a book about capitalism. My previous book, *Funny Weather: Everything You Didn't Want to Know About Climate Change but Probably Should Find Out*, broke down the science of the primary ecological and social crisis of our times into an accessible "fun" narrative. I wanted to do something that did the same for capitalism; that threw the contradictions

of the system into sharp relief. I wanted to affect people like a clap of thunder. I wanted to take Marx's *Capital*, and make it do for the comics reader what it did for me when I first read it twenty years ago. In *Red Rosa*, I found an opportunity to write just that book.

To be honest, 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary socialism is not an easy read. It's like they were paid by the word, or something. I started with *Das Kapital* again (just the student edition, I'm not a masochist), and then ploughed through Luxemburg's *Social Reform or Revolution*, *The Mass Strike*, *Introduction to Political Economy* (which is surprisingly accessible), *The Accumulation of Capital* (which is really hard going). I gave up on *Accumulation of Capital* and moved on to her *Anti-Critique of The Accumulation of Capital*, which is great—she's really witty and scathing about her critics and also gives an easy overview of the arguments in the *Accumulation*. Went back and managed to read it this time. When my eyes would slide off the page I developed a technique of standing up and reading a difficult passage aloud, because I found the meaning would go in if I tackled it that way. I have two children, by the way, so I got interrupted a lot. But it was worth it to read brilliant and prescient passages from the *Junius* pamphlet or *Martinique*. There's a passage from *Social Reform or Revolution* that literally made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. I quoted this in the book, and I'll repeat it here:

“When the tendency of capitalist production to expand limitlessly strikes against the limited size of private capital, credit steps in to surmount those limits [...]. Credit aggravates the inevitable crisis [...]. It accelerates the exchange of commodities [...] it provokes overproduction [...] and then, at the first symptom of stagnation, credit melts away. It abandons the exchange process just when it is still indispensable.

“Credit stimulates bold and unscrupulous utilization of the property of others [...], it leads to reckless speculation [...]. It helps to bring on and extend the crisis by transforming all exchange into an extremely complex and artificial mechanism which, having a minimum of metallic money as a real base, is easily disarranged at the slightest occasion.”

That's the 2008 “credit crunch” described 108 years before its time.

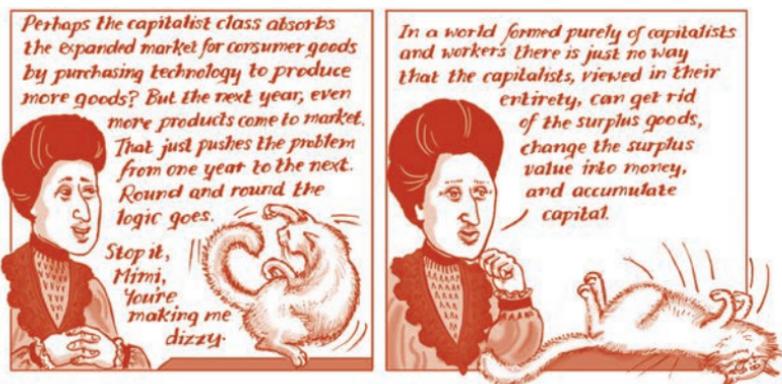
Part of what was so rewarding about tackling such dense material was knowing that I'd then have the opportunity to present it in a much more accessible format. We live in a soundbite culture. Extracting 140 characters from Luxemburg's writings isn't easy, but the graphic novelist's job is to refine and edit and condense repeatedly until the absolutely minimal amount of text conveys the maximum amount of meaning. This is then enhanced by the use of comedy, scripted narrative, and of visual metaphors, which I had fun with in the book. I created a seven page sequence where a youthful Rosa explains the basic precepts of *Das Kapital* to her brothers over the dinner table.



I sprinkled dandelion clocks through Luxemburg's *Introduction to Political Economy*:



And for *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg's cat Mimi provided some action.



## SETTING THE WORLD, AND PAGE, ON FIRE

My favorite Luxemburg quote that I arrived at in the process is “capitalism [...] is prepared to set the world on fire.” It’s a lovely phrase, but in the interests of accuracy I had to confess in the notes that I edited it down from the clunkier “German capitalism eagerly exports machines, iron, locomotives and textiles to Turkey, and does not collapse. Rather, it is prepared to set the world on fire to monopolize this trade to an even greater extent.”

I seem to specialize in comic books on unfunny subjects, and everything I’d written to date was pure factual exposition in cartoon form. *Red Rosa* was my first opportunity to explore multiple narratives with complex, real characters. In effect, I had the script of a film playing in my head and I had to capture that on paper, always straining against the tight spacings dictated by six frames to a page. I relished the process, and enjoyed creating a narrative structure, an arc to the story that carries the reader onward, with unexpected twists and turns.

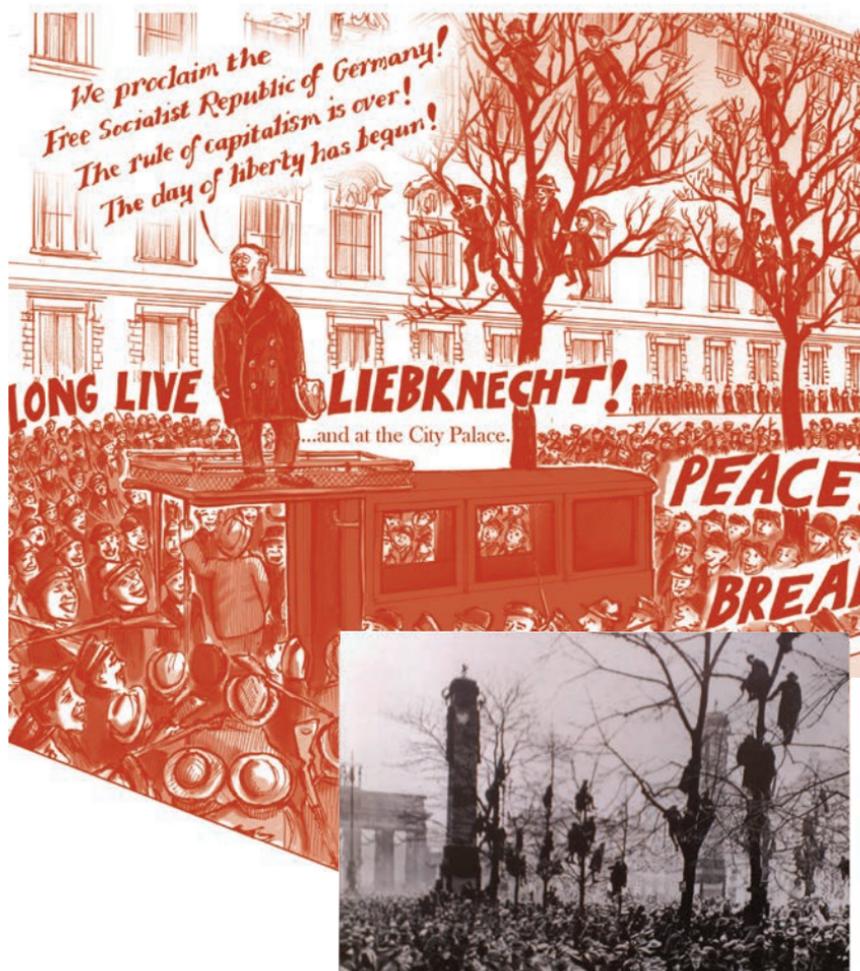
The climax of the book comes with the outbreak of the Great War. There is a beautiful synchronicity between Luxemburg’s life and work. Her economic writings map out the inextricable links between capitalism, globalization and the military-industrial complex (fifty years before those terms would be coined). And then comes the war, a pointless imperialist mass-slaughter which Luxemburg and Karl

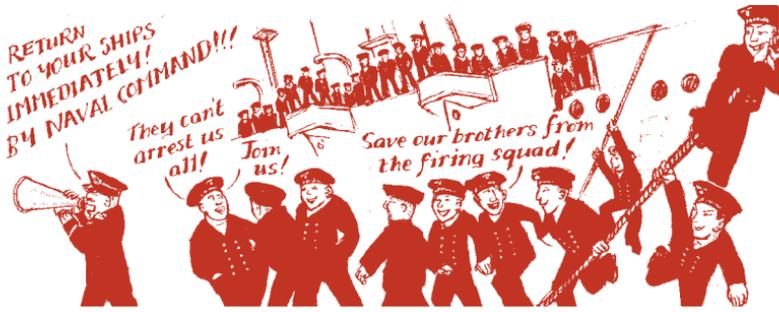
Liebknecht were almost unique in opposing. I structured the story in a careful crescendo of gradually rising tension and bleakness, building towards this double page illustration:



The other major synchronicity between Luxemburg's life and work is that she was a theorist of revolutions who was murdered for participating in revolutionary activity. The book thus culminates in an action-movie finale—but of events that really happened.

Depicting the German Revolution accurately enabled me to embark upon some satisfyingly nerdy historical-pictorial research. The invention of the Kodak Pocket Vest Camera in 1912 meant that for the first time, documentary photos could be taken of live events without the participants having to hold a pose. The German government, being super organized, has logged relevant historical photographs on archival websites. The amount of visual research that goes into creating a graphic novel like *Red Rosa* is not obvious to the reader, so I'm including some of the source material along with the finished images here:





The real thread that binds everything together in the book is, of course, Rosa herself. Indomitable, witty, fearless, uncompromising, it was a pleasure to be able to represent her in all her many guises.

Rosa the revolutionary, Rosa the rebel, Rosa the sensitive soul. Rosa the student, the teacher, the theorist, the journalist, and the rabble rouser. Rosa the lover, Rosa the poet. I just hope I did her justice. 

PAUL BUHLE

# RED ROSA: THE MAKING OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL

**M**any thanks to the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office for providing this marvelous space to expound on a subject that is vital for discussion, a more vital discussion—about what we need to grasp and pass on to the following generations—than ever. With luck, our collective work on Rosa is becoming more effectively recognized in its importance than anytime previous because we are precisely in a period of bureaucratic exhaustion around the world, of unprecedented plunder, and of mass movements trying to find their way.

I am going to be very brief, but I want to establish that the apparent coincidence of Rosa's re-emergence and the emergence of comic art as an accepted art form—an educational tool or weapon as much as the most beloved print form in the last century—is not actually a coincidence at all.

## THE RISE OF COMIC ART

Rosa lived her last decades as comic art was taking and conquering the field of popular culture across the Western world, in the most popular section of the daily or Sunday paper that ordinary folks, emphatically including the working classes, would turn to for pleasure and at least in some degree, for social insight. Within twenty years or so after Rosa's martyrdom, comic books sold more, at least in the United States, than all other periodicals together. The political content of comic books during their so-called Golden Age in the 1940s is more subtle and varied than most intellectuals have been able to understand, but that is a subject for another day.

The crucial break in comic art comes with rigorously realistic comics about war and biting/hilarious social criticism in comics—

both of these from publisher Entertaining Comics, both guided by the great figure of modern satire, *Mad* magazine creator, and inspirer of Monty Python, Saturday Night Live, the Simpsons and so much more. I am talking here about Harvey Kurtzman, a blue-collar Bronx Jew who grew up with his mother reading the *Daily Worker* out loud to him. The next break comes with the so-called underground comix, which were antiwar, ecological, and sometimes painfully but always determinedly uncensored. The most recent break happens as comics become recognized as comic art, earlier in parts of Europe, belatedly in the United States.

Note that this last development is more or less simultaneous with the emergence of new forms of reading and seeing—and with new forms of mass movements.

We are swiftly leaving the 20th century behind, which we left-wingers often take to be an exceptionally gloomy development. Having spent so much of my life studying the history of Marxist movements would tend to confirm the gloom. But I actually don't feel that way.

## **NOTHING IS INEVITABLE, ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE**

It is true that the names or signifiers that moved our precursors to rage, to tears, to denunciations of deserters and the uplifting of radical saints and martyrs—these are not so clear now, except for a pretty small minority. But in the last decade, across the world, Marx is now a subject to conjure, because who else could explain global capitalism and its workings?

What we are lacking is a way to explain the response of mass movements, real and potential, to those developments. And ways to explain to large numbers of people—not one great superior way to explain but lots of ways to reach lots of different kinds of people, especially the wage and salary workers, the unemployed, and all those of good will.

I want to propose, immodestly—since I am not the artist, it is easy for me to be immodest—that the Rosa comic is an urtext of sorts, a way to think about much more than Rosa Luxemburg as a person or about German socialism in its qualities and failings. The enthusiasm of young people for Senator Bernie Sanders' campaign offers more proof, if it were needed, that “socialism” by some definition is not a bygone idea of a vanished era.

All modern history, and not only the history of the West, might be summed up in the socialist failure to prevent the First World War, a failure rooted in centuries of colonialism, as Rosa, we might say, seems to have anticipated in her economic interpretation of capitalism's survival. Most of us here, I think, have long since concluded that the socialist and labor movements of the 1910s, supine to the appeals of war were also, unbeknownst to their members, pulled down by this deeper force of race and ecological barbarism.

Rosa sought to overcome a disadvantage by the mobilized force of proletarian will and of then-recent history. The rise of socialist movements seemed to mark an inevitability, except she knew that nothing is an inevitability. The widespread assumption of capitalism's decline was anything but inevitable.

Comics, at least my kind of comics, tell the story of capitalist development over the past century. For a decade or so I have been trying to support the spread of these stories-as-comics. *Wobblies*, *Che: A Graphic Biography*, and others point in the direction of Rosa, and that is not by accident. *Red Rosa* is, for me, the highest point that can be reached in comics as history, and as an art form. I hope you like the work as much as I do. 

# 5

## SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

BHASKAR SUNKARA

# AN UNORIGINAL PLAN TO SAVE THE PLANET

I discovered Rosa Luxemburg—along with Leon Trotsky—at a young age. In high school, actually, when I should have been doing something more immediately useful, like studying a foreign language or learning how to juggle.

I think I came to those Marxists first, before any others, because they seemed untainted by the crimes of Stalinism yet still offering uncompromisingly radical perspectives.

What distinguished Luxemburg in my mind was how much of a typical Third International Marxist she was. This is not to downplay her original intellectual contributions but rather to emphasize how the narrative about Luxemburg has been perhaps overly shaped by her critique of *What Is To Be Done?* and the perceived over-centralization in the Bolshevik Party and later in the early Soviet government.

It was Luxemburg who reminded her peers that “the mistakes that are made by a truly revolutionary workers’ movement are, historically speaking, immeasurably more fruitful and more valuable than the infallibility of the best possible ‘Central Committee.’” And it was Luxemburg who stood for the “bourgeois” freedoms—freedom of speech, assembly, and expression—that would have been so valuable to life in the Soviet Union.

Yet this perspective has also been used to obscure the fact that Luxemburg was in most respects indistinguishable from other revolutionary socialists—in the tradition of her peers like Trotsky, Lenin, and Gramsci. Though she left behind a trove of personal writings and letters that make her seem more human and approachable than Lenin, though she was free of the burdens of state power that confronted Lenin, she was far closer to him

than to any of those she did battle with within the German Social Democratic Party.

## CAPITALIST PRODUCTION OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

My prompt, then, to discuss specifically what Luxemburg has to offer us on climate change—the most pressing challenge for our generation—can really be reformulated to ask us lessons Lenin or Trotsky or Gramsci or any of the revolutionary socialists of that generation can tell us.

For starters, it's that we need to talk about capitalism. Socialists are right to see the acute climate change crisis and the broader environmental crisis as being rooted largely in the nature of capitalist production and the misuse of resources for the short-term gain of a few.

Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution* was a response to Eduard Bernstein and others within the Social Democratic Party that said the minimum program—the immediate set of reforms that socialists were trying to win people over to—was everything. The revolutionaries insisted on making sure that they were also focused on moving beyond capitalism, on constructing socialism, and presenting a moral and ethical vision of what that would look like and not assuming it would come about inevitably or by accident.

Acting in that spirit today—without merely engaging in historical reenactment—would mean discussing how resources could be rationally harnessed in a way that didn't mean either the climate-change-accelerating status quo continuing or a kind of green austerity for workers on the other.

It's also important to remember that unlike the ultra-left that Luxemburg did battle with in her own time, socialists care deeply about reforms in the here and now. The climate change crisis is an acute one. We can blame capitalism, but we won't be able to build movements strong enough to take on the system as a whole in time to save the planet. We need to address climate change *within* capitalism for now.

Telling people to sit tight and wait for the revolution isn't acceptable.

We can mobilize, openly as socialists along with other allies, and win the immediate help that people, especially the most vulnerable in the Global South and poor communities in the Global North,

need to confront the causes and effects of climate change. But we can do so in a way that builds the movement to not only address climate change but the broader environmental crisis and the irrational system of capitalist production at the root of these problems.

## KEY LESSONS

Socialists in the mold of Luxemburg don't think the best we can aspire to is small reforms, but we value them because they help workers. And also because we know that only through the process of fighting and winning small battles around key issues—like limiting emissions or instituting a carbon tax—can movements develop the experience and confidence needed to take on capitalism as a whole.

But there's one more key lesson from the revolutionary socialist tradition, and that's the question of who should make up our movement for climate justice and who that movement's allies should be. Lenin and Luxemburg would remind us that this has to be movements spearheaded by workers—in alliance with a much broader layer—but fundamentally reflecting their interests.

We can imagine that many of the demands that we're raising—for shifts to renewable energy, for higher emission standards, for the closing of coal power plants—will end up helping green capitalists in the short-term. We may even suggest, as Christian Parenti does, that the federal government—that same state that does lots of terrible things—even use its buying power to make new green technologies viable, jumpstarting new sectors. But this is the nature of demanding things within the confines of capitalism, and there is a big difference between saying that our demands may end up helping green capitalists and saying that we should have green capital at the forefront of our movements or in them at all.

To use language that's a bit out of place in 2016: we can look to Luxemburg and and say no to “class collaborationism.”

We can also take the same examples and be wary of the class nature of many NGOs in the climate justice movement today and think about what broad alternatives rooted in the struggles of workers might look like. How their forms of mobilization and popular education might differ.



Thinking about the issue of climate change in a serious political way, with clarity about where we are at (in capitalism, an exploitive system hurtling us towards environmental disaster), what we need to be doing (building broad movements and eventually a party rooted in the distinct interests of the working class), and where we need to go (with majoritarian support towards a different sort of society, a socialist society built to serve the needs of the vast majority), is to think like Luxemburg, or any other of her comrades, would have. ■

ALYSSA BATTISTONI

# SOCIALISM OR WHOLE FOODS: LUXEMBURGIAN ANSWERS TO OUR CLIMATE CRISIS

The world in which Rosa Luxemburg lived, worked, and wrote a century ago was quite literally a different one—though even then the concentration of carbon molecules in the atmosphere and global average temperatures were on the rise. For socialists at the start of the 21st century, prospects for the next hundred years can appear bleak. Climate change threatens to drown coastal cities, propagate great droughts and terrible storms, drive millions from their homes, and vanish countless species from the planet altogether. Barbarism, that is to say, is not hard to imagine.

The crises Luxemburg imagined, when she declared our choice to be one between socialism and barbarism, were of a different nature. But her insights into capitalism can nevertheless help us understand the predicament we now face—and how we might imagine an alternative.

One of Luxemburg's major contributions in *The Accumulation of Capital* was to point out that capitalism is dependent on an "outside"—that is, on having non-capitalist societies and forms to draw on as it continually expands. The capitalist economy needs an external source from which to obtain resources, find cheap labor, sell surplus commodities, and so on. Capitalism, she writes, "needs non-capitalist social strata as a market for its surplus value, as a source of supply for its means of production and as a reservoir of labor power for its wage system." Yet this is a self-defeating process: once capitalism becomes the only form of production, it can no longer function because it has no outside to draw on.

For Luxemburg, this is its central contradiction. Capitalism, she argues, is “the first mode of economy which is unable to exist by itself, which needs other economic systems as a medium and soil. Although it strives to become universal, and indeed, on account of this its tendency, it must break down—because it is immanently incapable of becoming a universal form of production.”

Luxemburg’s account of capitalism’s outside focuses on imperialism. Capitalism is necessarily imperialist, continually expanding into new, un-commodified societies in order to obtain fresh resources and create new markets to absorb its surplus production. Rather than an original moment of enclosure, primitive accumulation is an ongoing process of capitalism. At the time Luxemburg wrote, though, it seemed to her that this process of expansion was nearing completion and that capitalism itself was therefore in its late stages. It seemed soon to cover the globe, at which point its collapse was imminent.

## **THE ACCUMULATION OF GARBAGE AND CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS**

But of course, capitalism could expand in ways that Luxemburg couldn’t yet imagine. Luxemburg realized that primitive accumulation was an ongoing phenomenon. But capitalist expansion occurs not only as “pre-capitalist” societies are forced to accept commodity economies but also within already-capitalist societies as spaces and forms of previously non-commodified activity are brought into its orbit. Moreover, as David Harvey notes, capitalism’s very dynamism ends up producing differently developed spaces within already-capitalist societies; sources of potential accumulation exist even within a world that is largely capitalist. So a century after Luxemburg finished writing, there remains an “outside” to capitalism, and thus forms of wealth for capitalism to appropriate.

What are these spaces? The household has long been identified as a non-capitalist space within capitalism: Marxist feminists have long pointed out the ways in which capitalism relies on the unwaged work of the family for social reproduction. But capitalism has been making explicit inroads into this space through the increasing commodification of domestic labor and care work, and the privatization of formerly public institutions and social services.

Something similar is happening in the household of nature—the word ecology itself, like the word *economy*, derived from *oikos*, the Greek word for household. The space of “nature” or “life itself” is one of the areas where capitalism is most aggressively expanding.

We tend to characterize capital’s relationship to nature as one primarily of resource extraction. Luxemburg, for example, notes that capitalism’s drive to expand is spurred in part by the need for new sources of natural resources to use as inputs into commodity production: it must “gain immediate possession of important sources of productive forces such as land, game in primeval forests, minerals, precious stones and ores, products of exotic flora such as rubber, etc.” And indeed, capital is increasingly looking for resources not only in the spaces that Luxemburg herself described as sites of imperial expansion, as in the recent wave of land grabs, but to the ultimate outside, outer space itself.

But today, finding new resources is perhaps less pressing than finding “sinks” for absorption, not of capitalism’s surplus goods but rather its surplus waste products—most notably, carbon dioxide. Rather than destroying ecosystems in the process of extracting resources, capitalism now needs them to keep functioning in order to sustain Earth’s “life support systems.” Marx and other classical political economists called these things the “free gifts of nature”—but increasingly they are no longer free. A new suite of environmental management programs seeks to assess the monetary value that ecosystems provide to the economy: they might, for example, price the value of water filtration services provided by a river, storm mitigation provided by a wetland, or crop fertilization provided by honeybees. These kinds of market mechanisms have been roundly critiqued by many leftists as commodifying the biosphere itself and making possible the kind of dispossession that Luxemburg described. Although some of the most nightmarish scenarios have yet to materialize, what Sara Nelson calls a “biospheric service economy” is quickly emerging.

But these programs also suggest a potential update to Luxemburg’s analysis of the global division of labor. Many of these programs originated as development projects oriented around “livelihoods”: they aim to create sources of income for people who otherwise might resort to ecologically destructive activities in order to make a living. (Indeed, the introduction of capitalist economies now takes place in less overtly violent ways than Luxemburg described:

markets are now advanced by the likes of microfinance, development agencies, and philanthro-capitalism.) We should think of these people not as charitable beneficiaries but as laborers doing a kind of care work oriented towards ecosystems, including them in a notion of social reproduction that also recognizes the ecological processes necessary for sustaining life. We then might be able to consider a political response to capitalist expansion—one that seeks to create new relations of solidarity amongst a broadly defined working class. Luxemburg was clear that any movement toward socialism must be led by workers; the same is true of eco-socialism. But we must be expansive in our definition of who counts as a worker and thoughtful about which workers will help lead the way.

## **POSTCOLONIAL POLITICS AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Curiously, for all of Luxemburg's analysis of capitalism's imperialist dynamic, she doesn't have all that much to say about the politics of colonized countries themselves—other than being fairly hostile to the idea of self-determination, which she saw as just another form of bourgeois nationalism. Yet postcolonial politics are particularly critical to contemporary ecological politics: it is the formerly colonized countries of the global South where market-based environmental management programs are being developed and implemented and which stand to suffer the most devastating effects of climate change.

Luxemburg thought that barbarism would occur when the violence wreaked on non-capitalist societies of the periphery came back to haunt the capitalist core. World War I, of course, was the catastrophe forefront in her mind; Luxemburg feared, correctly, that it would ravage an entire generation of working-class men. But just as capitalism could survive and expand beyond the limits Luxemburg imagined, it could also survive devastating violence. Today, in light of the existential threat posed by climate change, the choice between socialism and barbarism can seem all too clear. Climate change will exacerbate storms, droughts, and other extreme weather events, resulting in food shortages, political instability, and a growing number of climate refugees, all while the wealthy withdraw into eco-friendly safe havens. It's important to draw these connections. But the Left should also be careful about declaring that climate change will instigate a new age of barbarism, bolstering the view

that instability necessarily leads to violence. Nor should we expect capitalism to simply collapse as climate change progresses. We must be very clear that there is, in fact, an alternative—and that we will have to struggle to realize it.

Here, we should remember Luxemburg's emphasis on political struggle as a space for consciousness-raising. It may seem clearer than ever to the Left that the choices before us are eco-socialism or barbarism, but it is perhaps also more complicated than ever to explain why. Both capitalism and climate change are massive, slow-moving processes whose effects are visible in daily life but whose causes are often obscured; understanding the two together is even more complex. But Luxemburg believed that regular people could understand the complex systems that shaped their everyday lives. Her commitment to democratic action and popular education is particularly critical in the face of claims that climate change necessitates limits to democracy.

The alternative that we envision must be a different one than that which animated 20th century socialism, intent on keeping up with capitalism's production of material goods. Leftists need to counter the vision of ever-more-consumption, upon which capitalism depends, with a different account of what constitutes quality of life. As we move towards a vision of socialism that emphasizes the development of human capacities, enjoyment of leisure, and other less resource-intensive activities, Luxemburg's vision of a creative, humanist socialism offers a rich resource.

But she should also be seen as a model for what we might call a more-than-humanist socialism—one that recognizes the needs of many kinds of beings. In her letters Luxemburg writes radiantly of the joy of life itself, coaxes ailing butterflies back to life, describes plants in detail befitting of her status as an amateur botanist, and weeps in solidarity with a buffalo being beaten as it struggles to carry a heavy load. These qualities are sometimes dismissed as romantic or sentimental biographical details. But her care for the many living creatures with which humans share a common world should be a guide for any eco-socialism worthy of the name. ■■■

SANDRA REIN

# IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT: MILITARISM THEN AND NOW

**T**his essay was first conceptualized as part of a panel entitled: “Socialism or Barbarism? War, Climate Change, and the Future of the Planet” for the Rosa Remix seminar. When the title was first suggested, I kept thinking of it despairingly as the “End of the World” panel, to borrow a line from REM. However, I was reminded that the lyric, “it’s the end of the world as we know it (and I feel fine)” can be interpreted positively—and we certainly know that Luxemburg herself didn’t dwell for long in despair. As we turn our critical gaze to war, violence, imperialism, social upheaval, climate change, I think we are best served to do so in the spirit of Luxemburg: critical, unflinching, revolutionary.

With this in mind, my contribution to the “End of the World” will be to focus on the final chapter of the *Accumulation of Capital*, entitled “Militarism in the Sphere of Capital Accumulation.” For our present historical moment, at least, I am persuaded that Luxemburg’s most significant contribution to both radical or critical political economy and a broader conversation on realizing human freedom is, at least in part, derived from her understanding and critique of militarism. Now, I am not arguing that our current historical moment is analogous to the historical conditions of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century about which Luxemburg was writing; however, just as the lead up to World War I was marked by state posturing, arms build-up, and the clear enunciation of imperialist interests, the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is also characterized by a “reordering” of regional power distribution (not to mention a reassertion of U.S.

global hegemony in the face of serious challengers), armed violence, and what Mary Kaldor has termed “new wars.” Moreover, I think that most scholars of international relations—bourgeois and critical—have had to acknowledge that the so-called “peace dividend” anticipated after the “end” of the Cold War has not been realized.

## AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF IMPERIALISM

It is worth highlighting Luxemburg’s purpose for writing *The Accumulation of Capital*—an endeavor that she described in a letter to Hans Diefenbach as one of the happiest of her life, and which was written nearly start to finish with little interruption—was to make a significant contribution to the economic theory of imperialism. Luxemburg intended the work to do two things: 1) to understand and analyze the economic roots and practices of (what was) contemporary imperialist politics, and 2) to have “implications” for the struggle against imperialism. If we don’t take seriously the implications of the analysis and make it meaningful in terms of discussing the potential for realizing human freedom by enacting an alternative to capitalism then works like *The Accumulation of Capital* are merely academic exercises. To begin, then, we must examine the basis of her argument about imperialism and militarism more specifically.

Notably, this important theoretical work was completed by a final chapter on militarism—a word we rarely use anymore, though we should. It is significant that this is the final chapter because it is one that also clearly identifies the crucial role of the state in terms of capital accumulation and the maintenance of capitalism as an entire international system. In this chapter, Luxemburg argues convincingly that militarism plays an essential role and is revealed as an enduring feature of imperialism (even as the practices of direct colonialism were fading) and makes the key role of the state in capitalist accumulation most obvious. Luxemburg demonstrates that militarism carries out a determinate function in the history of capital and necessarily accompanies the process of accumulation in each historical phase; she argues:

- 1) In the so-called period of “original accumulation” (I appreciate the new translation of *The Accumulation of Capital* using “original” rather than “primitive”), militarism plays the decisive

role in the conquest of the new world and Asia, later it is key to subjugating modern colonies (including the appropriation of their means of production);

- 2) militarism is necessary for the formation and extension of spheres of interest of European capital in non-European regions and, in particular, the extraction of railway concessions; ultimately, militarism backstops claims of European capital as the international creditor;
- 3) militarism also provides the physical/material means to launch a competitive armed struggle between and among capitalist countries over areas of non-capitalist “civilization.” (It is striking that Luxemburg uses the term “civilizations” in the context of non-capitalist lands when the common view of the time was that these were “uncivilized,” in addition to non-capitalist, spaces.)

We probably all agree that imperialism has done and continues to do these three things. These points have been practiced by active, imperial states historically. Luxemburg, however, does not end her analysis of militarism at these “obvious” points, but claims that they are “supplemented” by militarism from a purely economic standpoint—“as the pre-eminent means for the realization of surplus value, that is, as a sphere of accumulation.” In other words, militarism itself is fundamental to the capitalist project. It is one of the ways that capital both accumulates and expands or reproduces.

Luxemburg’s argument about the pivotal role of militarism forces us to ask how it functions as a sphere of accumulation. At the risk of doing an injustice to Luxemburg’s complex and sophisticated analysis, it can most simply be stated that the state itself maintains the military (and other state apparatuses, of course) through the use of indirect taxation on the wages of the workers. Because this happens after production, it does not affect the total surplus value, but it nonetheless has the effect of freeing an enlarged portion of surplus value for capitalization. What becomes the differentiating factor is that the state, according to Luxemburg, becomes a new market for armaments (and services) when it purchases for warfare (or the maintenance of a standing militia). Luxemburg writes:

“In practice, militarism works in both directions on the basis of indirect taxation by securing maintenance of the standing army—the organ of the rule of capital—and by establishing an unparalleled sphere of accumulation; it fulfills both of these functions at the expense of the regular living conditions of the working class.”

## STATE MILITARISM, CAPITALISM, AND THE BODIES THEY FEED ON

Luxemburg viewed state militarism as fundamental to capitalism and also believed that this is expressed not merely in material but also in ideational ways. We can still see this ideational element with material significance today. In the last several years in the United States and in Canada you have probably observed the “Support our Troops” campaigns. In keeping with Luxemburg’s analysis, we see that it is the working class that pays the indirect taxes in support of the militia, but it also provides the real living bodies for the armed forces—we know about the socio-economic recruitment practices of the U.S. military, in particular, but it also happens in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, it is rare for us to critically engage the state’s messaging around veterans, recruitment, or supporting our troops; through our silence or acquiescence we are failing to both meaningfully support those who are in military service and make visible the co-dependent relationship of capital to the state via the military. As I will note again below, Luxemburg’s work demonstrated that militarism requires the shaping of public opinion. This current example is mentioned to highlight the continuity of state practices—taxation, recruitment, and propaganda are all necessary elements to perpetuate the state *and* accumulation.

I could say much more about the working-class and racially-marked “bodies” recruited to serve the state and capital; however, for this essay I want to return to the discussion of how indirect taxation relates to militarism and the processes of capital accumulation. As already noted, the expansion of surplus value from workers is fairly straight forward, but Luxemburg also draws our attention to how it acts as a mechanism of appropriation from other domestic sources. She notes that the state is able to use indirect taxation to draw revenues from what she calls “non-proletarian consumers,” which ultimately benefits the purposes of accumulation. It is important to note that Luxemburg is referencing domestic, non-capitalist

groups including peasants, artisans, and small producers, i.e., those engaged in simple commodity production. As such, “non-capitalist” is not just conceptualized as referring to lands violently subjected to imperialist interests but also to those small producers within the capitalist state, demonstrating how this method of appropriation is essential and fundamental to capitalism itself.

Tellingly, once the state begins to pursue its militaristic purpose, it is unlikely to significantly reduce its militaristic programs. Luxemburg says that this is “automatic and rhythmic” and “ultimately in the hands of capital itself through the executive and legislative apparatus of the state and through the press, whose function is the production of so-called public opinion.” Thus, we see militarism as in the mutual interests of the state and capital and the critical role of the press in swaying public opinion to stay firmly supportive of the state’s military. In essence, “Support our Troops.”

## THE LONG SHADOW OF MILITARISM

At this point, just when it is getting really good, Luxemburg draws *The Accumulation of Capital* to a close. But before I do the same, I think we are forced to ask if Luxemburg’s analysis of militarism holds for the current period of capitalism. Briefly, let’s look at two elements of the state and contemporary capitalism: arms sales/purchases and military spending. Arguably, the two most “capitalistically successful states,” the United States and China, happen also to be the world’s top two states when measuring military expenditure. The U.S. remains leaps and bounds ahead of even China. And interestingly, the ten largest arms-producing and military services companies are all based in the United States and Western Europe. In further support of Luxemburg’s economic thesis regarding militarism, Saudi Arabia has recently increased military spending by 17%—noticeably in a period of declining oil revenues and increased regional instability. In essence, as the Saudi state potentially moves toward an accumulation crisis, it steps up military spending and becomes more bellicose in its actions in the region.

Of course, I could go on about militarism, modern imperialism, and financial crisis, and we haven’t even begun to touch the role of so-called public opinion (maintained by the press and recruitment practices) that was provocatively raised by Rosa Luxemburg. Let’s suffice it to say that there is a fundamental link between capital’s

need to accumulate and reproduce and the militaristic endeavors of the state—and this relationship requires the active maintenance of public support by the state given the reliance on taxation for the further appropriation of surplus value and other “non-capitalist” producers. In times of crisis, such as witnessed recently, we need to take up Luxemburg’s focus on militarism, not leave it to the “last chapter,” and engage what it means for our practice as well as our theory. Militarism cannot be divorced from economics, social upheaval, international solidarity, or environmental degradation. It is the key lens for understanding one of the state’s fundamental roles in capitalism.

Taking Luxemburg’s insight and applying it to the current moment compels us to revisit the state’s fundamental role in capitalist accumulation in order to begin to think about alternatives to capitalism and the realization of human freedom. We have become very comfortable talking about corporations and the market as if they somehow manage this whole system. Many people have argued that the neoliberal moment has led to a hollowing out of the state or even its disappearance. However, I would argue that since 2008 in particular we’ve witnessed the state performing its fundamental function in capitalism. And it has done so exceedingly well. Part of that success has been achieved through militarism, and of that we shouldn’t lose sight. ■

6

ONE HUNDRED  
YEARS OF THE  
ACCUMULATION  
OF CAPITAL

RAPHAËLE CHAPPE

# NEW PERSPECTIVES ON NEOLIBERAL FINANCE

In *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg identifies a general dynamic that lies at the heart of the process of capital accumulation, namely the chronic tendency to produce crises of over-accumulation. Capitalism needs to continually open up new territories for investment to solve this problem. What is the role played by international finance in this process? Though finance is somewhat incidental to the main argument of the book, or at least an add-on, Luxemburg's analysis of the international loan system prior to World War I acknowledges international finance as a fundamental agent in the dynamics of global capitalism.

Luxemburg's argument is that loaned funds are eventually routed back to purchase productive capital from the country where capital originated, thereby realizing surplus value in that country and adding to capital accumulation. In recent years, we have seen capital in constant need of new international investment opportunities, an expansion of the financial sector relative to the size of the productive economy, and the socialization of financial risk in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 financial crisis. Though such developments are broadly consistent with Luxemburg's view of finance, the changing nature of capital markets since she wrote *The Accumulation of Capital* begs for a reexamination of the original mechanisms she described.

The goal of this short essay is to attempt to do this by outlining Luxemburg's original analysis of international loans and illustrating how the framework may still be relevant to understanding modern financial markets through the example of the sovereign debt crisis in Greece. Luxemburg can help us conceptualize the growth of finance both as an expression of the need to overcome capitalism as a purely closed system and as an expression of imperialism.

## LUXEMBURG'S ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

What Luxemburg describes in Chapter 30 of *The Accumulation of Capital* is the following. Profits (surplus value) are extracted from the workforce in a rich country with capital-intensive industries and redeployed overseas through loans, rather than into the next round of production at home. The loans are made to poorer countries, which use the funds to import capital goods supplied by the country where capital originated, thereby realizing surplus value and adding to capital accumulation in that country. One example given is that of the rise in British commodity exports to Latin America in 1824-1825, financed through British loans. Loans eventually have to be repaid out of assets originating from pre-existing non-capitalist production. Hence international loans serve various functions: 1) transforming the wealth of non-capitalist groups into productive capital; 2) facilitating international transfer of capital from old capitalist countries to young ones (today we might say from developed to developing, or from rich to poor); and 3) enabling the realization of surplus value at home when the loans are paid off, with repayment flows typically generated from assets that lie outside of capitalistic relations.

What are the specific mechanisms of wealth extraction designed to ensure that the loans are paid off in this way? To answer this question, Luxemburg discusses the cases of Egypt and Turkey. In Egypt, sugar cane production was financed through foreign loans (the venture eventually collapsed as Egypt faced a crisis of over-indebtedness). The source of repayment was “the Egyptian fellah-peasant economy,” namely land (some of which was pledged as collateral for public debt), labor power and forced labor, as well as a tax on peasant holdings. In Turkey concessions were obtained by a Turkish company funded by European capital to develop railroads. The loans were backed by tithes to be collected by tax-farmers or stored in kind (peasant grain) by the Turkish government. Through these examples, Luxemburg shows that there would appear to be at least two mechanisms by which national income from non-capitalist groups can be used to service the debt and realize the surplus value of the country where capital originated: the pledging of collateral in the case of loans to government and the socialization of debt through the tax system.

Though capital investments in foreign countries and the demand of these countries for capital imports could be viewed as

something positive since, at first glance, they provide the means to further development, in Luxemburg's analysis the whole scheme conceals something more sinister, namely the extraction of value by the capitalist system, as well as an embedded imperialist power dynamic. The loans are "the surest ties by which the old capitalist states maintain their influence, exercise financial control and exert pressure on the customs, foreign and commercial policy of the young capitalist states." Luxemburg teaches us that one can think of finance as a tool of control which can ultimately be used to force the states being financed to adopt capitalistic institutional arrangements that favor the interests of capital.

## THE CASE OF GREECE

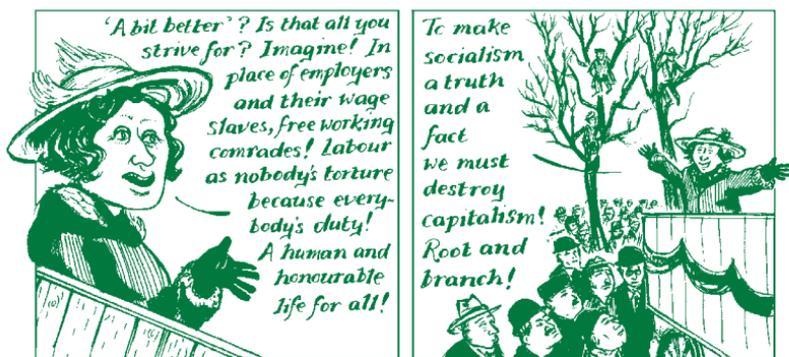
I have chosen to use Luxemburg's insights as a prism of analysis to highlight some interesting facts regarding the ongoing Greek sovereign debt crisis. One major development since Luxemburg wrote *The Accumulation of Capital* is the growing complexity of financial markets. There are now potentially many layers of intermediation between the domestic extraction of profit, on the one hand, and its redeployment in international financial markets. For this reason, it may not be so easy to trace the origin of international loans in the same way as Luxemburg did. However, it is interesting to note that though the ownership of Greek debt has changed a lot since the different bailouts, for the most part it has always been foreign-owned. Currently, almost two-thirds of Greece's debt, about 200 billion euros, is owed to the eurozone bailout fund or other eurozone countries. A key difference between Greece and, for instance, Japan (throughout the crisis debt-to-GDP ratios remained lower than those of Japan) is that in Greece the debt is primarily held by foreign capital, while in Japan it is not.

What is the Greek crisis really about? One aspect of Luxemburg's analysis that interests me in this regard is the link between finance and international trade. An idea that has been put forward by a number of economists (notably Paul Krugman, in his *New York Times* blog) is that at the root of the Greek crisis lies its current account deficit (rather than excessive welfare state spending or budget deficits). Broadly consistent with Luxemburg's analysis, other than oil-producing countries and China, the Greek current account deficit is with the same eurozone countries that hold Greek

debt (Germany, France, and Italy). Might this balance of trade solve a realization problem for those eurozone countries? The answer to this question is not so straightforward, but in the case of Germany the idea that German trade surpluses are being financed by Greek deficits could be advanced.

Greece was not allowed to declare bankruptcy. The prime motivation of the bailout packages was to avoid a Greek default and protect the rest of the eurozone, as the funds were designed to repay existing debt rather than rebuild the Greek economy. The bailout funds never made their way into the economy. This is consistent with Luxemburg's premise that capital accumulation would come to a halt with a crisis of over-indebtedness, so that default must be avoided at all cost. This is consistent with the idea that debt is also used as a form of imperialism and extraction, to acquire and privatize assets as a basis for capital accumulation. Bailouts came with conditions. Creditors imposed harsh austerity terms, requiring deep budget cuts, lower social spending, and steep tax increases.

Could we analyze these demands as some form of extraction, tapping into non-capitalist sectors? Can we view, as Luxemburg invites us, finance as a mechanism of extraction of pre-existing non-capitalist wealth? The existence of a clearly defined non-capitalist sector (such as the Egyptian fellah-peasant economy) is not as clear-cut as it was at the time of Luxemburg's writings. More generally, following the worldwide expansion of the capitalistic mode of production, the non-capitalist sector has arguably shrunk. Yet we may still ask the same question that she did in the case of Egypt and Turkey: Who ultimately bears the financial burden of loan reimbursement? In Greece, one answer lies in the socialization of



debt through the tax system. Under pressure to balance the budget in a context of massive tax evasion, prior Greek governments have added new taxes on the bulk of citizens who were tax-compliant, rather than on the actual corporations or wealthy individuals who were able to hide earnings. Further, as last resort, markets would have no hesitation to demand that Greece enter into a broad program of privatization and sell public property, even the Greek islands, as suggested in a mainstream German newspaper. We can see the same logic at work as that described by Luxemburg.

Did the sophisticated financial instruments engineered to structure unsustainable debt levels ultimately benefit Greek society at large? In the case of Luxemburg's Egyptian and Turkish examples, loans were used to finance infrastructure projects (interestingly, in Greece some loan proceeds were used to finance the major public infrastructure spending for the 2004 Olympic games). Did the lending facilities ultimately serve the interests of creditors (capital) or the interests of the Greek people? This is the broader question that Luxemburg invites us to reflect on, and it is still very much relevant 100 years after the publication of *The Accumulation of Capital*. ■

PATRICK BOND

# THE ACCUMULATION OF CAPITAL: REMIXED FOR MODERN-DAY SOUTHERN AFRICA

**R**emixing Luxemburg's *The Accumulation of Capital* with our post-apartheid political-economic tradition, a number of salient ideas emerge. To begin, Luxemburg's *Accumulation* takes the reader through several vital historical examples of the way "primitive communism," simple commodity reproduction, and capitalist/non-capitalist relations emerged: ancient Germans (the mark communities), the Inca of Latin America, India, Russia, the French versus Algerians, the Opium Wars in China, mechanisation versus the interests of US farmers, debt in Egypt's Osman empire, and conditions of early 20th century resource extraction and socio-political organisation in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (i.e., the core sites of British-German-Belgian imperialism).

The latter analysis prepared researchers to consider, a century later, how in Southern Africa, a new form of imperialism is emerging: "sub-imperialism." Two important ideas were advanced on this topic. First, Harold Wolpe (1926–1996) adopted the Luxemburgist notion "articulations of modes of production" in the early 1970s to help revive and regenerate his South African Communist Party's tradition of race-class debate. Second, Guy Mhone (1943–2005) brought his native Malawian peripheral vision to a unique theory of "economic enclavity," again emphasising ways that capital and the non-capitalist intertwined.

There was, in this fusion of three theorists—bringing to our world view, respectively, historic and world-imperialist

(Luxemburg), South African (Wolpe), and regional Southern African (Mhone) analytical agendas—a fruitful engagement with the political economy of frictions between capitalist and non-capitalist social relations.

## CAPITALIST CRISES BEGET IMPERIALISM

For Luxemburg, the central question was the way imperialism turned to extra-economic extraction of surpluses, in a context of desperation:

“Accumulation of capital periodically bursts out in crises and spurs capital on to a continual extension of the market. Capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist relations, nor [...] can it tolerate their continued existence side by side with itself. Only the continuous and progressive disintegration of non-capitalist relations makes accumulation of capital possible. Non-capitalist relations provide a fertile soil for capitalism; more strictly: capital feeds on the ruins of such relations, and although this non-capitalist milieu is indispensable for accumulation, the latter proceeds at the cost of this medium nevertheless, by eating it up. Historically, the accumulation of capital is a kind of metabolism between capitalist economy and those pre-capitalist methods of production without which it cannot go on and which, in this light, it corrodes and assimilates.”

Luxemburg knew capitalism well enough to emphasise that this was not a process simply of capital flowing into a region and setting up compatible class relations, and her (ultimately mistaken) orientation to the reproduction schemas was one indication of how the ebb and flow of capital and the rise of crisis tendencies together generated and accelerated uneven development.

It is well understood how in today’s crisis-ridden world, perpetual overproduction has caused a long stagnation since the 1970s, characterised by “periodic and cyclical swings of reproduction between overproduction and crisis.” The turn by capital to evermore intense bouts of “accumulation by dispossession”—as David Harvey re-articulated Luxemburg’s insights—means that the observations she made in 1913 are immediately relevant to anyone interested in capitalist exploitation of the non-capitalist life today:

“Capitalism is the first mode of economy which is unable to exist by itself, which needs other economic systems as a medium and soil [...]. In its living history it is a contradiction in itself, and its movement of accumulation provides a solution to the conflict and aggravates it at the same time.”

The “solution” isn’t really a resolution, Luxemburg showed: it is a “displacement.” And to establish the geographical terrain on which capitalist crisis displacement unfolded a century ago—and still unfolds today—meant Luxemburg had to criticise the geopolitics of a colonialism that fit her theory of imperialism so well.

## CAPITALISM CARVES AFRICA

That geopolitical terrain was carved out in her adopted city of Berlin, at a mansion on Wilhelmstraße 77, where the “Scramble for Africa” took place in 1884–85. Not a single African was there to negotiate, but indeed that site—today a pub and block of non-descript flats after its post-war demolition—is a central reason why Africa is carved into 54 dysfunctional country units, splitting relatives from each other and imposing colonial-era languages into perpetuity.

The Berlin conference’s codification of colonial power—mainly held by Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, and Germany—ensured the penetration of capitalist legal systems of property ownership, the settler’s monopoly of violence, and the introduction of monetary arrangements. With these capitalist innovations, colonial powers set up pseudo-states in Africa so as to more effectively loot the continent. But Luxemburg’s great innovation was to prove how colonial-imperial accumulation used “other economic systems as a medium and soil.”

In South Africa, she argued, this meant the Berlin Conference could only have occurred once it was clear to the world’s powers how valuable the colonial conquest could be:

“British capital revealed its real intentions only after two important events had taken place: the discovery of the Kimberley diamond fields in 1869–70, and the discovery of the gold mines in the Transvaal in 1882–5, which initiated a new epoch in the history of South Africa. Then Cecil Rhodes went into action. Public opinion in England rapidly swung over, and the greed for the treasures of South Africa

urged the British government on to drastic measures. The modest peasant economy was forthwith pushed into the background—the mines, and thus the mining capital, coming to the fore. The policy of the British government veered round abruptly. Great Britain had recognised the Boer Republics by the Sand River Agreement and the Treaty of Bloemfontein in the fifties. Now her political might advanced upon the tiny republic from every side, occupying all neighbouring districts and cutting off all possibility of expansion.”

The period of the late 1800s in which colonial-imperial power consolidated was also one of a sustained world capitalist crisis, in which the City of London, the Paris financial markets, and other financiers marshalled over-accumulated capital, directing its flows into the adventurous investments associated with Cecil Rhodes, Belgium’s King Leopold, and other larger-than-life accumulators-by-dispossession.

## THE RISE OF THE SUB-IMPERIAL POWERS

If we remix the relations between North and South a century later, as did Harvey in *The New Imperialism*, we relearn the relevance of Luxemburg’s ideas, based on this driving force: “Accumulation of capital periodically bursts out in crises and spurs capital on to a continual extension of the market. Capital cannot accumulate without the aid of non-capitalist relations.” As Harvey puts it,

“The opening up of global markets in both commodities and capital created openings for other states to insert themselves into the global economy, first as absorbers but then as producers of surplus capitals. They then became competitors on the world stage. What might be called ‘sub-imperialisms’ arose [...] each developing centre of capital accumulation sought out systematic spatio-temporal fixes for its own surplus capital by defining territorial spheres of influence.”

That dynamic, in turn, requires us to think of the way the BRICS—the coordinated network of heads of state and corporations from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—arose as sub-imperial allies of world capital’s expansionism to “define territorial spheres of influence” especially after the 2008 crisis. Their new physical spaces include neo-colonial land grabs in Africa, by voracious investors

from India, China, South Africa, and Brazil. Examples of this are many, but generally focus on sources of food, biofuels, minerals, and petroleum. Assisting in the process we often find warlords, the corrupt family members of corrupt politicians, and other domestic capital interests.

In addition, the expansion is often explicitly sub-imperial—in the sense of lubricating capitalist relations in non- or less-capitalist geographical territories—by virtue of South African retail capital's exceptionally successful penetration of African supermarkets and nascent shopping malls. One of the main firms involved, Makro, happens to have recently been purchased by Walmart and is a reliable representative of imperialism's unprecedented concentration of wholesale capital and of the ultra-cheap assembly line—especially stretching into super-exploitation of China's workers, rural women and environment, and outsourcing of greenhouse gas emissions—that this entails.

For these reasons, doubts arose in the South African left about how, as the then-Deputy Foreign Minister Marius Fransman put it: "Our presence in BRICS would necessitate us to push for Africa's integration into world trade." This sentiment was amplified by Development Bank of Southern Africa's Michelle Ruiters: "Our main focus is [...] financing large infrastructure cross-border projects, specifically because we find that most of the blockages that exist around infrastructure delivery are those on the cross-border list."

The BRICS states' intention here is to aid their extractive industries to strip the continent further. Outside South Africa (by far the continent's largest holder of minerals, often estimated in the trillions of dollars), the other main African countries with extensive mining underway at the peak of the commodity cycle were Botswana, Zambia, Ghana, Namibia, Angola, Mali, Guinea, Mauritania, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Africa's oil and gas producers are, in order of reserves, Nigeria, Angola, Ghana, Gabon, Congo (Republic), Equatorial Guinea, Chad, and Uganda.

To further extract Africa's raw materials, planning began for a massive new \$93-billion-per-year Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa, and the BRICS New Development Bank was launched in 2015 with a view, in part, to provide financing for such mega-infrastructure projects.

## CAPITALIST CONTRADICTIONS AND SUB-IMPERIAL AMBITIONS

All this occurred just as world commodity prices began to crash. From 2011–15, the slowing rate of Chinese growth and overproduction tendencies meant the decline of major mineral prices by more than 50 percent. In South Africa’s case, the collapse of coal and platinum by more than half was devastating to the share values of major firms with local operations, whose net worth quickly plummeted, in many cases by more than 85 percent.

It is in this context of crisis plus super-exploitative relations between capitalist and non-capitalist spheres that the Luxemburgist theory of imperialism finds African confirmations a century on. In 2013, WikiLeaks published emails hacked by Jeremy Hammond from the files of Stratfor (known as the private-sector version of the Central Intelligence Agency). The company’s analysts quite correctly summed up the situation in the region as follows:

“South Africa’s history is driven by the interplay of competition and cohabitation between domestic and foreign interests exploiting the country’s mineral resources. Despite being led by a democratically-elected government, the core imperatives of SA remain maintenance of a liberal regime that permits the free flow of labor and capital to and from the southern Africa region, and maintenance of a superior security capability able to project into south-central Africa.”

The democratically-elected government of the African National Congress (ANC) explicitly calls itself “anti-imperialist,” and yet in 2013, a century after Luxemburg explained the inner necessity of imperialism to turn to violence in search of extra-economic wealth (capitalist versus non-capitalist looting), a small but revealing example emerged in the Central African Republic (CAR). There, President Francois Bozize’s special advisor Didier Pereira had partnered with “ANC hard man” Joshua Nxumalo and the ANC’s funding arm, Chancellor House, to establish a diamond export monopoly. According to *Mail & Guardian* newspaper investigators, “Pereira is currently partnered to the ANC security supreme and fundraiser, Paul Langa, and former spy chief Billy Masetlha.”

The result was that both Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma deployed troops to first support Bozize at the presidential

palace and after he fled, to protect Johannesburg firms' operations in the CAR capital of Bangui. But the city was over-run by rebels on the weekend prior to the BRICS summit in Durban, and tragically, fifteen of the 220 South African National Defence Force (SANDF) troops involved in a massive fire fight against the rebels lost their lives in Bangui and were returned home in coffins just as the BRICS leaders also flew in. The incident very visibly demonstrated the limits of South Africa's "superior security capability to project into south-central Africa."

But SANDF wasn't alone in striving to serve capital's most excessive interests. For seven months before, in mid-August 2012, the local South African Police Service (SAPS) gained international notoriety for the massacre of 34 wildcat-striking Lonmin platinum mineworkers at Marikana. The police were called in via emails from Cyril Ramaphosa, the owner of nine percent of Lonmin representing black investors. He was the former mineworker leader in the late 1980s whose national strike breakthrough shook apartheid. Ramaphosa soon became a black billionaire capitalist and remained so close to the ANC elites—becoming deputy president of the ruling party in late 2012 and the country's deputy president in 2014—that he carelessly told the police minister he wanted a "pointed response" to the "dastardly criminal" mineworkers in an email on 15 August 2012. Within 24 hours, the police committed the Marikana Massacre.

## THE NECESSITY OF RESISTANCE

At this point, the South African working class was fed up with the displacement of capitalist crisis onto their bodies: lower wages relative to capital's profits (by more than five percent compared to 1994), rising inequality (up to an exceptionally high "income Gini Coefficient" of 0.77 on a scale of 0 to 1, according to the World Bank), extreme poverty (rising to 63 percent of the population by 2011 according to University of Cape Town researchers), and soaring financial obligations. The latter were important, insofar as deregulated "mashonisa" loan-sharks had moved en masse to the Marikana platinum fields to find borrowers. The mineworkers soon had so many loan repayments stripping their income that, by 2012, they became absolutely desperate. Even after the massacre, the workers stayed atop the hillside in their thousands, on strike for a full

month to win a \$1000/month wage, and in 2015 more than 70,000 workers struck for five months across all the other platinum fields, before winning their salary demand, but at the expense of enormous misery and fury.

It was all too reminiscent of Luxemburg's description of the same terrain a century earlier:

“The more ruthlessly capital sets about the destruction of non-capitalist strata at home and in the outside world, the more it lowers the standard of living for the workers as a whole, the greater also is the change in the day-to-day history of capital. It becomes a string of political and social disasters and convulsions, and under these conditions, punctuated by periodical economic catastrophes or crises, accumulation can go on no longer. But even before this natural economic impasse of capital's own creating is properly reached it becomes a necessity for the international working class to revolt against the rule of capital.”

The necessity is felt in the African working class, even more than any other continent's, according to the World Economic Forum, whose Global Competitiveness Index each year measures “employer-labor cooperation.” Since 2012, the South African proletariat has had the leading position as the world's least cooperative working class (in 2011 the class was ranked 7<sup>th</sup>, reflecting the intensification of struggles like Marikana). The number of “violent” demonstrations has soared from fewer than 600 per year in 2002-04 to nearly quadruple that number by 2014.

The World Economic Forum also shows the potential of other African working classes. Amongst 148 countries surveyed, Africans ranked impressively on a scale of 10 (most pliable) to 1 (most militant): of the 38 most militant working classes surveyed in 2013 (with rankings of 4 or lower), 18 are African. South Africa's score of 2.6 revealed an exceptionally angry working class, but a number of others have also performed with admirable strength in resisting local capital and the state elites that enforce capitalist rule.

Indeed, the tempo of revolt is apparently increasing, especially since the peak and then fall of commodity prices in 2011. The African Development Bank commissions annual measurements of social unrest from Reuters and Agence France-Press. According to press sources, major public protests rose from an index level of 100



in 2000 to nearly 450 in 2011. Instead of falling back after the Arab Spring—especially the regime-overthrows in North Africa’s Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco—the index of protests rose higher still, to 520 in 2012, as Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda maintained the momentum of 2011. In 2013, the index rose still higher, to 550. In 2014 it fell back just slightly. But as in the earlier years, the main causes of protest were socio-economic injustices.

In some settings, especially ranging from Nigeria, Mali, and the Sahel across Central Africa to Sudan, Somalia, and Kenya, these grievances quickly fuse with the pressures of (capitalist-induced) climate change to uproot the non-capitalist strata of peasant farmers and nomads—such as in Darfur—which in turn gives local populations

more reasons to despair. It is no coincidence that since George W. Bush founded the African Command in 2008, thousands of US forces have established dozens of bases across the continent so as to train African militaries (as documented by Nick Turse) to put down these rebellions. As Jacob Zuma confirmed after the continent's leaders met with Barack Obama in 2014, "There had been a good relationship already between Africa and the US but this summit has reshaped it and has taken it to another level [...]. We secured a buy-in from the US for Africa's peace and security initiatives [...]. As President Obama said, the boots must be African."

## SOLIDARITY AND IDEOLOGY

As Luxemburg warned,

"capital increasingly employs militarism for implementing a foreign and colonial policy to get hold of the means of production and labour power of non-capitalist countries and societies. This same militarism works in a like manner in the capitalist countries to divert purchasing power away from the non-capitalist strata. The representatives of simple commodity production and the working class are affected alike in this way. At their expense, the accumulation of capital is raised to the highest power, by robbing the one of their productive forces and by depressing the other's standard of living. Needless to say, after a certain stage the conditions for the accumulation of capital both at home and abroad turn into their very opposite—they become conditions for the decline of capitalism."

The crash of oil and mineral prices starting in 2011 confirms that the commodity super-cycle and the era of ridiculous "Africa Rising" rhetoric is now decisively over. The period ahead will perhaps instead be known as "Africans Uprising." Looking at this continent a century ago, Luxemburg found instances of non-capitalist, anti-capitalist resistance, just as the German government began its genocide of the Herero people of Namibia. From North Africa to South Africa, colonialism ran into trouble:

"The break-up of communal property was primarily intended to smash the social power of the Arab family associations and to quell

their stubborn resistance against the French yoke, in the course of which there were innumerable risings so that, in spite of France's military superiority, the country was in a continual state of war [...]. The ultimate purpose of the British government (in Southern Africa) was clear: Long in advance it was preparing for land robbery on a grand scale, using the native chieftains themselves as tools. But in the beginning it was content with the "pacification" of the Negroes by extensive military actions. Up to 1879 were fought nine bloody Kaffir wars to break the resistance of the Bantus."

The same bloody wars are being fought against African uprisings. What was missing a century ago, and still is today, is a coordinated strategy so that when revolt rises as the capitalist system meets non-capitalist societies and nature in Africa, the resistance can be stronger and sturdier—and more genuinely anti-capitalist—than we have experienced to date. The anti-colonial but resolutely nationalist politics which Frantz Fanon warned about when writing of the "Pitfalls of National Consciousness" exhibited by petit-bourgeois leaders in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* still prevail, and a genuinely radical pan-African anti-capitalism is still to be widely articulated.

Luxemburg points the way forward on ideology, flowing directly from the various experiences of proletarian and pre-proletarian uprisings she so carefully observed—at a distance in Southern Africa—and organized in Europe:

"At a certain stage of development there will be no other way out than the application of socialist principles. The aim of socialism is not accumulation but the satisfaction of toiling humanity's wants by developing the productive forces of the entire globe. And so we find that socialism is by its very nature a harmonious and universal system of economy." 

RICHARD D. WOLFF

# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF CAPITALISM'S GLOBAL RELOCATION

**R**osa Luxemburg's great work displays extraordinary merits. First, she explained key dimensions of the capitalism of her time in an exemplary application of Marxian economics. Second, she integrated foreign trade and imperialism into economic theory further and with more insight than most economists including Marx had yet done. Third, she showed the powerful insights available by using Marx's basic value and price concepts: a remarkable testimony to the usefulness of the labor theory of value. Finally, she linked her theoretical work to the strategic concerns and debates of the workers' movements of her time. She took sides with an open honesty rarely equaled since among economic theorists who sell themselves instead by pretending to be "scientists above politics."

To recognize and honor those achievements in *The Accumulation of Capital*, let us carry forward her kind of analysis. That is particularly appropriate because capitalism's current historic global shift is seriously underappreciated. From its start as the prevalent economic system in 18th century England, capitalism spread into Western Europe, North America, Japan and, from those places, eventually to the rest of the world. Until the 1970s, capitalism concentrated its factories, offices, warehouses, and stores in its old centers: Western Europe, North America, and Japan.

## THE EXPANSION OF THE HINTERLANDS

Around the old centers were areas called hinterlands. At first these were the rural areas just beyond the towns and cities where capitalism concentrated its enterprises. Hinterlands provided raw

materials, food, migrants moving into towns for jobs, and markets for capitalism's output commodities. With increasing urbanization coupled to industrialization, the hinterland had to expand. Colonialism and imperialism globalized the hinterlands.

By the 1970s, the world had been divided into a core center—actually what we call the old centers plus a few of their colonial settler outposts—and a periphery. Extreme differences in economic development, standards of living, etc., separated them. The development of capitalism in the old centers had produced a working class able to struggle and win the higher wages needed for a rising standard of living. This had not been possible in the far larger, more dispersed, culturally diverse periphery. By the 1970s, capitalism had produced an extremely unevenly developed world economy—the global parallel to the usually unequal developments inside countries, regions, and cities (nicely illustrated in Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums*, 2006).

Capitalists in the center had a set of “eureka” moments in the 1960s and 1970s. The more competitive among them recognized an opportunity opened up for them by capitalism's uneven development. Newly installed jet travel rendered every spot on the planet accessible within a few hours. Modern telecommunications allowed corporate executives to monitor and control workers in factories, offices, and stores thousands of miles away as easily as earlier they had controlled the lower floors from the top floors of their business buildings. Likewise by the 1970s, the people and governments in the countries defined across the periphery were desperate for jobs, finance, infrastructure, and enterprises needed to reverse their centuries-old “underdevelopment.”

Thus in the 1970s a profound new economic deal was struck. Capitalists from the old centers wanted cheaper labor and fewer regulatory constraints than were obtainable there. They could get what they wanted by relocating factories, offices, and eventually stores to the former hinterlands, the former periphery—the desperate-for-development economies of China, India, Brazil, and so on. The latter would provide cheap labor and few restrictive regulations. The old-center capitalists who first risked their capital to make such moves reaped the kinds of profits that turned many others into devoted followers.

## GLOBAL RELOCATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALISM

Capitalism's historic and ongoing global relocation began by focusing on manufacturing. Now it includes services as well. Leading capitalists abandoned their old centers to create more profitable new centers with local capitalists and their governments as partners. Social transformations that took centuries elsewhere have occurred in these new centers in just a few decades—out of extreme poverty, from rural to urban, and from agricultural to industrial. The consequences for capitalism's old and new centers are barely beginning to be understood.

Capitalism's global relocation both followed from and exacerbated a sudden increase in the supply of labor power pouring into capitalism's orbit. Hundreds of millions of workers, formerly kept out of the modern capitalist labor market (by poverty, underdevelopment, political isolation of countries, etc.), were suddenly brought into it. Desperate for jobs and long used to low standards of living, they accepted wages much lower than capitalists had been paying in the old centers. In Marx's terms, the price of labor power fell far below its value. Capitalists flocked from the old centers to take advantage of the opportunity created by the sudden imbalance in the supply relative to the demand for capitalist employees. Capital proved globally mobile while labor remained less so, as evidenced by the much more limited, although significant, increase in immigration to the old centers.

Excess supplies work to the advantage of the buyers as opposed to the sellers of labor power. Wages go down, profits rise, and economic inequalities deepen. Marx's economic theories then ask a question unknown in conventional economics: Will the low price of labor power rise back up to the value of labor power, or will the value of labor power descend to the lower price? Labor will seek to drive up the price toward the value of labor power, while capital will seek to depress the value toward the price. The outcome, for Marx, depends on the comparative levels of political organization, cultural persuasion, and force that labor and capital bring, respectively, to this struggle.

Moreover, the struggle is now worldwide due to the increasing globalization of the market for labor power. Real wages have been stagnant to declining since the 1970s across the old centers

of capitalism, whereas they have been rising in capitalism's new centers. This suggests that prices of labor power are rising toward values of labor power in the new centers while exactly the opposite transpires in the old centers. Their possible convergence at some in-between point of equivalence will last only until the inevitable new disruptions of that equivalence occur.

In any case, that in-between point means a broad decline in labor's share of total output will attend capitalism's global relocation. It already has deepened levels of income and wealth inequality within capitalist economies in both old and new centers (although not between them). There is abundant empirical evidence for all this. Thomas Piketty's 2013 work *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* is the best source for the statistics, although his arguments for why it happened and what to do about it are not mine, nor are they consistent with Rosa Luxemburg's or Marx's work.

## THE POLITICAL QUESTION *PAR EXCELLENCE*

In capitalism's old centers this historic relocation of capitalism has created widespread feelings of abandonment. The system that demanded and won mass loyalty is leaving and taking with it—or so it feels to many—the regular wage increases, job securities, and benefits that were once thought guaranteed to capitalism's great and growing “middle classes.” In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, capitalism in the old centers compensated its often militant working classes for ever higher exploitation by rising real wages and improving job conditions. Since the 1970s, capitalism offers that deal only to the people in its new centers. It offers long-term stagnation or decline in real wages and working conditions to the vast majority of the working classes of the old centers. Thus the political question *par excellence* in the old centers: As working classes there grasp and digest what capitalism now offers them, will they accept so inferior a deal compared to what they became accustomed to during the previous century? Parallel questions will gnaw at social stability in the new centers, where rapid capitalist development is generating even more glaringly grotesque inequalities and instabilities.

As capitalism's center and periphery change places after 250 years, the process and its outcomes could well destabilize the whole system. Depending on how the critics of capitalism,

enlarged and emboldened by rapid growth in their numbers and understanding, intervene, they might convert destabilization into system change. ■

**7**

**INSTEAD OF A  
CONCLUSION**

PETER HUDIS AND PAUL LE BLANC

# A LIFE WORTH REVISITING: LOOKING BACK ON (AND PUBLISHING) ROSA'S COMPLETE WORKS

The contributions to this volume originated in an international conference in New York City, “Rosa Remix” (August 21–22, 2015). It was co-sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office and Verso, which together are responsible for the publication in English of Rosa Luxemburg’s *Complete Works*. A primary purpose for the conference was to generate broader discussion of Luxemburg’s life and contributions and to involve more people in helping to make the publication of her works and dissemination of her ideas a vibrant reality. A focus was the publication of two volumes of newly translated economic writings by Luxemburg, which the two of us were involved in editing. Luxemburg’s economics provided a key topic for the conference, but no less central to our purpose was the relevance of Luxemburg’s life and work to our own time.

There are significant differences and similarities between Luxemburg’s time and our own. Luxemburg came to maturity in a period in which the European labor and socialist movements were themselves coming to a certain maturity. An influential Marxist orientation animated a massive and growing movement of parties, trade unions, social and cultural organizations, and more. This rich array of activities was grounded in a belief that the struggles of the growing working class must not only secure a better quality of life within the present but must also bring about a transition from capitalism to socialism. It was a time of profound change and innovation: New technologies were drawing the world closer together in multiple ways, generating an increase both of wealth and

inequality, with innovations in science and culture matched by periodic economic crises and a voracious intensification of imperialist and militarist dynamics. It was a period, too, in which family patterns and the role of women were in transition in many parts of the world, combining a widespread process that deepened certain aspects of female oppression with other more positive developments that opened new opportunities for at least some women, including Luxemburg herself.

## A REMARKABLE BODY OF WORK

Born in 1871 into a well-to-do, highly cultured family that would nurture the critical intelligence of their exceptionally bright daughter, Rosa Luxemburg grew up in a Poland divided under German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian domination at a time when the rising tides of *democratic aspiration* and *industrial capitalist transformation* were generating the crystallization of the socialist movement on a global scale. She was drawn into the revolutionary movement in Poland before she was fifteen years old. Even as she was completing her formal academic education, securing a doctorate in economics at the University of Zurich, she was being trained and tempered in the Marxist underground.

In 1898, Luxemburg moved to Germany in order to play a more substantial role in the massive and influential German Social Democratic Party (SPD). She soon occupied a prominent place in the revolutionary wing of the socialist movement, gaining considerable respect and also attracting considerable hostility. This hostility came not only from defenders of the capitalist status quo but also from bureaucratic-conservative elements in the labor and socialist movements threatened by her brilliant contributions to revolutionary Marxism. Luxemburg's closest comrades were professional revolutionaries and working-class intellectuals whose lives were an idealistic and passionate blend of revolutionary agitation, organizing, intensive education, and analysis, seasoned with debates and polemics, sometimes punctuated by strikes or insurrections, and often laced with prison and martyrdom.

After her own 1919 martyrdom, in the wake of an abortive workers' uprising, she left behind a remarkable body of work in Polish, German, and Russian. This is what is being gathered in the English-language *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*. Its aim is to enable

a new generation to explore the full range of her multidimensional contributions as theoretician, activist, and original personality. Luxemburg's quest for what she called a "land of boundless possibilities" is unmistakable to anyone who encounters her most important political writings as well as her many lesser-known articles, speeches, and essays on the political issues of her day.

Refusing to define herself in the terms often adopted by her contemporaries, she issued a searing critique of the inhumanity of capitalism while being no less critical of what she viewed as misguided efforts by radicals to supplant it. Her understanding that capitalism could only be overcome through a thoroughly participatory and democratic process that actively involves the *majority* of the oppressed was a departure from the hierarchical models of electoral politics and revolutionary putschism that defined so many efforts at social change in the 20th century, just as it anticipates the aspirations of many feminists, ecologists, and "Occupy" activists struggling to avoid the errors of the past in the 21st century.

## THE PILLARS OF INFLUENCE

Luxemburg's work has proven especially influential in three aspects of modern political theory. One concerns the relation between reform and revolution. In sharp opposition to those (such as Eduard Bernstein) who argued that capitalism's "civilizing mission" of developing productive forces and parliamentary democracy had rendered a revolutionary seizure of power passé, she contended that capitalism is driven by its very nature to engender increasing levels of inequality, economic crisis, and imperialist expansion—all of which undermine the very possibility of genuine democracy. A revolutionary transformation of society, she argued, becomes not less but rather more important with the "progress" of capitalist accumulation. At the same time, she took issue with those on the left who contended that the need for a revolutionary solution to capitalism makes efforts at social reform quixotic and a diversion from the fight for socialism. A truly revolutionary movement, she argued, fights for reforms to improve the lot of the masses at the same time as it seeks to enlighten them as to the necessity of a fundamental social transformation. For Luxemburg, everyday struggles to improve living and working conditions produce an "intellectual sediment" that forms the humus from which new, and even unforeseen, struggles for human liberation can arise. A focus on the ultimate goal of

socialism, she held, is what makes the struggle for immediate reforms meaningful and worthwhile.

A second aspect of her influence on political theory concerns her critique of organizational centralism and the tendency of groups and tendencies committed to human emancipation to calcify and lose touch with the spontaneous rhythms and movements that are responsible for igniting efforts at social transformation. Throughout much of her life she sought to clarify the relationship between spontaneity and organization—often in opposition to the major political tendencies with which she was associated. This is especially seen in her many debates within the German Social-Democratic Party (at the time the largest, and until 1914, the most influential socialist party in the West), over its tendency to fetishize organization at the expense of listening to and learning from new impulses from below—especially those coming from the less developed countries, like Russia. It is no less seen in her criticism of the organizational approach developed by Lenin's Bolsheviks, which she subjected to critical examination on a number of occasions (even as she worked with them on others). Her insistence that a party is only as strong as its willingness to be open to the fresh winds of spontaneous movements and ideas offers an important corrective to the sectarianism and bureaucratism that has marred so many political organizations, especially on the left, over the past 100 years.

A third (and perhaps most important) aspect of her influence on political theory concerns her conception of the inseparability of socialism and democracy. She directly addressed this in her 1918 critique of the Russian Revolution, which raised the pivotal question that remains to be answered to this day—what happens after the revolution? Are we destined to see revolutions succumb to single-party rule, dictatorship, and the denial of the most basic democratic rights? In sharp contrast to many of the leading Marxists of the time, she held that freedom of speech, expression, and association were the fundamental preconditions for a revolutionary transformation of society, without which the domination of capital cannot be overcome. Numerous radical thinkers and tendencies have been influenced by her writings on this question, as can be seen from the collection of essays found in the recently published *Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Legacy*, edited by Jason Schulman (Palgrave Macmillan).

At the same time, Luxemburg was more than a political theorist, for she was without doubt one of the foremost Marxist economists

of her era and among the most outstanding economic theoreticians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her magnum opus, *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to the Economic Theory of Imperialism*, offered the first comprehensive analysis of what we now call the globalization of capital and a spirited defense of the thesis that colonial and imperialist expansion is an essential feature of the capitalist mode of production. Along with her *Introduction to Political Economy*, these works define Luxemburg as one of the most important economists of modern times (and perhaps the foremost female theorist in the history of economics). She thoroughly explored the impact of capitalism upon the non-Western world in these and other writings and in doing so provided one of the sharpest criticisms of capital's destructive impact upon native habitats, indigenous culture, and the communal social formations of pre-capitalist societies. Few thinkers in the European radical tradition raised so loud a voice against racism and the dehumanization that accompanies it.

Luxemburg's argument that capital accumulation hinges upon and compels the destruction of non-capitalist strata and social formations has proven to be one of the most influential as well as controversial aspects of her legacy. It produced a series of responses and rejoinders by figures ranging from Nikolai Bukharin to Henryck Grossman and from Paul Sweezy and Roman Rosdolsky. It especially speaks to the contemporary debate as to whether or not capital's drive for self-expansion completely levels and destroys all non-capitalist social relations (an issue that has proved of great importance in debates over "accumulation by dispossession," as seen in the work of David Harvey). At the same time, her conception of the inseparability of economic crisis and capital accumulation has spurred important studies on the monetary theory of crises, financialization, and role of effective demand in modern capitalism (as especially seen in the work, among others, of Tadesuz Kowalski and Ricardo Bellofiore).

Taken as a whole, Luxemburg's economic studies represent the most comprehensive analysis of capitalism's inherent tendency towards global expansion ever written. Living as we are at a historical moment in which the logic of capital has now expanded to cover the entire world, we surely cannot afford to exclude her economic writings from an appreciation of her multi-dimensionality.

Even an appreciation of her work as political and economic theorist, however, does not account for the fullness of Luxemburg's

contribution. She was an original personality who has captured the imagination of people around the world—including many who may not identify with all aspects of her political project. A woman who became a leading political figure in the largely male-dominated Socialist International, she refused to be pigeonholed into working primarily on the “woman question.” She was a serious analytical economist who took delight in exploring some of the most technical aspects of the Marxian theory of expanded reproduction, and yet she often referred to herself as an idealist, on the grounds that “I do not agree with the view that it is foolish to be an idealist in the German movement.” She was a committed political activist, yet one who refused to downplay her fascination with the natural world and human culture. As she put it in one of her letters, “I cannot separate the physical from the spiritual.”

## THE LETTERS OF ROSA LUXEMBURG

Largely for these reasons, to help prepare an audience for the English-language *Complete Works*, Verso Books published a companion to the series in 2011—a translation of Annelies Laschitzka and Georg Adler’s *Herzlichst Ihrer Rosa*, issued as *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. This 600-page book represents the largest collection of letters ever published of Luxemburg in English, with a great many of the letters made available to the English-speaking public for the first time. It demonstrates the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional nature of Luxemburg’s interests and contributions. The book was very widely reviewed in academic journals, left-wing periodicals and websites, and mass-circulation journals and magazines. At no time in the last 50 years did Luxemburg receive as much public attention in the English-speaking world as in the reviews and commentaries that appeared on this volume.

Reviews included those by Jacqueline Rose (*London Review of Books*), Sheila Rowbotham (*The Guardian*), Vivian Gornick (*The Nation*), Christopher Hitchens (*Atlantic Monthly*), Joel Schalit (*The Jewish Daily Forward*), Adam Kirsch (*The Jewish Review of Books*), George Fish (*New Politics*), Lesley Chamberlain (*New Statesman*), in addition to a dozen others. It is very rare that a Marxist thinker is discussed so publicly, especially in the U.S., and so we are very pleased with the reception of the volume. Some commented on her unswerving commitment to participatory democracy and its

inseparability from efforts to surmount capitalism. Others emphasized her prescient insights into the globalization of capital. And other reviews singled out her personality, which combined so many different facets. As the British feminist scholar and philosopher Jacqueline Rose put it in a review in *The London Review of Books*, for Luxemburg “The shifting sands of the revolution and of the psyche are more or less the same thing. It is in this context that the correspondence is so critical; not as the sole repository of intimacy, but because it shows the ceaseless traffic between the personal and political.” Rose, like many of the reviewers, sees Luxemburg as trying to break down the barriers between the external—engagement with the political world—and the internal—the knowledge of ourselves, as someone who breaks through conventional categories, enabling us to envision liberation in far more expansive terms than levels of economic output and political organization. “See to it that you stay human!” This call, voiced in a letter of 1916 to Mathilde Wurm, seems to capture what attracts many to a re-examination of the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg.

## THE COMPLETE WORKS

It is time for an English-language *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*. Over the past two decades there clearly have been many signs of growing interest in Luxemburg in the English-speaking world, as exhibited in numerous conferences, symposia, books, articles, and plays. Yet access to her work has been limited by the fact that much of it has either never been translated into English or is available only in deficient or outdated translations. Over 70% of the material in Luxemburg’s *Gesammelte Werke* has yet to appear in English. Over 80% of her correspondence has never appeared in any form in English. And almost none of her work as part of the Polish Marxist movement has appeared in English. For this reason, Verso Books, in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung—New York Office, has committed itself to issuing Luxemburg’s *Complete Works* in what will take up at least 14 substantial volumes. Our work builds upon the extraordinary and tireless efforts of those who have labored so hard for so many decades to bring her writings to light in Germany, Poland, Japan, and elsewhere—such as Felix Tych, Narihiko Ito, Annelies Laschitza, Holger Politt, and many others. Our aim is for the *Complete Works* to include everything written by her—essays, articles, speeches, books, letters, and surviving manuscripts.

The English-language *Complete Works* will be divided into three rubrics—the first containing her major economic writings, the second her political writings, and the third her complete correspondence. Since her overall contribution cannot be grasped without engaging her work as an economic theorist, we have chosen to begin the series with her economic works. Admittedly, the separation into economic and political writings is somewhat artificial. As she indicates in her correspondence, her initial approach to economic theory was largely stimulated by a *political* problematic—the expansion of European imperialism into Asia and Africa. Her effort to comprehend the phenomena of imperialism and how it points to the dissolution or “the final crisis” of capitalism determined much of the content of her economic work. Meanwhile, many of her “political” writings, such as *Reform or Revolution*, contain brilliant analyses of the economic law of motion of capitalism and its proclivity for cyclical crises. Yet given the amount of time, care, and attention that Luxemburg gave to developing her major economic works, we felt that it makes sense to begin the *Complete Works* with the works that contain her most detailed and analytically specific delineation of Marxian economics.

## ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WRITINGS

The first two volumes of Economic Writings have now been published. We believe these will be of great interest to economists and economic historians, but also of great assistance to the new generation of activists who wish to gain greater insight in the complexities of modern capitalism.

The first volume includes the first-ever complete translation of the *Introduction to Political Economy*, as well as seven manuscripts consisting of lectures and research at the German Social-Democratic Party school where she taught courses. This provides a wonderful overview of the nature, origins, history, and internal contradictions of capitalism. These materials show how intensely Luxemburg studied not only economic and political phenomena but also made important contributions to the then-emerging fields of anthropology and ethnology, dealing with communal social and property relations that predate capitalism. We believe her appreciation for such pre-capitalist social formations will speak to today’s search for an alternative to capitalism, which is clearly one of the foremost theoretical and practical issues of the day. Her manuscripts on the

Middle Ages and slavery in ancient Greece and Rome also show Luxemburg as one of the major economic historians of her time.

The second volume of *Economic Writings* includes new and more translations of her classic *The Accumulation of Capital* and of her response to various Marxist critics, the *Anti-Critique*. Luxemburg's analysis of the capital accumulation process—with all of its voracious dynamism and destructiveness—is matched by her anthropological sensibilities as she examines the consequent impact on peoples and cultures around the world. This is a most fitting moment to re-examine Luxemburg's effort to demonstrate the integrality of imperialism and capitalism, given the urgent necessity to combat capital's global drive to undermine the ecological as well as social viability of human existence itself.

The next phase of this project will involve issuing Luxemburg's *Political Writings*, in a minimum of seven volumes. At first we planned on issuing these writings in chronological order—beginning with her earliest writings within the Polish Marxist movement and ending with her writings of 1918-19 on the Russian and German Revolutions. However, in light of the discovery of many previously unknown or unpublished writings of Luxemburg, we have decided to issue these writings thematically. The *Political Writings* will begin with three volumes devoted to "On Revolution," which will contain Luxemburg's wide-ranging analyses of the 1905 and 1917-18 Russian and 1918-1919 German Revolutions. We believe that these volumes will truly bring forth a new perspective to the English-speaking world on Luxemburg's contribution. Clearly, revolution was the central motif and organizing focus of Rosa Luxemburg's life and thought. The *Political Writings* will be further rounded out by being organized around additional distinct themes, such as her writings on nationalism, imperialism, organizational perspectives, etc.

The English-language *Complete Works* will conclude with a projected five-volume collection of her correspondence.

Luxemburg's passion and clarity, her critical and creative intelligence, her strength and courage, her wicked humor and profound warmth and humanity are qualities that attract many. Increasing numbers of people are drawn not simply to that lively intelligence which is permeated with inspiring values, but especially to her analyses and ideas on how reality works and on what we can do to overcome oppression and gain liberation. They are drawn to her penetrating discussion of the relationship of reform to revolution, to

her sense of the interplay between revolutionary organization and spontaneous mass action, to her remarkable analyses of imperialism and militarism, to her unshakeable conviction of the centrality of genuine democracy to genuine socialism, and to her insistence on the compelling need for such a society of the free and the equal.

## WHY HAVE ROSA'S IDEAS COME BACK?

It is worth asking why, aside from Luxemburg's undoubtedly attractive personal qualities, her ideas have come back into fashion. Related to this is the challenge of what relevance those ideas hold for the current historical-political moment.

Luxemburg viewed capitalism as both a remarkably creative and horrifically destructive system, creating the material basis for a more democratic and egalitarian society while at the same time—through periodic economic crises and the expansion of militaristic and imperialist dynamics inherent to the capital accumulation process—undermining democracy and the well-being of a majority of the people in society. In important ways, such things define our world as well, a fact that has been made keenly, painfully clear through developments that have afflicted us in the first fifteen years of the current century. More and more people are impacted by a declining quality of life, impoverishment, a resurgence of racist assaults, the degradation of women, climate change and environmental disasters, war without end, and what the recent Occupy movements identified as the enrichment of an immensely powerful and wealthy 1% at the expense of an increasingly beleaguered 99% of the population.

Conservative and neoliberal policies, social-liberal and social-democratic reformism, the many varieties of religious fundamentalism, the individualist dissidence of libertarians and anarchists, and ideologies less defined have all failed to eliminate the problems—and because of this there has been a persistent, spreading, deepening discontent. This is the case in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas. It is the case throughout Europe, from Scandinavia to countries such as Turkey where Europe shades into Asia. It is the case from South Africa to Egypt and throughout the Middle East. It is the case in India and in China, in Korea, and in Indonesia.

There is a need—a “market,” if you will—for ideas that address this reality. Of course, the all-too-narrow, all-too-rigid, and in some cases all-too-authoritarian ideologies that passed for “Marxism”

in much of the 20th century have lost the persuasive powers they may have once possessed. But the open, creative, critical-minded approach represented by Rosa Luxemburg is now more compelling than ever before. Many are beginning to conclude that there is much to be learned from the way Luxemburg does Marxism, providing resources applicable to our own times and problems.

It is our hope that the contributions presented here, as well as the ongoing publication of the *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, will help scholars, activists, and others connect with this remarkable person and her ideas. 

# SELECTED RESOURCES

## BY ROSA

*The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg.* Edited by Peter Hudis and Paul Le Blanc. Brooklyn: Verso, 2013.

*The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg.* Edited by Georg Adler, Peter Hudis and Annelies Laschitza. Brooklyn: Verso, 2011.

*Rosa Luxemburg: Reflections and Writings.* Edited by Paul Le Blanc, New York: Humanity Books, 2000.

## ABOUT ROSA

*Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg.* By Kate Evans, edited by Paul Buhle. Brooklyn: Verso, 2015.

*Rosa Luxemburg: Her Life and Legacy.* Edited by Jason Schulman. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

*The Accumulation of Capital in Southern Africa: Rosa Luxemburg's contemporary relevance.* Edited by Patrick Bond, Horman Chitonge and Arndt Hopfmann. RLS-South Africa and UKZN Centre for Civil Society, 2006.

## VIDEOS

*The Making of 'Red Rosa'*. Featuring Kate Evans and Molly Crabapple, Nov. 5, 2015. Available on our YouTube channel, @rosaluxnyc.

*The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*. Performed by Kathleen Chalfant, Nov. 14, 2012. Available on our YouTube channel, @rosaluxnyc.

*Accumulation of Capital and the Reemergence of Rosa Luxemburg*. Featuring Stefanie Ehmsen, Jason Schulman, Neferti X.M. Tadiar, and Raphaële Chappe, Sep. 12, 2014. Available on our YouTube channel, @rosaluxnyc.

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