

*The family: that unforgettable place
where everything began.
(M. Gallo)*



Various biographies also stated the 25th December 1870 and 5th March 1870 as being Rosa Luxemburg's date of birth. This misunderstanding could be attributed to the fact that Rosa Luxemburg for a long time used false documents.

1871

Many thanks for you birthday card, which I laughed about: my »official« date of birth is actually wrong (I'm not quite as old as that) but, as a respectable person, I don't have a real birth certificate, but an »acquired« and »corrected« one.

Rosa Luxemburg in a letter to Henriette Roland-Holst dated 30th January 1907.

In her curriculum vitae, which she sent to Zurich University, Rosa Luxemburg gave her date of birth as being 5th March 1871.

Rosa Luxemburg was descended from a Jewish family which felt affiliated to the Jewish Enlightenment. Her parents were intellectuals and were particularly interested in German and Polish literature. Rosa Luxemburg's father was a respected tradesman in Zamość and owned a house on the marketplace.



Rosa Luxemburg's mother
Lina, née Löwenstein



Her father
Eliasch Luxemburg
(Eduard Luxemburg)

ROSA (ROSALIE, ROSALIA, ROZA) LUXEMBURG (LUKSENBURG, LUXENBURG)

BORN 5TH MARCH 1871 IN ZAMOŚĆ

There are no sources about the family's material living conditions. However, the Luxemburg family most certainly did not enjoy permanent prosperity.

»... my poor father is not a banker and can't take a vacation whenever he pleases, totally dependent as he is on his penny's worth of miserable business ... «

Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches 1899



The birthplace of Rosa Luxemburg in Zamość (2009).

Marketplace
ZAMOŚĆ, Rosa Luxemburg's native town in the province of Lublin, which was part of the so-called Congress of Poland and ruled by Tsarist Russia.



»Real« life is somewhere
beyond the roofs.

1873

In 1873, the Luksenburg family moved to Warsaw into a rented flat in Złotastraße 16, which was in a good residential area. Warsaw had the advantages of being an anonymous city with an open multicultural society.



Warsaw around 1900



Rosa, age 5

Rosa Luxemburg seldom mentioned her childhood. In 1904, she wrote about her childhood memories to Luise Kautsky from Zwickau prison:

»... and that was also the best moment before the empty, noisy, beating life of the large tenement block awoke. The solemn silence of the morning weighed on the triviality of the street: the morning gold of the young sun glittered in the window panes above, and way beyond swam rosy coloured, airy clouds before dissolving in the grey city sky. I firmly believed that ›life‹, the ›real life‹ is somewhere far away, hidden behind tall roofs. Since then I have been travelling after it, but it always keeps hiding behind one roof or another. Perhaps in the end it was all a wanton game with me, and the real life is really still there in the yard where we read the ›Beginnings of Civilization‹ with Antoni for the first time?«

When she was five years old, Rosa suddenly fell ill with a hip complaint. She had to spend almost a whole year in bed or in her room and had a limp for the rest of her life. Rosa Luxemburg was a lively, inquisitive child. With the help of her mother, she learned to read and write when she was five years old.

Until she was 9, Rosa Luxemburg was educated at home. In 1880 she was accepted to the 1st year of the girl's gymnasium. This was only possible because of her excellent academic achievements.

1880

The gymnasium was primarily reserved for Russian girls whose fathers were soldiers of the occupying power and for daughters of the nobility. As a Jewish child, Rosa Luxemburg ranked at the bottom of the hierarchy.

At Christmas 1881 when she was ten years old, Rosa was witness to a pogrom. The hordes ravaged for days not only in the Warsaw Ghetto, but also violently plundered in Złota Street, which was where the Luksenburgs lived.

1881

In 1884, before the impending visit of the German Kaiser Wilhelm I to Warsaw, Rosa Luxemburg wrote a satirical poem in Polish:

»At last we shall see you, ruler of the west, or that is if you come to the Saxon Garden, as I will not be visiting your court. I don't care for your mark of respect. I would like to know what you chat about. You should be on familiar terms with ›ours‹. As far as politics is concerned I'm still a stupid sheep, which is why I don't want to talk to you much. There is only one thing which I want to say to you, dear Wilhelm: »For the sake of Europe tell, nay order thy foxy scoundrel Bismarck never to sully peace.«

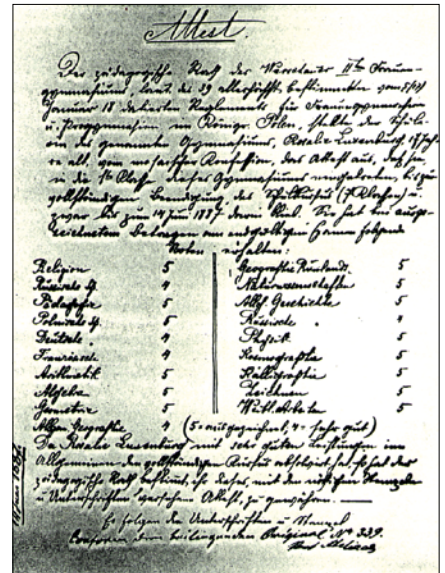


Rosa, twelve years old

*My ideal is a social system
that allows one to love everybody
with a clear conscience*



With her many talents, learning came easily to Rosa. During her entire school life, she was always the best student. Despite this, she was not awarded the gold medal which she deserved when she left school. The education system was dominated by anti-Semitic and anti-Polish regulations. The language used in lessons was Russian and the students were not allowed to speak Polish with each other.



Rosa Luxemburg later described the political situation in Tsarist Russia during her schooldays in her introduction to Wladimir Korolenko's »The history of my contemporary«.

As a schoolgirl Rosa witnessed how in the nearby citadel revolutionary socialists were locked up, sent away to do forced labour or hanged. Among them were also young women.



Warsaw Citadel

»During the eighties, after the assassination of Alexander II, a period of paralyzing hopelessness enveloped Russia. The liberal reforms of the sixties with regard to the judiciary and to rural self-administration were everywhere repealed. A death-like silence prevailed during the reign of Alexander III. Discouraged by both the failure to realize peaceful reforms and the apparent ineffectiveness of the revolutionary movement, the Russian people were completely overcome with depression and resignation.«

1882

The »Proletariat« party, which was founded in 1882 and was a predecessor of the modern socialist movement, was almost wiped out.

**Rosa Luxemburg understood:
»The world must be changed!«.**

Like her friends, Adolf Warski and Julian Marchlewski, she joined a revolutionary group under the leadership of the roofer, Marcin Kasprzak. This group maintained contact with socialist groups in Poland and Russia. They rejected individual terror. The group's role model was a mass organisation such as German Social Democracy. After about 2 years of political agitation amongst Warsaw's pupils and students, Rosa was on the verge of being arrested. It was presumably Marcin Kasprzak who helped her to flee over the Polish-German border hidden under straw in a farmer's cart.



Marcin Kasprzak, born in 1860, executed in 1905 in Warsaw

».. I want to burden the conscience of the affluent with all the suffering and all the bidden, bitter tears.«

From a poem written by Rosa Luxemburg in Polish whilst still at school

1889

I really am quite grown up.



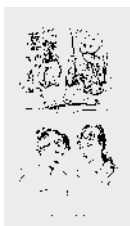
Zurich, old University, 1890



Zurich students' study and living room



R.L. as a young girl



Rosa Luxemburg found her ideal sanctuary in Zurich. The university there was the only one in Europe to have opened its doors to women who wanted to study. Zurich also had a politically interesting and extensively equipped library. Half of the women studying there originated from Russia.

| W. I. Fichte's 'Sociologie der Sozialökonomie' | |
|--|-------------------|
| Name | Wohnung |
| 1. Fichte, W. I. | 1. Fichte, W. I. |
| 2. Fichte, W. I. | 2. Fichte, W. I. |
| 3. Fichte, W. I. | 3. Fichte, W. I. |
| 4. Fichte, W. I. | 4. Fichte, W. I. |
| 5. Fichte, W. I. | 5. Fichte, W. I. |
| 6. Fichte, W. I. | 6. Fichte, W. I. |
| 7. Fichte, W. I. | 7. Fichte, W. I. |
| 8. Fichte, W. I. | 8. Fichte, W. I. |
| 9. Fichte, W. I. | 9. Fichte, W. I. |
| 10. Fichte, W. I. | 10. Fichte, W. I. |



Plattenstraße 47



In the first year Rosa Luxemburg enrolled in the university's Faculty of Philosophy and attended lectures on mathematics, botany and zoology. She remained greatly interested in these subjects for the rest of her life. From 1890 onwards, she enrolled in political and economic science as well as history.

Rosa Luxemburg hardly took any notice of Ricarda Huch and Anita Augspurg, who were studying in Zurich at the same time.

1890



Leo Jogiches



W. I. Sassulitsch

Zurich was the most important meeting place for Polish and Russian emigrants. In the bars and »Slav pensions« popular with Russians, discussions were heated and the topic was almost always »the basic theory of social democracy« and the »revolution«.



G. W. Plechanow



P. B. Axelrod

During her time as a student in Zurich, Rosa came into contact with leading Polish and Russian Marxists such as **Georgi Plechanow, Vera Sassulitsch (Zasulic) und Pawel Axelrod** and many others.

Her fellow students were also her friends from Warsaw, for example **Julian Marchlewski (Karski) and Adolf Warszawski (Warski)** and the young revolutionary **Leo Jogiches** from Vilnius.

1898

On 20th July 1898, Rosa was awarded her doctorate. She attained the »magna cum laude« and left university as Doctor of Public Law and Political Science.

»Our fatherland,
that is the whole world.«



The II. International Socialist Congress in Zurich, 1893. A group posing for a photograph during an excursion to the island of Ufenau.

In 1893 at the II. International Socialist Congress in Zurich, Rosa Luxemburg tried in vain to fight for a mandate. The party – the SDK-PiL (Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) – which had been newly founded by her, Leo Jogiches, Julian Marchlewski and Adolf Warszawski, stood in stark contrast to the PPS (Polish Socialist Party), which had put **the national struggle** at the top of its political agenda.



Leo Jogiches



Adolf Warszawski



Julian B. Marchlewski



Parteitag Berlin

At the end of the 19th century, German Social Democracy was held in great esteem within the Socialist International. It was a revolutionary workers and opposition party with the proclaimed long-term aim of defeating capitalism and creating a socialist society.

At that time, the SPD had more than 100,000 members. August Bebel and Paul Singer were party leaders, Wilhelm Liebknecht was editor in chief of »Vorwärts« (Forward) and Karl Kautsky was chief editor of the magazine »Neue Zeit« (The New Time). Rosa Luxemburg decided to move to Berlin in order to be able to use the SPD press as a platform for her journalistic and theoretical work.



R. L. around 1893

The Belgian socialist leader Emile Vandervelde remembers:

»Rosa, 23 years old at the time, was quite unknown outside one or two socialist groups in Germany and Poland ... I can see her now: how she rose from amongst the delegates and stood on a chair to make herself better heard. Small and looking very frail in a summer dress which cleverly concealed her physical defects, she represented her cause with such magnetism and such compelling words.«

Besides studying at **Zurich University** and researching for her doctorate in **libraries in Paris**, Rosa Luxemburg also independently edited the Russian-Polish underground newspaper »Sprawa Robotnicza« (Workers' Cause) in Paris together with Julian Marchlewski and Adolf Warski. Under a pseudonym she wrote numerous articles and organised the typesetting, printing and often the distribution of the paper. German socialists helped to smuggle the paper over the border to Poland. A part also reached Poland for distribution from Munich.

Rosa Luxemburg also collaborated in the »Arbeiterstimme« (The Workers' Cause), a magazine published by Robert Seidel in Zurich, as well as writing for Karl Kautsky's »Neue Zeit« (The New Time), a weekly journal of German Social Democracy, which was published in Stuttgart.

»Comrades! For the first time Polish social democrats from the parts of Poland that are subject to Russian rule are taking part in your congress. The workers of Warsaw and Lodz send their delegates from the dark realm of political despotism«

R.L. at the Congress

However, immigration and political agitation required German citizenship. For this reason, Rosa Luxemburg entered a marriage of convenience in April 1898 with Gustav Lübeck, the son of German émigrés.

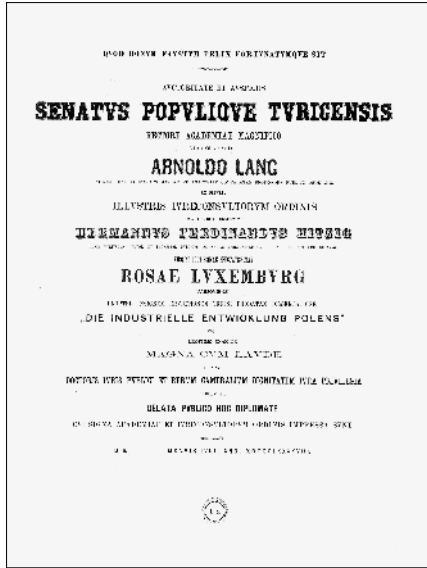


Marriage, 1898

1898

*By the way,
you can congratulate me
on my doctor's title.*

The economic statistical reasoning required for her dissertation demanded that Rosa Luxemburg exert tedious effort and that she spend endless days researching in libraries. She therefore felt hindered in her desire to do more practical work.



Doctor's Diploma

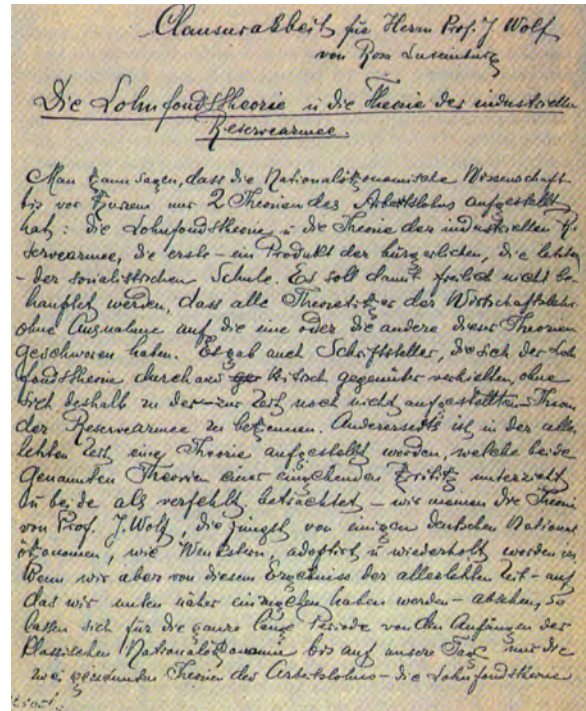
»... The dissertation can be credited with a full command of the subject matter, great accuracy, great reasoning power. It unlocks the subject without ever becoming longwinded and testifies for theoretical talent as well as a practical view. The style is rather poor, the viewpoint somewhat one-sided. The writer is a socialist and an adherent of the so-called materialist view of history. From time to time, she uses sources from socialist pamphlet literature. However, that does not detract from the competence of the achievement, which exceeds by far what is demanded of a thesis. I therefore request that it be accepted.«

Comment on the thesis: Professor Julius Wolf (doctoral advisor)

»... I simply loathe this dissertation of mine just because we invested so much work and effort in it! The mere thought of it throws me into hysterics ... «

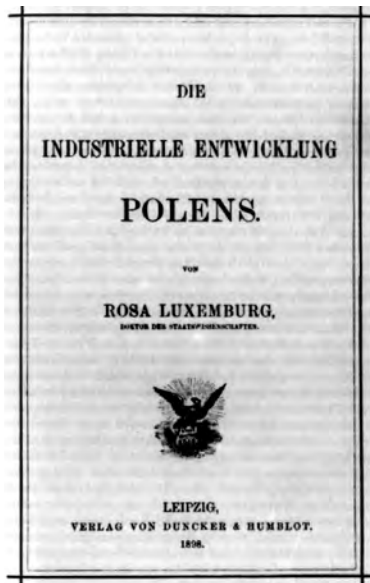
R.L. to Leo Jogiches, Berlin 24. 6. 1898

1898



Exam paper for Prof. Julius Wolf

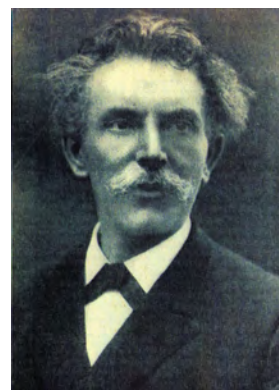
She was proud and happy when she received her printed dissertation in the post.



Doctoral Dissertation

»... It looks pretty doesn't it? ... I have to admit my heart quivered and I blushed as I was opening the package ... «

R.L. to Leo Jogiches on 10th July 1898



Robert Seidel
was editor, teacher and lecturer. He had come to Switzerland when he was twenty as a clothworker from Saxony. He was politically active in the city and canton of Zurich and then in the National Assembly. Rosa Luxemburg, he and his wife Mathilde were friends for many years.

»... how interesting, how significant! A woman was needed to deliver the first thorough work on Russia-Poland's industrial development and at the same time of Russia and to show that both of these countries are economically linked and thus politically interdependent. We congratulate womankind on this new moral victory! It is a new justification of the right of women for equality with men, insofar as this right still needs justifying. We congratulate our comrade on her profound, clear and gripping dissertation.«

Robert Seidel in the newspaper -Zürcher Volksrecht-

*Confound it;
I want to appear
in public.*



Berlin around 1900

In May 1898, Rosa Luxemburg moved to Germany. German Social Democracy was in the midst of an election campaign. She spent the first few days in Munich at her friends, Adolf and Jadwiga Warszawski.

» ... in general Berlin has made the most unfavourable impression on me: cold, tasteless, massive – a real barracks; and the dear Prussians with their arrogance, as though every one of them had swallowed the cane with which one had once been beaten ... «

R.L. to Mathilde and Robert Seidel in Zurich on 30th May 1898

On 16th May, Rosa Luxemburg arrived in Berlin.

1898

On 24th May, Rosa Luxemburg went to the SPD's office in Katzbach Straße, Berlin. She was received by Ignaz Auer with whom she talked for a long time.

Ignaz Auer gave Rosa Luxemburg the handbook of the SPD to study and entered her name in the party address book. From now on Rosa Luxemburg was **a member of the legal German Social Democratic Party**. Rosa Luxemburg was entrusted with the task of tackling neglected political agitation amongst workers and miners in Upper Silesia. No party official wanted to take on the hardship of moving to this remote, famine-struck and miserable region.



Ignaz Auer

» ... so I think that, as far as I can tell, I made a very good impression on him. On parting he assured me that he was very happy to have got to know me, which means a lot for such a Bavarian brute ... «

R.L. to Leo Jogiches on 25th May 1898

» ... that I'd just about made up my mind to go to Upper Silesia. I've thought it over again and again, and I see no other solution. ... So there's nothing to do but grab my little suitcase and be off. «

R.L. to Leo Jogiches on 28th May 1898



Employees of a Silesian coalmine around 1900

This first tour as political agitator amongst the Polish speaking miners and steelworkers in Königshütte, Katscher, Gleiwitz etc. was a great success. Those who listened brought her flowers and did not want to let her go.

*My intent and wish is
to push in a positive way.*

From then on Rosa Luxemburg was relentlessly busy on behalf of the party and constantly out and about. She toured Berlin's working class bars and appeared at numerous election meetings in the whole of the Reich. At party conferences she debated with the »patriarchs«, whom she wanted to »push forwards«.

She took part in the big international social congresses where she was also considered an expert on Polish and Russian matters.



Rosa Luxemburg
talking to social dem-
ocrats; at the centre:
Alexander Helphand
(Parvus)

Rosa Luxemburg wrote articles and cutting commentaries for leading socialist newspapers and journals. Occasionally, she was editor for the »Sächsischen Arbeiterzeitung« (Saxony Workers' Paper), the »Leipziger Volkszeitung« (Leipzig People's Paper) and »Vorwärts« (Forwards).



Rosa Luxemburg and August Bebel at the International Socialist Congress on 21.8.1904 in Amsterdam.

»I am dissatisfied with the fashion in which most of the articles in the party press are written. The style is conventional, wooden, stereotypical ... I know, the world is different and different times need different songs, but songs are exactly what they need and our writing is mostly not a song, just a colorless, dull sound like that of a running engine. To my mind the reason behind this is that when people write they mostly forget to reach deep into their own selves, to relive the importance and truth of the subject. I think that with every new article one should experience the subject matter through and through, get emotionally involved, every single time, every single day. Only then will the cold, familiar truths, expressed in words new and bright, go from the writer's heart to the reader's heart ... «

R.L. to Mathilde and Robert Seidel, Zurich, 23rd June 1898



Rosa standing between **Sen Katajama** from Japan and **Georgij Plechanow**, from Russia; next to her is the Austrian, **Dr. Viktor Adler**; Amsterdam 1904

1904

Rosa Luxemburg served her first gaol sentence on 26th August 1904 in Zwickau. She had been sentenced to 2 months imprisonment for offending the sovereign.



International Social Congress in Paris, 1900;
at the front: **Rosa Luxemburg**

1900

*A revolution
can also take on a
cultural form.*



Eduard Bernstein

Social reform or revolution?
This was the disputed issue at
the time when Rosa Luxemburg
began working actively for the
German Social Democracy.



Georg von Vollmar



*»... an extremely important
point has been obscured in our
Party, namely that of under-
standing the relation between
our final goal and our everyday
struggles ... For us there can
never be any question that we
must struggle to seize political
power. A socialist party must
always have a response appropri-
ate to the situation; it can never
shrink back from its task. There-
fore our views on what our final
goals are must be fully clarified.
And we will fulfil them, in spite of
storm, wind, and weather. «
(Applause)*

R.L. in her speech at the party conference 1898 in
Stuttgart

1898

Eduard Bernstein, theoretician of the »revision-
ists«, increasingly articulated his opposition to
class struggle and attempts at revolution.
He recommended transforming the SPD into a
democratic reformist party. At the party confer-
ence in Stuttgart in 1898, the first party confer-
ence of German Social Democracy at which
Rosa Luxemburg participated, she joined the
discussions and opposed the reformist theories of
Bernstein and his adherents, for example Georg
von Vollmar, Wolfgang Heine etc.

*»... Vollmar has reproached me bitterly of wanting
to instruct the old veterans, as only a young recruit
in the movement. That is not the case... I know that I
must first collect my epaulettes in the movement; but
I want to do this in the left wing, where one wants to
fight with the enemy and not in the right wing, where
one wants to compromise with the enemy. «*

**She opposed these ideas with her view:
Reform as well as revolution!**



Karl Kautsky



Franz Mehring



August Bebel



Clara Zetkin

Karl Kautsky and Franz Meh-
ring, who were considered tru-
stees of Marx's legacy, and
August Bebel and Clara Zetkin
were on Rosa Luxemburg's side
in the conflict with the revisio-
nists.
In various articles in the »Leip-
ziger Volkszeitung«, which
later in 1899 were published in
two brochures, Rosa Luxem-
burg fiercely attacked and ridi-
culed Bernstein and his sup-
porters.

Thus, she became widely
known in the international
labour movement. With increa-
sing frequency she was to
lament the lack of revolutiona-
ry zeal and idealism within
German Social Democracy.
She missed humaneness, soli-
darity and spontaneity.

1899



**Before soon, she became a nuisance to some comrades.
A woman, a Polish and Jewish woman had dared to demon-
strate her intellectual superiority. She did not fit the pic-
ture of the established party leaders and career conscious
officials.**

I live most joyously amid a storm.

1905

On 22 January 1905, 140,000 peaceful demonstrators marched to the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg to deliver a petition to the Tsar. They were greeted with gunfire. More than one thousand people died. Countless were wounded. The massacre set off a wave of violent strikes and peasant riots against the Tsarist regime.

It was the beginning of a revolution that Luxemburg had been predicting for years.

Luxemburg wanted to support the revolution with all her strength. Living in Berlin, she was in contact with comrades in the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL) in Krakow and Warsaw. She wrote for Polish newspapers and reported on the events in Russia and Poland for German workers' newspapers and in international socialist circles. She travelled constantly, addressing public meetings on the struggle for freedom being waged by Russian workers. At the end of the year, Luxemburg decided to take part in the revolution herself. After several risky detours, she arrived in Warsaw on 29 December 1905.



Card from Warsaw to Luise and Karl Kautsky

*"My dearest, most favourite people!
On Sunday evening, the 4th [of March], fate caught up with me: I was arrested. My passport had already been stamped for my return journey, and I was on the verge of leaving. Well, that's the way it goes. Hopefully, you won't take the matter too much to heart. Long live the Re ... !"*

Card to Luise and Karl Kautsky, before 13 March 1906

*My dearest ones! Yesterday at 9 in the evening I arrived safely in a train that was unbeaten, had its lights out, and was escorted by the military ... the city is like a place of the dead, [there's a] general strike, soldiers everywhere you turn. The work is going well, [and] today I start in. Many heartfelt greetings.
Your Rosa*

To Karl and Luise Kautsky, Warsaw, 30 December 1905

Together with Leo Jogiches and other SDKPiL comrades, Luxemburg was able to work underground for only two months. The days were filled with great anticipation and extraordinary effort. Despite all their precautions, Luxemburg and Jogiches were discovered, arrested in her apartment on 4 March 1906, and taken to the infamous Tenth Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel.

... my friends of course expect me to telegraph Witte (the Russian Minister-President) and write to the German Consulate [in Warsaw]. I wouldn't even consider it! The gentlemen will wait a long time before a Social Democrat asks for their protection ..."

Card to Karl Kautsky, before 15 March 1906



Rosa Luxemburg as prisoner in Warsaw

"But the class situation is such that in Russia even the road to a moderate monarchical constitution passes through a republican dictatorship of the proletariat. ... The above perspectives on the revolution suggest that the proletariat will experience not only victories but also defeats. But for the proletariat there is no other path to ultimate victory, unless we were to imagine the socialist revolution as a sudden leap that could be completed within 24 hours, as opposed to a more or less lengthy period characterized by stormy class struggles with shorter or longer breaks."

Rosa Luxemburg, "Lessons from the Three Dumas" (1908)

Luxemburg faced deportation to a labour camp. But the executive committee of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) bailed her out, and she was released from prison on 28 June 1906. In August, the regime permitted her to travel to Finland; from there she returned to Berlin.

In December 1906, Jogiches was sentenced to eight years of forced labour. But in April 1907 he managed to escape, and by May he was back in Berlin.

*We are observing the Russian revolution,
and we'd be fools not to learn from it.*

For years, Rosa Luxemburg had tried to get people to understand the tactic of the **mass strike**. At the Jena party congress in September 1905, most trade union leaders remained opposed to political strikes on principle.

Luxemburg plunged energetically into the debates.

The party congress ultimately sanctioned the political strike as a weapon that, under certain conditions, the German working class, too, would have to use.

“A general strike, forged in advance under the shackles of legality, is like a demonstration of military power with a cannon whose ammunition has first been dumped into the water in full view of the enemy. A threat made . . . ‘with fists in one’s pockets’ wouldn’t frighten a child, let alone a class fighting to death to save its rule.”

Rosa Luxemburg, “The Belgian Experiment” (1902)



Rosa Luxemburg with Alexander Helfphand at the 1905 party congress in Jena (Parvus on left)



During a break at the Jena party congress, 1905

For Luxemburg and her allies, this was a victory; one which made her proud and filled her with confidence.

Her speeches at the party congress earned her two months in prison at the request of the Weimar public prosecutor. The charge was “inciting class hatred”.

In Kuokkala, Finland, Luxemburg discussed the revolution and the mass strike with Lenin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev. From time to time she travelled — under an assumed name — to St. Petersburg, to visit Parvus and Trotsky in prison.

In Kuokkala she wrote her 64-page pamphlet *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*. In this text she analyses the course of the revolution in Russia and highlights the political mass strike as a new, revolutionary weapon of the proletariat for the class struggles to come.

“The trade-union movement is not that which is reflected in the quite understandable but irrational illusion of a minority of the trade-union leaders, but that which lives in the consciousness of the mass of proletarians who have been won for the class struggle. In this consciousness the trade-union movement is part of social democracy. And what it is, that should it dare to appear.”

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906)



After rigorous debate at the party congress in Mannheim in the autumn of 1906, Luxemburg was forced to accept a bitter defeat. Her pamphlet was rejected by trade union leaders as being too radical. This time the leadership yielded to the party:

The majority rejected the mass strike.

1906

At a public meeting on the fringes of the Mannheim party congress, an enthusiastic crowd called on Luxemburg to speak about the revolution in Russia. At the end of her speech, she said:

“I can assure you in all honesty and without exaggeration that the months I spent in Russia were the happiest of my life.”

*One learns fastest and best
by teaching others.*



R. L. around 1910

1907
According to a report in the newspaper
»Vorwärts« on 20th October 1907,
Rosa Luxemburg discussed the term economics
at the beginning of her lecture.



»Why must we study political economy as a science?
As long as economic relations between people regulated themselves without difficulty, these relations did not require scientific study. With the onset of a capitalist style economy this has changed. Crises are a side effect of this economic style. Unemployment is also a constant phenomenon of today's society as well as the daily and hourly price fluctuations by which one individual can become a millionaire in a short time without having to lift a finger, while another will become a beggar. These phenomena are not naturally so and are not inevitable. They have been brought about by human institutions, are of human creation and, nevertheless, bourgeois society is at a loss when faced with it as if it were dealing with uncontrollable elemental forces. We stand before an anarchist style of economics that has outgrown us. This is the reason for having to study the relations of economic life in a scientific manner ...
... political economy is the science of all sciences; it prepares the ground on which we want to walk in the country of the future ... «

In October 1907, Rosa Luxemburg took up a lecturers post at the SPD party school in Berlin which had been opened by August Bebel. It was a task that she enjoyed greatly and attended to with great diligence. The school was not so much an academic workshop, but rather she was supposed to qualify party members for propaganda purposes.

Teaching there were August Bebel, Heinrich Cunow, Hermann Duncker, Franz Mehring, Kurt Rosenfeld, Arthur Stadthagen and Emanuel Wurm.

Rosa Luxemburg was the only woman amongst the teaching staff. Her subjects were economic history and political economy.



Social Democracy Party School, Berlin 1910
1 Emanuel Wurm, 2 Arthur Stadthagen, 3 Franz Mehring, 4 Kurt Rosenfeld, 5 Heinrich Cunow, 6 Dr. Eckstein, 7 Rosa Luxemburg, 8 Heinrich Schulz, 9 Friedrich Ebert

It can be inferred from the files of the royal police headquarters that the Social Democratic Party School and its teachers and students were under surveillance from the day of its opening. Rosa Luxemburg worked there until the party school was shut in August 1914. She gave extra tuition, one-to-one counselling, invited students to her home, and organised lecturer's conferences.

»She was as popular as she was feared, because in her role as brilliant lecturer and teacher she was relentlessly strict in her expectations and insisted on thoroughly working through each individual problem. A few superficial students were given a hard time. She left them with no place to hide. She used clear formulations and expected clear answers.«

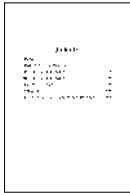
»... Rosa is not as bad as you think. Despite all the trouble-making, I would miss the woman in the party. At the party school she is revered as the best teacher by radicals, revisionists and trade unionists alike. There she embodies objectivity of the highest ability.«

August Bebel to Victor Adler

Rosa Luxemburg's student Wilhelm Koenen

1914

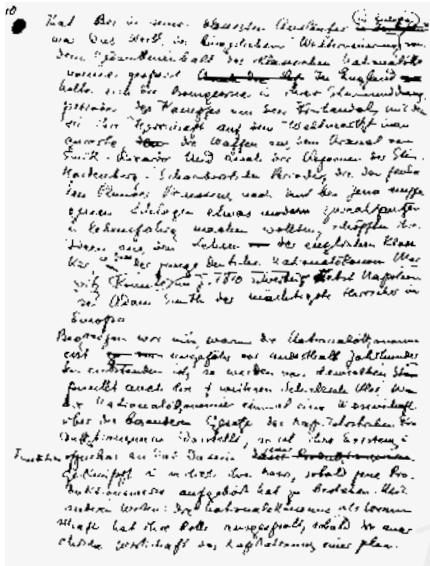
I am working like one possessed.



During her work at the party school, Rosa Luxemburg began one of her most important scientific works: »**Introduction to Political Economy**«.

In 1909/10, she initially wanted to publish this work in the form of eight booklets and then as a book. In February 1910, she considered two of the booklets to be ready for print. The book could only actually be published in 1925.

With this work, Rosa Luxemburg wanted to rekindle awareness for the historic need to replace capitalism with a new, fairer social order.



Manuscript page from »Introduction to Political Economy«

»... the constant change of industrial economy forces the trade unions to defend former accomplishments from new attacks by the capital at every downfall, and at every step forward to first fight in order to raise depressed wages to a standard appropriate to the favourable situation. The trade unions will thus always be forced into the defensive.«

R.L. Ges. Werke V, S. 764 (Collected Works)

»The literary form she has given to her book is brilliant, but its purely theoretical chapters make very great demands on the intellect of the reader, and assume a wide knowledge of political economy in general and of Marxist theory in particular... The only prominent Marxists to recognise its value were Franz Mebring and Julian Marchlewski, and they were both enthusiastic about it, whilst a horde of competent and incompetent critics indulged in an orgy of loud criticism which often degenerated into mere abuse.«

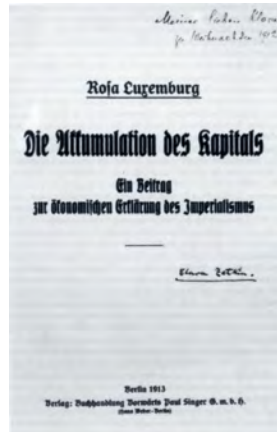
Paul Frölich: Rosa Luxemburg, Her Life and Work, 1939



R.L. in her flat, 1907

In 1913 Rosa Luxemburg wrote »**The Accumulation of Capital**«

1913



Titelseite mit Widmung für Clara Zetkin

»Capitalism is the first mode of economy with the weapon of propaganda, a mode which tends to engulf the entire globe and to stamp out all other economies, tolerating no rival at its side. Yet at the same time it is also 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.«

Ges. Werke V, S. 411 (Collected Works)

»... the time when I worked on »Accumulation« was the happiest in my life. I was really intoxicated, saw and heard nothing day and night when the problem unravelled so beautifully, and I no longer know what gave me more pleasure, the process of thinking when, by slowly wandering around my room, I turned over in my mind a difficult question... or producing the literary forms with the quill in my hand. Did you know that I wrote the entire 30 galleys in one go in four months – incredible performance – and sent it off to the printer without so much as a further glance through?«

Letter to Hans Diefenbach dated 12th May 1917 from Wronke prison

*The increase in class differences
has aroused thoughts
of sharper weapons.*

The danger of a great war breaking out in Europe loomed ever more ominously on the horizon. At the socialist international congresses, Rosa Luxemburg tried to win over and reinforce the solidarity of the European proletariat against the war.



At the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart, 1907.



The international socialist office during the International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart 1907.

1907

At the beginning of 1910, indignation at the military build-up, the economic crisis and the unfair Prussian three-tier election law grew amongst the population. There were huge demonstrations all over the country. The miners prepared for a big strike. Political mass strike was deemed to be an adequate means by various workers organisations. Rosa Luxemburg travelled from place to place in order to speak at mass demonstrations.



Electoral law demonstrators in Gera



Arrest of an electoral law demonstrator



Deployed police force

1910

During this time of frequent unrest, demonstrations and strikes, Rosa Luxemburg wrote an article for »Vorwärts« in which she propagated mass strike. The article was rejected. Most of the leaders of Social Democracy, and particularly of the trade unions, did not want to risk a strike due to electoral campaign tactics. Relations broke up with the party leadership and with Karl Kautsky, who was chief editor of »Vorwärts«.

At the International Socialist Congress in August 1907, Rosa Luxemburg was not only an SPD delegate but also a delegate of the Polish and Russian socialist democratic workers parties.

She was looking forward to seeing Clara Zetkin, Lenin, and Jaurès from France. Together with Lenin and Martow she wrote a resolution, which, after consulting Bebel, had to be reworked until it found a form that would not give the public prosecutor grounds to press charges or even to ban the German Social Democracy. The decisive sentences of this resolution are:

»... In the event of a threat of war it is the duty of the workers and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved to do everything possible to prevent the outbreak of war by taking suitable measures, which can, of course, change or be intensified in accordance with the intensification of the class struggle and the general political situation. In the event of war breaking out nevertheless, it is their duty to take measures to bring it to an end as quickly as possible, and to utilise the economic and political crisis brought about by the war to arouse the masses of the people and accelerate the overthrow of capitalist class rule.«

»This small, delicate woman teemed with unrestrained revolutionary power. Despite all those who mocked and bated her, she managed again and again to captivate listeners at party conferences with her fiery temperament and received rapturous applause even from the opposition. And all the time, what was characteristic of her was that her intellect never lost control of her temperament.«

Max Adler

At a public gathering on 25th September 1913 in Flechenheim, Rosa Luxemburg posed the question of whether the war should be accepted with impunity. When the answer came from the audience: »Never!«, she continued:

»If they expect us to murder our French or other foreign brothers, then let us tell them, »No, under no circumstances!.«



R.L. speaking in Deutz, 1910

For the public prosecutor this was reason to press charges for encouraging disobedience of the law and of the authorities' orders.

1913

Darling, imagine, how splendid.

Her speech for her defence on 20th February 1914 before the criminal court in Frankfurt was a great intellectual success for Rosa Luxemburg. She justified her fight against war and militarism with great blows against the public prosecutor and the officers' caste.

«... We are of the opinion that the great mass of working people does and must decide about the question of war and peace – that this is not a matter of commands from above and blind obedience from below. We think that wars can only come about as long as the working class either supports them enthusiastically because it considers them justified and necessary, or at least accepts them passively. But once the majority of working people come to the conclusion – and it is precisely the task of the Social Democracy to arouse this consciousness and to bring them to this conclusion – when, as I say, the majority of people come to the conclusion that wars are noibing but a barbaric, unsocial, reactionary phenomenon, entirely against the interests of the people, then wars will have become impossible ...»



Rosa Luxemburg with her lawyers Paul Levi (left) and Kurt Rosenfeld.

Rosa Luxemburg was sentenced to one year in prison.

The verdict triggered profound outrage amongst the German workforce. Rosa Luxemburg and her lawyer, Paul Levi, were invited to countless gatherings in many cities in order to give an account of the trial.



Cartoon in «Der Wahre Jakob» (The Real McCoy) on the Frankfurt trial, 25th July 1914



Cartoon in «Vorwärts» (Forwards) on 9th March 1914

In June 1914, Rosa Luxemburg was again charged, this time for insulting the military. She had referred to the systematic abuse of soldiers in the army in words and writing. Her defence was able to collect 30,000 signatures of dismissed soldiers. They were victims or witnesses of such abuse and agreed to give evidence in court.

The public prosecutor demanded her immediate arrest due to the high likelihood of an attempt to flee.

Rosa Luxemburg's answer was:

«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.»

«... I assure you that I would never flee even if the gallows threatened and for the simple reason that I believe it necessary for our party to get used to the fact that sacrifices are part of a Socialist's trade and that this goes without saying. You are right: »Long live the struggle!«



R.L. to Walter Stoecker on 11th March 1914.

In order to avoid further disgrace to the judiciary and above all to the military, legal proceedings were discontinued indefinitely.

Rosa Luxemburg remained the political and moral winner.



I am deeply shocked.

1914

At the end of July 1914, the anti-war demonstrations hit their peak.



Jean Jaurès

On 29th July, the International Socialist Office in Brussels opened its meeting. In her speeches, Rosa Luxemburg urged for swift and decisive action and described the fight against the war as the most important topic of the coming International Socialist Congress.

Rosa Luxemburg felt a strong rapport with Jean Jaurès, the leader of the French workers movement. He appealed to the power of the proletariat, which he said must express its demands for peace. **Jean Jaurès was murdered by a French nationalist during his journey home from the congress.**



As she said herself, 4th August 1914 was the bleakest of days for Rosa Luxemburg. She found it incomprehensible that the German working class let itself be driven into the massacre without the slightest resistance, that German Social Democracy capitulated as a matter of course, and that the Socialist International broke down.

»The outbreak of war had a terrible effect on Rosa, even worst was the effect of the position of German Social Democracy... The approval of the war credits by Social Democracy in the German Reichstag was a signal for her to finally disown her former comrades whom she had been alienated from for a long time, and to begin her underground educational work in the German workforce with a small handful of selected adherents ...«



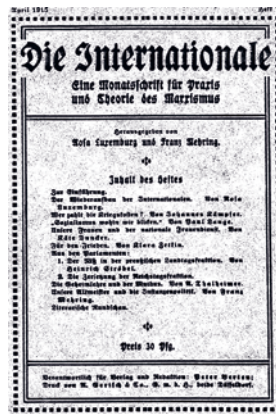
Luise Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg. Ein Gedenkbuch (Rosa Luxemburg, A Memorial Book), p. 40

»German as well as international Socialism are going through a crisis as never before in history ... if, after the war, international socialism does not manage to achieve an absolute and this time serious, even in the case of war, renunciation of imperialism and militarism with all its pretexts, then socialism might as well give up ...«

Rosa Luxemburg's article in the »Berner Tagwacht« on 30th September 1914



Karl Liebknecht
Member of the Reichstag as reinforcement soldier.



The first issue of the magazine »Die Internationale« (The International) appeared in spring 1915 under the editorial auspices of Franz Mehring, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. It was to explore all the problems of the workers movement raised by the war. The magazine was banned as soon as it was published. The editors, publishers and printers were accused of high treason. The 5000 copies that had already been sold were passed around amongst comrades and workers.

Small groups of so-called »radical socialists« who agitated against the war formed in isolation all over the Reich. They gave their community the name »Spartacus Group«.

In answer to Karl Kautsky's declaration that the International was not a weapon in the war, Rosa Luxemburg wrote under the pseudonym »Mortimer«:

»... the world historic appeal of the communist manifesto has undergone a significant amendment and, after Karl Kautsky's correction, now reads:

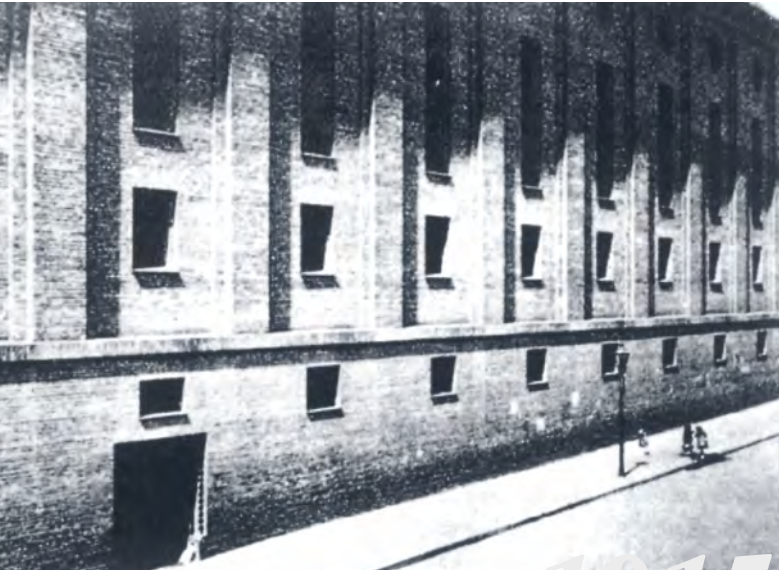
Workers of the world unite in peace and slash your throats in war! So for today: »A Russian for every shot – a Frenchman for every stab!« ... and tomorrow after the peace treaty: »Embrace, millions« ...«



»The Weltfeiertag (world peace day) demonstrators«

1915

*I am working hard
and need all of my
»free time«.*



Women's prison in Barnimstraße, Berlin



Women's prison in Barnimstraße, Berlin

»... don't worry about me, I am fine – healthy and comfortable. Being transported in the »green wagon« did not shock me either; I had already gone through the same journey in Warsaw. There was such a striking similarity that I had several funny thoughts. There was of course a difference; the Russian policemen always transported me with great respect as a »political prisoner«, Berlin's constables on the other hand explained that they couldn't care less who I was and put me into a car with 9 »colleagues« ...«

R.L. to Mathilde Jacob on 23rd February 1915

Münchner
Neueste Nachrichten
(The Munich Latest News)

1915

Although Rosa Luxemburg was granted a reprieve until 31st March 1915 because of illness, **the Frankfurt public prosecutor issued an immediate arrest warrant on 18th February.**

During this period in detention Rosa Luxemburg wrote two significant works. In **»ANTI CRITICISM«**, she got even with the critics of her book **»Accumulation of Capital«**. In **»THE CRISIS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY«**, she analysed the reasons for the war and highlighted its horrors and the failure of German and international social democracy.



»... »Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles! Long live democracy! Long live the Tsar and Slav-dom! Ten thousand tarpaulins guaranteed up to regulations! A hundred thousand kilos of bacon, coffee-substitute for immediate delivery!« ... Dividends are rising, and the proletarians are falling. And with every one there sinks into the grave a fighter of the future, a soldier of the revolution, mankind's savior from the yoke of capitalism. The madness will cease and the bloody demons of hell will vanish only when workers in Germany and France, England and Russia finally awake from their stupor, extend to each other a brotherly hand, and drown out the bestial chorus of imperialist war-mongers and the shrill cry of capitalist hyenas with labor's old and mighty battle cry: Proletarians of all lands, unite!«

From the Junius Pamphlet, chapter 8

Besides her socio-political studies, Rosa Luxemburg also occupied her time with ornithology and botany. She was particularly fond of her herbarium.



»... thank you especially for the flowers; you don't know what a good deed you have done. I can start botanising again, my passion and the best relaxation ...«

R.L. to Mathilde Jacob on 9th April 1915, Berlin-Barnimstraße



With the help of her secretary and friend Mathilde Jacob, the manuscripts could be smuggled out of prison. Only after Rosa Luxemburg's release from prison could a publisher be found. She chose the name **»Junius«** as pseudonym.

The work became internationally known as the JUNIUS PAMPHLET.

After this year in prison, Rosa Luxemburg was in poor health. Nevertheless, she called to the more than one million women workers who were waiting for her with flowers at the prison gate:

»I have returned to freedom with a tremendous appetite for work!«



1916

I've got »involuntary« leisure time again.

On 10th July 1916 Rosa Luxemburg was again arrested. In the opinion of the Berlin police commissioner she was a danger to public security.

Police prison Berlin Alexanderplatz, women's prison Berlin Barnimstraße, Wronke prison by Posen and Breslau prison; these were to be the places where she spent the next 2½ years.

»... dive on Alexanderplatz where in the 11 square metre sized cell I declaimed Mörike morning and night without light, squashed between the c (but without the w) and the iron bunk ...«

»Police prison Alexanderplatz ... the month and a half I spent there turned my hair gray and left me with nerves wrecked so badly that I'll never be the same ...«

R.L. to Hans Diefenbach on 29.6.1917

R.L. to Mathilde Wurm on 28.12.1916



Cell in Wronke prison

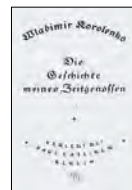
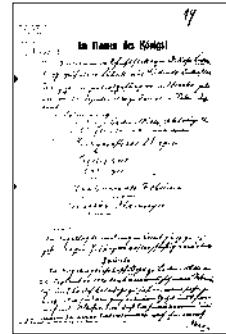


Lilac tree in the prison yard at Wronke, planted by R.L.

»... a great tit is sitting on the grate at my window turning its little head from side to side in order to look through the glass pane at me. I am sitting here at my desk working, enjoying the ticking of the clock - a cosy, comforting sound.«

R.L. to Hans Diefenbach on 13th August 1917

In Wronke prison Rosa Luxemburg was granted special facilities as a prisoner of »protective custody«. She could receive visitors on request and accept flowers, books, food and personal belongings. She could arrange her two small rooms as she wished and wear her own clothes. She had created a small garden in the prison yard. The doors were open during the day. From here she wrote the most beautiful letters to her friends.



During her time in protective custody, Rosa Luxemburg translated Wladimir Korolenko's **»Die Geschichte meines Zeitgenossen«** (The History of My Contemporary) from Russian and also wrote the foreword. The book was published in 1919 by Paul Cassirer.

However, in July 1917, Rosa Luxemburg was moved to Breslau Prison.

»... here I am leading the life of a real convict, i.e. day and night they lock me into my cell and all I can see outside is the men's prison. ... The difference from Wronke is in every respect a sharp one, though this is not a complaint but merely an explanation if for the time being I do not write letters woven out of the scent of roses, the azure colour of the sky and the wisps of cloud to which you have hitherto been accustomed... Cheerfulness will surely return - I carry it in me in inexhaustible amounts ...«

R.L. to Hans Diefenbach on 13th August 1917

Rosa Luxemburg was visited regularly by Mathilde Jacob and Marta Rosenbaum. Not only German newspapers found their way into her cell, but also Russian newspapers and pamphlets. Rosa Luxemburg observed the revolutionary activities in Russia and the mass demonstrations and strikes in Germany with great interest. In her contributions to the Spartacus Letters she admired the Russian proletariats and sharply criticised the attitude of the German Social Democrats, where the right wing was still propagating rallying calls.

The Spartacus Group had joined up with the »Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany«, which had been founded in April 1917. From then on Rosa Luxemburg was a member of the USPD.

»Things can't go on like this much longer. Now that Dittmann and Kurt Eisner have been set free, I am sure that the door will soon be open for myself, and for Karl too. We had better wait until we can meet in Berlin. ...«

R.L. to Sophie Liebknecht on 18th October 1918

On 8th November 1918 Rosa Luxemburg was finally released from Breslau prison.

Are you pleased about the Russians?

1917

On 7 November 1917, Petrograd workers, soldiers, and sailors overthrew the Provisional Government led by Kerensky. The Council of People's Commissars was formed with Lenin as chair.

The armed uprising of the Petrograd workers began in March 1917, taking hold of the entire country. The Tsarist regime fell. On 16 April 1917, Lenin returned to Russia from Switzerland and urged the Bolshevik Party to carry the revolution forward.

You can well imagine what a turmoil [the news from] Russia has stirred within me. So many old friends who have been languishing in prison for years in Moscow, in St. Petersburg, Orel, or Riga are now walking around free. How much that lightens the burden for me of sitting here ...

Luxemburg to Hans Diefenbach. 27 March 1917, Wronke

Luxemburg soon expressed scepticism about the prospects for success.

"My heart trembles for the Russians very much, I hope, unfortunately, not for a victory of the Leninists, although I would prefer such a downfall over 'Staying alive for the Fatherland' ..."

Luxemburg to Mathilde Wurm. 15 November 1917, Breslau prison



Sailors in the port city of Vladivostok

"All the revolutionary honour and capacity which western Social-Democracy lacked was represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism ..."

"But with the repression of political life in the country as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. 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 idealism direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously – at bottom, then, a clique affair – a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is, a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense ..."

Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution* (1922).



From Luxemburg's manuscript on the Russian Revolution, showing the phrase "freedom is always the freedom of those who think differently".

Again and again, Luxemburg emphasized the necessity of revolution in other countries, particularly Germany. For Luxemburg, no revolution is victorious in a single country alone. **In the summer of 1918, Luxemburg wrote very critical articles about the events in Russia.** Her comrades Ernst Meyer and Paul Levi refused to publish them in the *Spartacus Letters*.

In order to convince them that her criticisms were valid, Luxemburg wrote a monograph which, while acknowledging positive aspects of the revolution, critically examines Bolshevik policy on issues of agrarian reform, national groups' right to self-determination, democracy, and terror.

1918



Paul Levi compiled the incomplete manuscripts and published them as a booklet in 1922. It remained controversial for a long time.

Proletarian, arise! To the struggle!
There is a world to win
and a world to defeat



By the autumn of 1918, revolution was inevitable in Germany, as well. Beginning with the sailors' uprising in Kiel on 3 November, the revolution reached its peak on 9 November. Workers' and Soldiers' Councils were organized across the country. On 10 November, late in the evening, Luxemburg arrived in Berlin directly from the prison in Breslau (now Wrocław). She was sick and had aged visibly. Nonetheless, she energetically assumed editorship of the newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag).

"Dearest, in all haste, just a few lines. Since I got off the train I have not yet set foot at home. Up until yesterday the entire time has been taken up in pursuit of the Rote Fahne. Would it appear – or wouldn't it? The struggle turned on this question from early in the morning till late at night. It's finally here... I wait with longing for your article – [keep it] quite short!... We want to have your name [in our paper] right away. Write something perhaps about women, that is so important now, and none of us here understand anything about it. Dearest, in haste, a thousand greetings and hugs. Your RL"

1918



Handing over the Guards' Uhlans barracks to members of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council



Berlin under the red flag

"Ruthless revolutionary energy and tender humanity – this alone is the true essence of socialism. One world must now be destroyed, but each tear that might have been avoided is an indictment; and a man who hurrying on to important deeds inadvertently tramples underfoot even a poor worm, is guilty of a crime."

Rosa Luxemburg in Die Rote Fahne, 18 November 1918

Rosa Luxemburg to Clara Zetkin, 18 November 1918, Berlin, Hotel Moltke

"The abolition of the rule of capitalism, the realization of the social order of socialism – this and nothing less is the historical theme of the present revolution. This is a huge work which cannot be completed in the twinkling of an eye by a few decrees from above... All power in the hands of the working masses, in the hands of the workers' and soldiers' councils, protection of the work of revolution against its lurking enemies..."

Rosa Luxemburg in Die Rote Fahne, 18 November 1918



November 1918

Socialism or barbarism



5 January 1919: armed workers occupy Berlin's newspaper quarter

Embittered and angry, Luxemburg argued with leaders of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD).

"It is sheer insanity to believe that capitalists would willingly obey the socialist verdict of a parliament or national assembly, that they would calmly renounce property, profit, the right to exploit."

Rosa Luxemburg, "What Does the Spartacus League Want?" (1918)



"Revolutions are unacquainted with half-measures, compromises, slinking around and biding. Revolutions call for open sights, clear principles, determined hearts."

Rosa Luxemburg in *Die Rote Fabne*, 29 December 1918

1918



Revolutionary fighters being cared for by civilians, January 1919



Paper reeds serving as barricades in Berlin's newspaper quarter

At the Spartacus League party congress on 30 December 1918, delegates decided to leave the USPD and found a new party: the Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus League). Luxemburg had advocated for the name "Socialist Party", while Leo Jogiches altogether rejected forming a new party, calling it premature.

1919

Counter-revolutionary forces pushed for the rapid dissolution of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils and the holding of elections for the national assembly.

"...the greater the task, the more will we gather all of our forces. And we must not forget that the revolution is able to do its work with extraordinary speed..."

Rosa Luxemburg, closing words of her speech on the party programme (1918).



*Spartacus is the name of the enemy
and Berlin is the city
where our officers know how to win.*

On 4th January 1919, the social democratic government had declared the dismissal of the Chief of the Berlin Police, Emil Eichhorn, who belonged to the left wing of the USPD. This provoked unprepared armed struggles of the revolutionary workers and soldiers of Berlin, which ended in their defeat on 12th January.

»... The violent political crises, which we see here in Berlin every two weeks or even more often, are hindering the course of educational and organisational work, but at the same time they are a great school for the masses. And after all one must take history as it comes... Right now the battle is raging through Berlin, a lot of our brave boys have fallen, Meyer, Ledebour and (as we fear) Leo (Jogiches) have been arrested. For today I must close. A thousand embraces! Your R.«

R. L. to Clara Zetkin on 11.1.1919



Government troops tanks at Alexanderplatz

The revolutionary workers' uprising was brutally put down by the government troops, or Freikorps, which were called upon by the SPD.

1919

»... You cannot imagine the situation in Berlin. The white terror is raging as it did only under the tsarist regime. Landsberg, Ebert, Scheide-mann, who played the guardians of legality, are giving free hand to the marauding troops, whom they have assembled and indoctrinated from old officers and sergeant elements and sons of the bourgeoisie... The wildest troublemakers over the bolshevist terror carried out or tolerated dreadful riots, which, were they to be reported from Petersburg or Moscow, would provoke an outcry of the so-called civilized world.«

Haase, Ernst: Hugo Haase. Sein Leben und Wirken. (Hugo Haase. His life and work)

The closing words of the final article **»Order prevails in Berlin«**, which Rosa Luxemburg wrote for the **Rote Fahne«** (Red Flag) on 14th January 1919, read as follows:

*»The leadership failed. But a new leadership can and must be created by the masses and from the masses. The masses are the crucial factor. They are the rock on which the ultimate victory of the revolution will be built. The masses were up to the challenge, and out of this ›defeat‹ they have forged a link in the chain of historic defeats, which is the pride and strength of international socialism. That is why future victories will spring from this ›defeat‹. ›Order prevails in Berlin!‹
You foolish lackeys! Your ›order‹ is built on sand. Tomorrow the revolution will ›rise up again, clashing its weapons,‹ and to your horror it will proclaim with trumpets blazing:
I was, I am, I shall be!«*

1918



10th December 1918, Brandenburg Gate: welcome speech of the people's representative Ebert on the arrival of the guard troops in Berlin (under the de-facto commando of captain Pabst)



January battles in the newspaper quarter



German Army minister, **Gustav Noske**, visits government troop positions.

She was always on the side of those who had gone astray but who all the same were in the right. (Peter Weiss)

»... I am only comforted by the grim thought that I too will soon be sent to meet my Maker – perhaps by a bullet of the counter-revolution, which is lurking on all sides. But as long as I live, I remain beholden to you in the warmest, most loyal and fervent love ...«

R.L. to Marie and Adolf Geck on 18th November 1918, Berlin

1918

On 15th January, the newly formed »Garde-Kavallerie-Schützendivision« (guard's cavalry division) took over the occupation of the west of Berlin. It set up its headquarters in the grand »Hotel Eden«. Their commander was Hauptmann Pabst. That same evening they revealed themselves for who they really were: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's murderers.

Karl Liebknecht was badly abused and shot on the way to prison. Rosa Luxemburg was dragged out of the hotel, badly abused, shot by lieutenant Souchon during the journey and thrown into the Landwehrkanal. The death squad was led by first lieutenant Vogel.



Lieutenant Karl Vogel. Drawing in the courtroom by O. T. H. The accused fled after the conviction and was granted amnesty 1 ½ years later.

The following day the press reported the fallacy: »Liebknecht shot while fleeing, Luxemburg killed by the crowd«.

Leo Jogiches managed to track down the accomplices to the crime. He was able to take a photo of their feast after the murder. He repeatedly published accusations in the »Rote Fahne«, until finally there was a trial. It ended in a farce.

The murder remained unpunished.



»... I am chained to the editorial office and am in the printing house until midnight every day in order to see to the make-up. On top of that, the urgent messages and instructions which have to be dealt with immediately only arrive at 10 or 11 o'clock. Every day, starting early in the morning there are also conferences and discussions and in between these, meetings to attend. To make a change, every few days there comes a warning from »official sources« that the assassins are laying in wait for Karl (Liebknecht) and I, meaning that we shouldn't sleep at home, but rather have to find shelter somewhere different every night ...«

R.L. to Clara Zetkin on 25th December 1918



Landwehrkanal – Lichtensteinbrücke

Rosa Luxemburg's corpse was washed ashore at the Freiarchenbrücke on the Landwehrkanal on 1st June 1919. Mathilde Jacob was able to identify the corpse by the remains of her clothes. She had to pay for the »recovery« of the body.



Hotel Eden on Kurfürstendamm

On 15th January, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht und Wilhelm Pieck were tracked down in Mannheimerstraße 43 in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, arrested and taken to the Hotel Eden.



Government troops in front of the house Mannheimerstraße 43

After a short interrogation and a telephone call with the German Army minister Noske (MSPD), Pabst ordered that the prisoners be transported to Moabit prison. This transfer order was already part of the murder plan.

»The victory of the counter-revolution in January 1919 led directly and logically to the victory of Hitler in January 1933.«

Paul Frölich

On 13th June Rosa Luxemburg was buried next to Karl Liebknecht in the cemetery in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde. The funeral procession turned into a powerful demonstration.



»Der Mord« (The murder) by Käthe Kollwitz

In the spring and summer of 1919, a terrible civil war raged over Germany in the course of which several thousand workers were brutally murdered.

ROSA LUXEMBURG 1890-15 JANUARY 1919

*How I need you –
how we need each other.*

Leo (Leon) Jogiches
Pseudonyms: Grosovsky, Jan Tyszka, Leonie, Otto Engelmann, K. Krysztalowicz, Dr. Müller. Born 1867 in Vilnius to a Russian-Jewish banking family.



Leo Jogiches, 1890



Rosa Luxemburg, 1893

Even as a youth, Jogiches organized worker resistance in Lithuanian workplaces. At age 20, he helped two individuals flee abroad after they had participated in the attempted assassination of the Russian Tsar Alexander III. Two years later Jogiches, too, was forced to flee – to Switzerland, where he enrolled at the University of Zurich.

In the early years, Jogiches was the absolute intellectual authority in Luxemburg's eyes. Jogiches, who hardly wrote himself, reviewed her manuscripts and also corrected her doctoral dissertation.

1895

There he made the acquaintance of zoology student Rosa Luxemburg. They began a presumably unique political collaboration that continued – through highs and lows, devotion and reluctance – until she was murdered.

Luxemburg wrote countless letters to Leo Jogiches. More than 1,000 have survived. Her reports on activities and reflections on political events or people are interspersed with declarations of love, analyses of their feelings for each other, and criticisms of her loved one's behaviour.

"But the greatest joy you gave me was when you wrote that we are still young and will be able to organize our personal life. Oh, my golden Dziodzio, if you could only fulfil that promise!"

Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, Berlin, 6 March 1899

"... think about it, be good! Write kind and gentle letters, and don't address me with the formal 'you,' which is a tactless piece of crudity on your part... be bumble, and tell me you love me without being afraid that you will be demeaning yourself if, say, just for today, you give me three pennies more than I give you. Don't be afraid and don't be ashamed to express your feelings for me (if you still have them...)"

Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, Paris, 21 March 1895

"... you don't notice that your entire correspondence systematically displays a quality of being one huge unpleasant thing: Its only content is a dreary, pedantic mentoring, such as is more usually associated with 'letters of a teacher to his pet pupil'..."

Rosa Luxemburg to Leo Jogiches, Friedenau, 13 January 1900



Leo Jogiches, 1893

1919

Despite frequent and at times fierce quarrels and the severing of their romantic ties in 1906/07, their political collaboration endured.

In emergencies, they took care of one another, as friends do. **Leo Jogiches successfully tracked down Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's murderers.**

"March 1919... I loved my mother dearly, and I suffered for a long time when death tore her from me early in life. But I ultimately accepted my fate. I will never get over the loss of Rosa."

Leo Jogiches to Mathilde Jacob

On 10 March 1919, after being brutally abused in a police cell in Moabit, Jogiches was also shot dead "while fleeing" by the police detective Tamschick.

Tamschick committed a further political murder on 18 May 1919, when he killed former navy lieutenant Dorrenbach, a leader in the People's Navy Division. Tamschick was subsequently promoted to officer aspirant.

They never managed to arrange this shared "personal life", not only because Jogiches always shied away from committing himself once and for all to one woman, but also because the great "cause", the revolutionary struggle they had devoted themselves to, stood in the way.



Leo Jogiches, around 1908



Leo Jogiches, 1918



Käthe Kollwitz's drawing of the deceased Leo Jogiches

Don't worry,
I'm already doing better.

**Mathilde Jacob,
born in Berlin
on 8 March 1873,
died on 14 April 1943
in the Theresienstadt
concentration camp, a
victim of the Holocaust.**



"In 1913 I had the good fortune of getting to know Rosa personally. Never before had a woman impressed me so deeply. Her large, glowing eyes, which seemed to comprehend everything, her modesty and kindness, her almost childlike joy at everything beautiful – all that endeared her to me. I looked up in awe to this intellectual giant, who was almost shabbily dressed.

Later, no matter how often I accompanied Rosa Luxemburg to assemblies, conferences, or demonstrations, the first impression remained unchanged: her appearance was so modest and unassuming that people who had never seen her before cried out in amazement: 'That's Rosa Luxemburg?!' If she then spoke, in her spirited way, she began to grow beyond the dimensions of her diminutive figure, and fascinated her listeners."

Mathilde Jacob,
"On Rosa Luxemburg and her Friends
Through War and Revolution"

1913

Mathilde Jacob lived with her mother and sister in Moabit, Berlin, where she ran an office that offered translation, secretarial, and typing services. One of her first clients from socialist circles was Karl Radek.

From late 1913, she also worked for Rosa Luxemburg. Jacob was in charge of the technical production and distribution of Social-Democratic Correspondence, a periodical edited by Julius Marchlewski, Luxemburg, and Franz Mehring. The two women soon came to trust one another.

"My dear, dear Mathilde!...

There's nothing new with me except that I sit out in the open, in the sun, a lot nowadays. In this your beautiful wicker chair comes in very handy, it is so light and easy to carry around, and it feels positively regal to be sitting in it. Today a lot of butterflies and bumblebees came, but they didn't find a single blossom in the garden. – I therefore brought the flowerpot with the cineraria in full bloom, the one Marta [Rosenbaum] sent me, and you should have seen how the little creatures threw themselves upon it and couldn't get enough of that wonderful golden pollen. Today I also saw for the first time in my life a splendid bird: the yellowhammer. I sat so quiet and motionless that it hopped over quite close and I was able to observe it in exact detail. All the things I'm getting to know here in Wronke! Really, Mathilde, I am gathering new bits of knowledge in massive quantities here, then I immediately do some research, and I feel that my life has been positively enriched."

Rosa Luxemburg to Mathilde Jacob, Wronke Fortress, 3 May 1917

Sozialdemokratische Korrespondenz

Herausgegeben von J. Marski / R. Luxemburg / F. Mehring

Nr. 66 Berlin, 16. Juni 1914

Zin schritt vorwärts

A.L. Die letzte Verbandsgeneralversammlung der acht Berliner Jahreskreise hat gezeigt, dass die Genossen der Reichshauptstadt entschlossen sind, die ihnen gebührende Stellung der Avantgarde im preussischen Wahlrechtskampf tatkräftig zu behaupten. Die riesige Kampferregung, die in der Versammlung herrschte, der Ernst und der Eifer, womit man während der ganzen Tagung auf die Erörterung des preussischen Wahlrechtskampfes einging, endlich die gefassten Beschlüsse legen unzweifelhaftes Zeugnis für den festen Willen der Berliner Arbeiterschaft ab, mit den Kampfmaßnahmen der Partei bitteren Ernst zu machen. Das Beispiel Berlins wird zweifellos auf ganz Preussen, ja auf die Genossen im ganzen Reich erwirkend und anfeuernd wirken. Die letzte Berliner Tagung ist aber nicht bloß durch die Beschlüsse bedeutsam, die schließlich mit Übergrosser Mehrheit zur Annahme gelangten, sondern nicht minder durch die Ausführungen, mit denen man gegen jene beschlossene Opposition machte und an ihren Kritik übte. Die Auseinandersetzungen des Gen. Richard Fischer sind in dieser Beziehung als die deutlichste und schärfste Zusammenfassung der Gedankengänge jener Kreise der Partei und auch der Gewerkschaften zu bezeichnen, die als Gegner der Massenstriktes und der allgemeinen Verachthung unserer Taktik auftraten. Worin gipfelte die Kritik des Gen. Fischer? In der Ausweitung eines blühenden Phantasieländes vor einer wilden Futuristik, die angeblich nur darau

1917

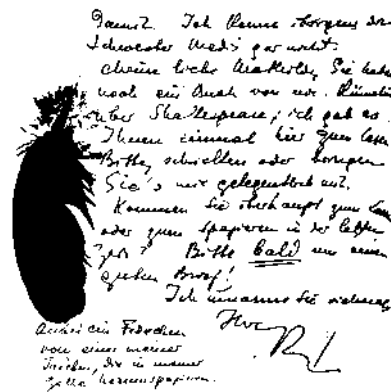
As her official secretary, Jacob had more contact with Luxemburg while she was in prison than anyone else. She used books, newspapers, bouquets of flowers, and shopping bags to smuggle in secret messages and reports. She brought encrypted requests into the prison and left with answers.

She took care of Rosa's diet, her flowers, her washing, her books, and all the little things that she desired and that made her life and work in prison easier. And she took care of Luxemburg's beloved cat, Mimi.

"... when will I sit in Southend with you and Mimi and read Goethe to you again? ... I bug you and Mimi with terrible longing. Your RL"

Rosa Luxemburg to Mathilde Jacob, Wronke Fortress, 7 February 1917

1917



Letter to Mathilde Jacob, written with a pigeon's feather, 14 August 1917

Owing to a misunderstanding, Jacob avoided Luxemburg during the difficult, stressful days of the revolution, and worked for Leo Jogiches. The two women were reconciled just two days before Luxemburg's murder.



From Luxemburg's herbarium

1918

It is no use being cowardly or weak

1898

Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin's friendship began in 1898 after the party conference in Stuttgart. Clara Zetkin was then 41 years old. She could look back on 20 years work in the German and international labour movement. For her young comrade, Rosa Luxemburg, this proved a great help in orientating herself within inner party connections. Clara Zetkin valued Rosa Luxemburg's theoretical knowledge and analytic reasoning. Both women were excellent journalists and speakers.



Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg in 1910 at the Magdeburg party conference

Clara Josephine Zetkin (Zundel) née Eißner, born on 5th July 1857 in Wiederau/Saxony, died on 20th June 1933 in Archangelskoje near Moscow.

1892 – 1917, head of the social democratic women's magazine »Die Gleichheit« (**equality**); from 1919, leading member of the KPD and the communist parliamentary party in the Reichstag.



Clara Zetkin at the beginning of the 1890s



»... We will write to one another, Clara and I, which I'm very happy about ...«

L. to Leo Jogiches on 2nd February 1899

»Small, delicate Rosa embodied energy without equal. She demanded the utmost of herself every minute and achieved it. If she was in danger of breaking down due to overexertion, she recovered with even greater work. She grew wings when working and fighting.«

Clara Zetkin in: Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht 1919

»... imagine if Clara already had her mandate and were to sit in the Reichstag with Rosa! Then you would see something! ...«

Victor Adler to August Bebel in a letter dated 5th August 1910



The Zetkin-Zundel family's house in Sillenbuch near Stuttgart

In Sillenbuch house, the home of Clara Zetkin, her sons and Friedrich Zundel, Rosa Luxemburg often sought and found peace and relaxation. Here she met many of her friends, such as the Geck family, Hans Diefenbach, the Kautskys, the Bebels and Lenin. She spent many pleasant evenings there enjoying music, song and readings.

1919

»... Oh Rosa, what days! I see before me so clearly the historic greatness and meanings of all your actions ... My dearest, my only Rosa. I know you never wished for a better death than to fall fighting for the revolution. But what about us? Can we spare you? I cannot think I only feel. I embrace you and press you close to my heart. Always yours, Clara.«

Clara Zetkin to Rosa Luxemburg on 13th January 1919 from Stuttgart

»... the worst thing is that I can't come and see you now, not even for two days: 1. I have lots to do here, 2. I must cure myself and I hardly feel capable of travelling 3. We must save money (you, I and all of us!). And then you go and send me such flower baskets and the poet (Friedr. Zundel, Clara's husband) indulges in such luxuries! Oh you hopeless grand seigneurs of the heart - with holes in your pockets! A long talk with you would be so liberating. But what use is that! Even that must be taken quietly and cheerfully ...«

R.L. to Clara Zetkin on 9th March 1916 from Südende-Berlin



Clara Zetkin, around 1920

1916

And be happy, do you understand?



Rosa Luxemburg and Luise Kautsky during their stay in Switzerland

Luise Kautsky, born 1864. Karl Kautsky's second wife. In the summer of 1944 at 80 years of age, she was arrested by the Germans in Holland, seized and taken to the concentration camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she died (was murdered) in December of the same year.

Rosa Luxemburg nurtured a deep friendship with Luise and Karl Kautsky's family for many years. With them she also spent many relaxing holidays in Switzerland and Italy. Rosa Luxemburg's friendship with Luise did not break up even after the dispute with Karl Kautsky.

Luise Kautsky about Rosa Luxemburg:

»... she was small and would have been unprepossessing had her looks not been enhanced by her beautiful shining eyes, her fine oval shaped face, beautiful complexion and her full dark hair and in particular her intelligent expression. What was the charm of her being? Its liveliness, the ability to quickly empathise with every mood of the other, and her accomplished art of listening, her loving way of empathising with the joys and sorrows of others, her sparkling humour, her clear, sensible judgement, her cheerfulness with which she infected her partner, and on the other hand the deep moral earnest with which she approached all the problems that her eventful life confronted her with every day.«

»Beloved Lulu !

... believe me, the time that I - and others - am now spending sitting behind bars is not lost. In some way it will pay out in the end. I am of the opinion that without too much cleverness and contemplating one should live in a way one considers right without expecting to see the dividends for this immediately. It will all work out in the end. And if not then I couldn't care less; I am so enjoying life, I inspect the buds on my bushes every morning, visit a little red ladybird with two black dots on it's back every day ... watch the clouds, always new and more beautiful, and in the entirety feel no more important than this little ladybird and from this feeling of minuteness, indescribably happy... I embrace you with all my heart ... your R.«

R.L. to Luise Kautsky on 15th April 1917

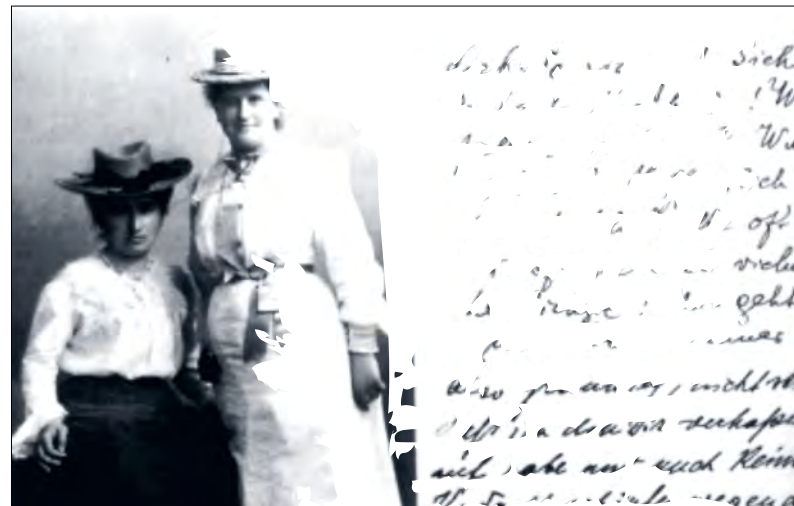
1917

»... Now I am quite well again and in good spirits, only I miss you to gossip and laugh with, as only we two know how. I would certainly succeed in getting you to laugh soon again, although your last letters sounded alarmingly morose« ... » I suppose all inclination for music as for everything else has left you for quite a while. Your mind is preoccupied with worries about the wrong course history is taking, and your heart is full of sighs over the despicable conduct of – Scheidemann and comrades. And everybody who writes me, moans and sighs similarly. To me nothing seems more ludicrous than that. Don't you understand that the general misery is altogether too great to bemoan it? ... «
»I embrace you. Your R.«

R.L. to Luise Kautsky on 26th January 1917 from Wronke prison

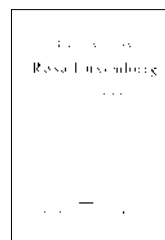
From Luise Kautsky »Rosa Luxemburg, ein Gedenkbuch« (Rosa Luxemburg, a memorial book)

» ... when she (Rosa Luxemburg) had founded her own household, she also began to be interested in housework, did not disdain cooking and loved it when her guests felt comfortable in her home. By no means did she harbour a contempt of domestic virtues, was very tidy and clean, and had a pronounced sense of beauty. When she was tired of intellectual work, she often also took up needlework. I have seen a number of sofa cushions and blankets that have blossomed in her skilful fingers ... «



Card from Rosa Luxemburg and Luise Kautsky to Minna Kautsky (Karl Kautsky's mother) dated 19th June 1905

1905



Dedication in the book »Rosa Luxemburg«

*Hans, you have no idea
how blue the sky was today.*

**Hans Diefenbach,
born 1884 in Stuttgart,
killed in action in October
1917. He was blown too
pieces by a grenade in
France while serving as
military doctor.**

Hans Diefenbach came from Stuttgart to Munich to study medicine. In the house of the socialist doctor Mrs. Hope Bridges Adams-Lehmann, he found a second home. Here he became acquainted with many famous social democrats. When he moved to Berlin, he was immediately welcomed in social democratic circles. It was here that he also first met Rosa Luxemburg. A deep and cordial friendship developed between the two.



1907

»... Hänschen, good morning, here I am, I feel so lonely today and will have to revive myself a bit by chatting to you... a robin sat on the wall behind me and sang for me a bit... (it) has a very small, delicate little voice and is performing strange intimate melodies that sound like a prelude, like a piece of reveille... performed in a quiet tremolo tone so infinitely sweet that it seems bazy, like a memory lost in dreams. My heart quivers with delight and pain when I hear this song and I immediately see my life and the world in a new light just as if the clouds were parting and a bright ray of sunshine were falling to earth...«

In Hans Diefenbach's diary there is the following passage:

»I can say, to my honour, that I have not much nationalism in me, but am not entirely able to deprive myself of the thought of being in some way bound to the idea of my origins in Württemberg and the relationship to the historic bills, to the places from which Scelling, Schiller, Hegel, Mörike, Hölderlin came.«

Luise Kautsky: Rosa Luxemburg, ein Gedenkbuch (Rosa Luxemburg, a Memorial Book)

R.L. to Dr. Hans Diefenbach on 23rd June 1917 from Wronke prison

»... I have lost my dearest friend, who unlike anyone else understood and empathized with every one of my moods, every feeling...«

R.L. to Hans Diefenbach's sister

»... I can speak of nothing with you at the moment except that, but exactly here there is nothing to say. Or at least I am unable to find the words. Nor should I think about it, else I could not bear it. On the contrary, I continue living with the dream that he is here, I can see myself vividly before him, chat with him in my thoughts about everything, within me he is still alive...«

R.L. to Luise Kautsky on 24th November 1917 from Breslau prison

1917

»... only one thing torments me: that I shall have to enjoy so much beauty alone. I want to call out loudly over the wall: Oh please, note the beautiful day! Do not forget, however busy you may be, even if you are rushing over the yard going about your daily business, do not forget to quickly raise your head and glance at the enormous silvery clouds and the still blue ocean in which they are swimming. Note the air, which is heavy with the passionate breath of the last lime flowers and the glow and beauty that rest on this day, because this day will never come back. It has been given to you like a fully open rose which lies at your feet and is waiting to be picked up and pressed to your lips. R«

R.L. to Dr. Hans Diefenbach on 6th July 1917 from Wronke prison

*My little girl
– chin up –
stay firm and calm.*

Sophie (Sonja) Liebknecht
born 1884
in Rostov-on-Don,
Art Historian
Second wife of
Karl Liebknecht,
died 1964

Rosa Luxemburg always cared lovingly for Sophie Liebknecht, who suffered greatly from the imprisonment of her husband, Karl Liebknecht. From prison, Rosa Luxemburg wrote her comforting and encouraging letters.

»... Sonyusba, dearest, you must be calm and happy all the same. Such is life, and we have to take it as it is, valiantly, beads erect, smiling ever — despite everything.«

R.L. to Sophie Liebknecht from Wronke in December 1917



Sophie Liebknecht in »Karl und Rosa, Erinnerungen« (Karl und Rosa, Memories)

1916

»... until 10th July 1916, I saw Rosa Luxemburg almost every day. She often accompanied me a part of the way when I brought the paper and some food to my husband in Moabit and I sometimes tried to hunt down a taxi on Potsdamer Platz for the journey to Moabit. Afterwards, I sometimes brought the secret messages that my husband had given me to the café »Fürstenhof« and gave them to Rosa. We mostly had a cup of coffee there and tried to feign a kind of gaiety to others and ourselves. When I didn't rush home, we went to Südende to Rosa's, where she demonstrated her culinary skills, which she enjoyed greatly and which was very tasty ... «

»Sonyusba, you are feeling embittered because of my long imprisonment. You ask: »How can human beings dare to decide the fate of their fellows? What is the meaning of it all « You won't mind — I couldn't help laughing as I read. In Dostoyeffsky's novel, The Brothers Karamazoff, one of the characters, Madame Hokhlakova, used to ask the same questions; she would look round from one member of the company to another, and would then blurt out a second question before there had been time to begin an answer to the first. My dear little bird, the whole history of civilisation (which according to a modest estimate extends through some twenty thousand years) is grounded upon »human beings deciding the fate of their fellows «; the practice is deeply rooted in the material conditions of existence. Nothing but a further evolution, and a painful one, can change such things. At this hour we are living in the very chapter of the transition, and you ask »What is the meaning of it all? « Your query is not a reasonable one to make concerning the totality of life and its forms. Why are there blue-tits in the world? I really don't know, but I'm glad that there are, and it is sweet to me when a hasty »zeezeebey« sounds suddenly from beyond the wall ... «

R.L. to Sophie Liebknecht on 23rd May 1917 from Wronke prison



Karl Liebknecht with his family, 1913

»... I suppose I must be out of sorts to feel everything so deeply. Sometimes, however, it seems to me that I am not really a human being at all but like a bird or a beast in human form. I feel so much more at home even in a scrap of garden like the one here, and still more in the meadows when the grass is humming with bees than — at one of our party congresses. I can say that to you, for you will not promptly suspect me of treason to socialism! You know that I really hope to die at my post, in a street fight or in prison. But my innermost personality belongs more to my tomtits than to the comrades. ... «

R.L. to Sophie Liebknecht on 2nd Mai 1917 from Wronke prison

*»Disappointment with the masses«
is always the most lamentable excuse for a political leader.*



**Mathilde Wurm
née Adler
born in 1874,
author and Social Democrat,
member of the USPD,
from 1917 – 1919 representa-
tive of the city of Berlin,
mainly active
in the social sector.
She committed suicide
in exile in London.**

Mathilde and Emanuel Wurm were part of the USPD's left wing, which was called the »Sozialdemokratische Arbeitsgemeinschaft« (Social democratic group). For Rosa Luxemburg, the leading representatives were not decisive enough in their opposition to the party executive's authoritarian actions and to the political perseverance of the social democrat majority. Mathilde Wurm had to endure her anger about the »weaklings and cowards«.

*»... your last letter made me seethe with rage because, despite its brevity, it shows me in every line how very much you are again under the influence of your milieu. This whining tone, this ›alas‹ and ›alack‹ about the ›disappointments‹ which you have experienced –disappointments which you blame on others, instead of just looking into the mirror to see the whole of humanity's wretchedness in its most striking likeness! ... your grouching, peevish, cowardly and half hearted nature has never been as alien, as hateful to me, as it is now ... let me tell you, as soon as I can stick my nose outside again, I will chase and hunt your company of frogs with trumpet calls, cracks of the whip and bloodbounds...
Do you have enough now for a New Years Greeting?*

*Then see to it that you remain a Mensch. Being a Mensch means happily throwing one's life ›on fate's great scale‹ if necessary, but, at the same time, enjoying every bright day and every beautiful cloud. Oh, I can't write you a prescription for being a Mensch. I only know how one is a Mensch, and you used to know it too when we went walking for a few hours in the Südende fields with the sunset's red light falling on the wheat. The world is beautiful even with all its horrors, and it would be even more beautiful if there were no weaklings and cowards.
Come, you still get a kiss, because you are a sincere little dear.
Happy New Year!«*

R.L. to Mathilde Wurm on 28th December 1916 from Wronke prison

1916

*»My dear Tilde!
... that you now have neither time nor interest for anything except the ›single issue,‹ namely the quandary of the party, is calamitous. Such one-sidedness also clouds one's political judgement; and above all, one must live as a full person at all times.
... why do you come with your special Jewish sorrows? I feel just as sorry for the wretched Indian victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo, the negroes in Africa with whose bodies the Europeans play catch. Do you remember the words written on the work of the Great General Staff about Trotha's campaign in the Kalahari desert? ›And the death-rattles, the mad cries of those dying of thirst, faded away into the sublime silence of eternity.‹
Oh, this ›sublime silence of eternity‹ in which so many screams have faded away unheard! It rings within me so strongly that I have no special corner of my heart reserved for the ghetto: I am at home wherever in the world there are clouds, birds and human tears...«*

R.L. to Mathilde Wurm on 16th February 1917 from Wronke prison



Mathilde Wurm

»My dear Röschen, ... day after day I open the papers expecting to read at last of your release. Day after day I am disappointed. Our present democratic government is so wonderful that we don't even have a law of amnesty and you are still in protective custody. How you must be suffering to be robbed of your freedom at this particular moment!«

Mathilde Wurm to R.L. on 7th November 1918 to Breslau prison

1918



Lore Agnes (MSPD) – Clara Zetkin (KPD) – Mathilde Wurm (USPD)

*Your sweet letter today
was such a comfort to me.*



Rosa Luxemburg and Kostja Zetkin, around 1907

**Kostja (Konstantin) Zetkin
born 1885,
died 1980,
Doctor,
son of Clara Zetkin**

**Rosa Luxemburg already
knew Kostja Zetkin as a
boy. In the spring of 1907,
a love affair began.
She became his teacher,
friend and lover. She
shared with him her
thoughts, worries and
pleasures.**

*»... sweet Beloved, on the 21st I
received your kind, long letter
and today the short one ... I am
happy that Ferdinand Lassalle
has captivated you, I too enthuse
about him and will not let any-
one or anything put me off him. As
far as I am concerned, he still
and always incites me to work
and to science, which through
him is always so full of life and
genius. Marx may be more
powerful and profound, but by
far not as sparkling and colour-
ful ... «*

R.L. to Kostja Zetkin on 27th September 1907

*»... you sweet consoler, since yesterday I have experienced so many terrible things. Early in
the morning, the most important lawyer for political trials came from Warsaw, sent especially
to me; he and his colleague called on me to sort Europe out because of the atrocities in the war
court, in the prisons and in the torture chambers. He spoke and I made notes from 10 in the
morning till 7 at night, until he had to go in order to be in court again in the morning. We
both cried whilst working. It is dreadful to see several executions a day; things happen in the
prisons that make your hair stand on end. You can imagine how I felt ... «*

R.L. to Kostja Zetkin on 5th June 1908

*»Nyunyu, darling, your letter
yesterday about my painting
made me so happy and gave me
so much courage that I started
another yesterday. It demands so
much of me that I can hardly eat,
because I am so impatient to
send it to you. But it will probab-
ly take another four or five days!
Dudu dearest, that I am still
painting is your fault, as you
alone give me the courage to be
so daring ... «*

R.L. to Kostja Zetkin on 21st August 1908

*»... today I went and painted
for the first time in nature. I went
to Schlachtensee and died of
impatience but, oh God, what
problems! I could only take a
sketchbook, so had to paint on
plain paper and in the air. But
yet again I learnt something. Oh,
if I could spend the next two
years of my life only painting –
that would devour me ... But
what mad dreams, I am not
allowed to, because not a soul
needs my paintings, but the peo-
ple need my articles ... «*

R.L. to Kostja Zetkin on 22nd August 1908



Painted by Rosa Luxemburg, 1908



Drawing by Rosa Luxemburg

This liaison lasted for more than 2 years,
they always remained friends

1908

Despite all that and all that



1871

Karl Liebknecht was born in Leipzig as the second son of the family of the distinguished leader of German Social Democracy, Wilhelm Liebknecht and his wife Nathalie. After studying law at the universities in Leipzig and Berlin, Karl Liebknecht defended German social democrats, fighters against German militarism and Russian emigrants in eviction trials.

Within social democracy, Karl Liebknecht was part of the left wing. The first political field of action Karl Liebknecht devoted himself to was the fight against militarism.



Karl Friedrich Paul Liebknecht
born 13th August 1871
murdered 15th January 1919,
lawyer,
member of the SPD from 1900,
from 1902, Berlin city councillor from 1908,
member of the Prussian Parliament from 1912, member of the German Reichstag



In February 1907, Karl Liebknecht published a text entitled »Militarismus und Antimilitarismus« (Militarism and Anti-militarism), with particular regard to the international youth movement.

»Militarism is our worst enemy and (...) the fight against it cannot be waged in a more effective way than by continuing to increase the number of social democrats in the army.«

K.L. at the Bremen SPD party conference in 1904

»Internationally, militarism endangers peace amongst nations and nationally it acts as bulwark and battering ram against our inner enemy«, the fighting proletariat.«

K.L. at the SPD party conference in Jena in 1905

This text and Karl Liebknecht's motions at party conferences for political agitation against militarism prompted the Prussian minister of war to press charges.

Karl Liebknecht was sentenced to 18 months prison for high treason which he had to begin to serve immediately.

»... Gentlemen, I do not need to tell you that a woman such as Madame Dr. Luxemburg does not belong to the class who try to escape from a sentence, – that a woman such as Madame Dr. Luxemburg is brave enough to look her enemies in the eye ...«

From a speech by K.L. in the Prussian parliament on 9th January 1915

1907

Karl Liebknecht supported the social democratic youth movement at a national and international level.

In 1907, the first international youth conference was carried out in Stuttgart. Karl Liebknecht was elected chairman.



K.L. speaking in Tiergarten, December 1918

After the outbreak of the First World War, Karl Liebknecht was the first and initially the only social democratic Reichstag delegate to oppose the granting of war credits. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht waged the battle against the war together and, particularly during the November Revolution, thus became comrades in arms.

Together with Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht took on the chair of the newly founded Communist Party of Germany (KPD).

On 15th January 1919, Karl Liebknecht was murdered by members of the guard's cavalry division, as was Rosa Luxemburg.



K.L. with his son, 1918

*» L. F.
 Many thanks for the English books. I've already read Kingsley and am sincerely grateful for this acquaintance. As for your friendly intention to visit me here again, I would rather be patient and wait to see you and all my friends outside and can chat to my hearts content about God and the world. Meanwhile, regards to you both and the children.
 Your Rosa Luxemburg«*

R.L. to Karl Liebknecht on 5th January 1916 from Berlin-Barnimstraße prison



K.L. at a demonstration in January 1919

1919

»Who could deny that we would miss Rosa Luxemburg's far-sightedness, deep spirit, knowledge and will of every hour of the day.

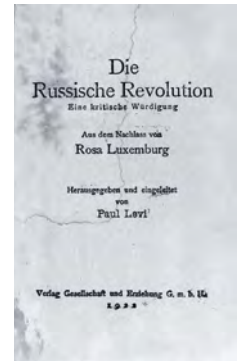
P. L. on the 3rd anniversary of Rosa Luxemburg's death

1883



Paul Levi
Born in 1883 in Hechingen /Wttbg.
died 1930 in Berlin.
Son of a republican,
Jewish family of merchants.
Lawyer in Frankfurt a. Main,
Member of the SPD from 1909,
Reichstag deputy in the
Weimar Republic

Paul Levi was the only person whom Rosa Luxemburg had entrusted with her manuscript »The Russian Revolution« which she had written in Breslau prison. In 1922, he published Rosa Luxemburg's manuscript. Within the KPD and the Communist International, the publication caused hefty disputes.



Paul Levi was one of the founders of the Spartacus League and the Communist Party of Germany. After Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered, he led the KPD from 1919 until February 1921.

In the months before the First World War, Levi's main sphere of activity was political agitation against militarism.

»When officers' honour and law collide with one another, then in Germany the law has to remain silent.«

P.L. in »Volksstimme« (Peoples' voice)

In the trial against Rosa Luxemburg for prompting disobedience of the law, and the second trial for insulting the officers and sergeant corps, Paul Levi took on the defence along with Kurt Rosenfeld. They could not prevent Rosa Luxemburg being sentenced to one year prison.

»No, your honour, the accused is not so poor (...) in Germany there are hundreds of thousands who love her and whom she loves and whom she will not let down, even for one year in prison. In that matter you can believe the accused.«

P. L. in his speech for the defence on 20th February 1914



Paul Levi and Rosa Luxemburg used the trials for widespread anti-militaristic agitation which received great respect in the entire party.

1914

After the first trial in Frankfurt, Rosa Luxemburg and Paul Levi got to know and love each other and were close friends for about half a year.

»After dreadful party work for Poland (...) I must write a few words, in order to feel the sun and joie de vivre. Darling, if only you were with me for just a moment.«

R. L. to Paul Levi around 20th/21st April 1914

Paul Levi was probably very depressed at the outbreak of the war. On 31st July, Rosa Luxemburg wrote to him:

»... don't despair, we now need fresh courage and a cool head in order to act.«

Because of his critical stance on the Communist International and his criticism of the insurgent tactics of the KPD, Levi was expelled from the party in 1921. Paul Levi remained true to his left convictions in the spirit of Rosa Luxemburg within the communist group (KAG) and later in the SPD.



Paul Levi at the 2nd Congress of the Communist International in Moscow.

During a trial in which Paul Levi defended an editor who was accusing the examining magistrate, Paul Jorns, of not having solved but rather having covered up Luxemburg and Liebknecht's murders, he became ill with pneumonia. Paul Levi died in an accident. After his tragic death on 9th February 1930, Carl von Ossietzky wrote an obituary in the »Weltbühne« on 18th February 1930:



»The communists were wrong to call him disloyal, the social democrats wrong in calling him a convert. He was an international socialist of Rosa Luxemburg's school and never denied it. Paul Levi was as dedicated to Socialism as hardly anyone else.«

ROSA LUXEMBURG

*She was and remains for us an eagle.
(Lenin)*



Lithography by Conrad Felixmüller, 1919

*To the funeral, citizens!
Noske guards stand in line!
Come and see us
all walking behind her corpse.
Her followers
Her brothers united
Look how we honour her
Profess our belief in her
And weep for her
This is not a funeral
procession
But a procession of burning
philantropy
Loud accusation
of a people
for the victim of violence –
and the reign of blood
of its tyrants*

Oskar Käbel



Funeral procession for Rosa Luxemburg on 13th June 1919



Rosa Luxemburg's funeral



Grave of the victims of the revolution

Memorial for Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

On 13th June 1926, a memorial was unveiled in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde. It was designed by the Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe, made of broken red, hard burned brick from demolished buildings in Oldenburg. It consisted of stacked up, staggered blocks and was about twelve metres long and six metres high, with a Soviet star with a hammer and sickle as sculptural elements. The monument was financed by donations from the labour force.



Memorial at Berlin-Friedrichsfelde cemetery 1926

At the time, Mies van der Rohe was already one of the most famous architects in Germany. In a conversation later, he explained:

»Clarity and truth should meet – against the haze that had risen up and murdered hope. The hopes, which we quite rightly saw, for a stable German republic. That would have had to have been a single minded democracy.«

The monument was demolished in 1935 by NS rulers. The present monument was erected in 1951.

Epitaph for Rosa Luxemburg

*Here lies buried
Rosa Luxemburg
A Jew from Poland
Who fought for the
German workers
Murdered on the orders of
German oppressors. You
who are oppressed;
Bury your differences!*

Bertolt Brecht

Peter Geide, Rosa Luxemburg and the Weimar left



ROSA LUXEMBURG

Her work is a piece of the history of socialism and the international labour movement.
(Iring Fetscher)



In 1974, the Deutsche Bundespost brought out a stamp with a portrait of Rosa Luxemburg. The former postmaster general received more than 200 letters of complaint. The press was full of appalled readers' letters.

1968

In the revolts of 1968, students often carried protest banners with a picture of Rosa Luxemburg.



The commemorative plaque for Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht on the Landwehrkanal was destroyed on numerous occasions.



1980

In 1987, there was a proposal to call the new bridge over the Landwehrkanal »Rosa-Luxemburg-Brücke«. (Rosa Luxemburg had been thrown into the canal at this location after being murdered). The CDU/FDP majority in the Berlin parliament withheld their consent. On the bridge's inauguration day members of the Berlin history workshop nonetheless mounted a nameplate. The plate was removed by police officers 30 minutes later.



Rosa Luxemburg University of Cologne

On the occasion of the third reading of the emergency powers act, the members of the SDS had on 30th May 1968 given their university a new name. The inscription carried the symbolic colour red.

1988



Every year on the 15th January, the day of Rosa Luxemburg's and Karl Liebknecht's death, thousands of people visit the memorial site at the cemetery in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde.

In 1988, a monument was erected for Rosa Luxemburg on the Landwehrkanal. The monument was designed and supplied by the architects Schüler/Schüler-Witte.



1995

15. Januar 1996



On the occasion of Rosa Luxemburg's 125th Birthday a reading was held in Munich in her honour.

The Jusos of Munich (Young Socialists in the SPD) held a Rosa Luxemburg congress.



Members of the history workshop of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) educational institute in Munich take part in the demonstration in 1996.

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