

**FRANK JACOB,
ALBERT SCHARENBERG,
JÖRN SCHÜTRUMPF (HG.)**

ROSA LUXEMBURG

Band 1 • Leben und Wirken



BÜCHNER

Rosa Luxemburg. Band 1: Leben und Wirken

Prof. Dr. Frank Jacob, geb. 1984, studierte von 2004 bis 2010 an der Julius-Maximilians-Universität in Würzburg sowie an der Osaka University Geschichte und Japanologie. 2012 wurde er an der Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg im Fachbereich Japanologie mit einer Arbeit zu Geheimgesellschaften in Deutschland und Japan promoviert. 2014 erhielt er einen Ruf auf eine Tenure-Track-Professur für Welt- und Globalgeschichte ab 1500 an die City University of New York, 2018 einen Ruf auf eine Professur (tenured) für Globalgeschichte (19. und 20. Jahrhundert) an die Nord Universität, Norwegen. Er ist Autor und Herausgeber von mehr als 70 Büchern, darunter 1917: *Die korruptierte Revolution*, der Sammelband *Engels @ 200* und *Rosa Luxemburg: Living and Thinking the Revolution*.

Dr. Albert Scharenberg leitet das Historische Zentrum der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in Berlin. Von 2012 bis 2018 war er Ko-Direktor des New Yorker Büros der Stiftung, vorher Redakteur der Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik und Lehrbeauftragter für Nordamerikastudien an der FU Berlin. Zu seinen Buchveröffentlichungen zählen *Martin Luther King: Eine Biografie* und, als Herausgeber, die Anthologie *Rosa Remix*.

Dr. Jörn Schütrumpf ist Leiter der Fokusstelle Rosa Luxemburg der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Zuletzt sind von ihm die Quelleneditionen ›*Spartakusaufstand*‹. *Der unterschlagene Bericht des Untersuchungsausschusses der verfassunggebenden Preussischen Landesversammlung über die Januar-Unruhen 1919 in Berlin* (2018) und *Paul Levi, Ohne einen Tropfen Lakaienblut. Spartakus* (2 Bde., 2018) erschienen. 2021 erscheint von Michael Brie und Jörn Schütrumpf *Rosa Luxemburg. A Revolutionary Marxist at the Limits of Marxism* (Palgrave 2021).

Frank Jacob • Albert Scharenberg • Jörn Schütrumpf (Hg.)

Rosa Luxemburg

Band 1: Leben und Wirken



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Rosa Luxemburg. Band 1: Leben und Wirken

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Einleitung

Frank Jacob, Albert Scharenberg und Jörn Schütrumpf

»Warum ist alles so?« Sie Kind, »so« ist eben das Leben seit jeher, alles gehört dazu: Leid und Trennung und Sehnsucht. Man muss es immer mit allem nehmen und alles schön und gut finden. Ich tue es wenigstens so. Nicht durch ausgeklügelte Weitsicht, sondern einfach so aus meiner Natur. Ich fühle instinktiv, dass das die einzige richtige Art ist, das Leben zu nehmen, und fühle mich deshalb wirklich glücklich in jeder Lage. Ich möchte auch nichts aus meinem Leben missen und nichts anders haben, als es war und ist.«¹

Rosa Luxemburg lebte ein bewegtes Leben, in dem vor allem zwei Dinge zählten: die »Einheit von Wort und Tat« und »eigenständiges Denken«.² Wer einen Blick auf das Leben und Wirken der jüdischen Polin, der Revolutionärin und Sozialistin wirft, der begegnet »einem der ungewöhnlichsten Menschen, der je aufseiten der europäischen Linken stand«³, und einer bedeutenden Frau, die bis heute – sozial wie politisch – nichts von ihrer emanzipatorischen Strahlkraft verloren hat. Das Urteil der großen Luxemburgforscherin Annelies Laschitza (1934–2018) hat daher immer noch Gültigkeit: »Rosa Luxemburg ge-

1 Brief an Sophie Liebknecht, Wronke, 19. April 1917, in: Rosa Luxemburg: Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, 20. Auflage, Berlin 2019, S. 31.

2 Jörn Schütrumpf: Zwischen Liebe und Zorn. Rosa Luxemburg, in: ders. (Hrsg.): Rosa Luxemburg oder: Der Preis der Freiheit, 3. ergänzte und überarbeitete Auflage, Berlin 2018, S. 12.

3 Ebd., S. 14–16.

hört zu den interessantesten Persönlichkeiten des 20. Jahrhunderts.«⁴ Dass die berühmte Sozialistin, wie eingangs schon anhand eines ihrer Briefe aus dem Gefängnis deutlich wurde, ihr Leben aktiv genoss, gleichzeitig aber versuchte, es zu nutzen, um die Welt in eine bessere zu verwandeln, unterstreicht diese Bewertung nur, die Laschitzka wie folgt erweitert: »Sie sprühte vor Ideen, war außergewöhnlich gebildet, vielseitig talentiert und ehrgeizig. Das ermöglichte es ihr, sich als emanzipierte Frau zu behaupten, ohne an Situationen der Ohnmacht und persönlichen Niederlagen zu zerbrechen.«⁵

Luxemburg war ohne Frage brillant und eine der wichtigsten europäischen Intellektuellen des späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts;⁶ gleichzeitig war sie ein mitfühlender Mensch und Freund. Gegenüber Sophie Liebknecht betonte sie in einem Brief aus dem Gefängnis Anfang Januar 1917 selbst: »Nichts Menschliches und auch nichts Weibliches ist mir fremd und gleichgültig.«⁷ Wie andere Menschen auch kämpfte Luxemburg Zeit ihres Lebens dabei allerdings ebenso mit Widersprüchen: »Obwohl sie Geselligkeit liebte, flüchtete Rosa Luxemburg doch oft in die Einsamkeit. Sie konnte freundlich und grob, verständnisvoll und jähzornig, heiter und trübsinnig, bescheiden und überheblich, einsichtig und Streitbar, nüchtern und beseelt sein.«⁸ Aufgrund ihrer charismatischen Persönlichkeit gelang es ihr, andere Menschen mitzureißen und zu begeistern. Andererseits weckten diese Eigenschaften auch Neid und Missgunst, so dass die intellektuell und rhetorisch hochbegabte Luxemburg viel Hass auf sich zog. In einer von Krieg und Revolution geprägten Zeit, die von der Existenz

4 Annelies Laschitzka: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem. Rosa Luxemburg – Eine Biographie, 2. Auflage, Berlin 1996, S. 9.

5 Ebd.

6 Giuseppe Berti: Gli scritti politici di Rosa Luxemburg, in: Studi Storici 9/1968, H. 1, S. 225; Dana Mills: Rosa Luxemburg, London 2020, S. 7.

7 Brief an Sophie Liebknecht, Wronke, Anfang Januar 1917, in: Rosa Luxemburg: Briefe aus dem Gefängnis, 20. Auflage, Berlin 2019, S. 17.

8 Laschitzka: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem, S. 9.

und dem Ende des Deutschen Kaiserreiches bestimmt wurde, gegen dessen Missstände sich Luxemburg mit all ihrer Kraft gewandt hatte, »zog [sie] schon früh Emotionen der unterschiedlichsten Art auf sich, gleichgültig ließ sie kaum jemanden.«⁹ Ihre Zeitgenossen erblickten in ihr nicht nur »eine ungewöhnlich intelligente Frau« (Theodor Heuss), eine »[v]ernünftige« Revolutionärin (Kurt Eisner) oder einen fähigen »Staatsmann« (sic!) (Harry Graf Kessler)¹⁰, sondern jemanden, dem Freiheit und Wahrhaftigkeit im Zweifelsfall mehr bedeuteten als politischer Einfluss bzw. politische Macht. Vor ihrem Spott war niemand sicher. Sie lebte in Lassalles Geiste und sagte jedem, auch denen, die es nicht hören wollten, dass es »die revolutionärste Tat« sei und bleibe, immer »das laut zu sagen, was ist.«¹¹ Gerade weil sie unbequeme Wahrheiten benannte und keine Diskussion scheute, war sie vielen Parteigenossen ein Dorn im Auge. Die Person Luxemburgs und die Interpretation ihres Wirkens haben daher »viele Biographen in ihren Bann gezogen.«¹² Dabei wurde besonders mit Blick auf die historische Reflexion auch um Luxemburgs Erbe bzw. die Interpretation ihres Lebens und ihrer Schriften gestritten: »Selektiv verfahren in der Regel jene, die Rosa Luxemburg ideologielastig in die kommunistische oder

9 Ernst Piper: Rosa Luxemburg. Ein Leben, 2. Auflage, München 2019, S. 11.

10 Zitiert nach ebd., S. 10 f.

11 Rosa Luxemburg: In revolutionärer Stunde: Was weiter? in: Dies.: Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 2, S. 36.

12 Laschitza: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem, S. 10. Zu nennen wären hier, unter anderem und in chronologischer Reihenfolge: Paul Frölich: Rosa Luxemburg. Gedanke und Tat, Paris 1939; Peter Nettel: Rosa Luxemburg. The Biography, 2 Bde., London 1966 [zuletzt erneut 2019]; Gilbert Badia: Rosa Luxemburg. Journaliste, polemiste, revolutionnaire, Paris 1975; Elzbieta Ettinger: Rosa Luxemburg. Ein Leben, übers. von Barbara Bortfeldt, Bonn 1990; Laschitza: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem (1996); Dietmar Dath: Rosa Luxemburg, 2. Auflage, Berlin 2019; Piper: Rosa Luxemburg, 2019; Michael Brie/Jörn Schütrumpf: Rosa Luxemburg. A Revolutionary Marxist at the Limits of Marxism, London 2021; Frank Jacob: Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919): Ein Leben für und mit der Revolution, Leipzig 2021.

in die sozialdemokratische Parteitradition integrierten.«¹³ Gerade weil sich die so produktive Sozialistin aber mit vielen wichtigen Fragen ihrer Zeit – Demokratie, Diktatur, Imperialismus¹⁴, Kapitalismus, Nationalismus¹⁵, Revolution¹⁶, etc. – auseinandergesetzt hatte, boten und bieten sich bis heute viele Ansatzpunkte, sich mit Luxemburg zu befassen und auseinanderzusetzen, sie quasi neu zu entdecken.¹⁷ Das Denken Rosa Luxemburgs ist nach wie vor unentdeckt. Wie Marx stellte sie Fragen, die nicht abgegolten sind und auf die *es immer aufs Neue Antworten* zu finden gilt. Rosa Luxemburg ist heute mehr denn je nicht stumme Ikone – das war sie lange genug –, sondern Partnerin im Dialog über das Verständnis der Welt wie für Ausstiege aus der kapitalgetriebenen Selbstvernichtung.

Rosa Luxemburgs Leben war, um noch einmal Annelies Laschitzka zu zitieren, »aufreibend und konfliktreich. Sie kämpfte für eine bessere Welt. Ihr Ideal war ein Sozialismus, der vom Volk mitgestaltet wird, auf uneingeschränkter Freiheit und Demokratie basiert und einen dauerhaften Frieden garantiert.«¹⁸ John Peter Nettle hatte in seiner biographischen Studie Luxemburgs darauf hingewiesen, dass Luxemburg besonders politisch war und deshalb so aktiv Anteil an der historischen Entwicklung bis zum Ende des Deutschen Kaiserreiches genommen hatte.¹⁹

13 Laschitzka: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem, S. 10.

14 Rosa Luxemburg: Die Akkumulation des Kapitals. Ein Beitrag zur ökonomischen Erklärung des Imperialismus, Berlin 1913.

15 Rosa Luxemburg: Internationalismus und Klassenkampf, hrsg. von Jürgen Hentze, Berlin 1971.

16 Rosa Luxemburg: Sozialreform oder Revolution? in: Rosa Luxemburg, Gesammelte Werke, Bd.1, Erster Halbbd., Berlin 1982, S. 369–445; Rosa Luxemburg: Arbeiterrevolution 1905/06, hrsg. und übersetzt von Holger Politt, Berlin 2015.

17 Michael Brie: Rosa Luxemburg neu entdecken. Ein hellblaues Bändchen zu »Freiheit für den Feind! Demokratie und Sozialismus«, Hamburg 2019.

18 Annelies Laschitzka: Im Lebensrausch, trotz alledem, S. 9.

19 John Peter Nettle, Rosa Luxemburg. The Biography, London/New York 2019, S. 55.

Urteile über ihr Leben fielen allerdings nicht immer derart positiv aus. Joachim C. Fest schrieb etwa im April 1971 im *Spiegel*, dass »Rosa Luxemburg [...] am Ende gar keine Revolutionärin [war], sondern nur ein aufsässiges Temperament, und erst der Lebenszufall hatte sie in die Politik verschlagen, die sie im Grunde verabscheute.«²⁰ Derlei Aussagen entsprechen jedoch nicht den historischen Realitäten. Rosa Luxemburg war eine Revolutionärin, schon weil sie »Marxistin war« und »ihre Begriffe durch Marx mitgeprägt waren«.²¹ Dabei war sie keine doktrinaire Marxistin, sondern versuchte, Marx und Engels zu begreifen und deren Arbeiten durch eigene zeitbezogene Reflexionen zu erweitern, im Sinne ihrer eigenen Zeit zu interpretieren. Schon dadurch war sie im Engelsschen Sinne zu einer Art »operativen Intellektuellen« geworden, einer aktiven Revolutionärin und einer zukunftsorientierten Sozialistin, die »unentwegt auf eine gerechte und gleiche Welt für alle«²² hinarbeitete.

Dass sie dabei vielerorts Missmut hervorrief, kann nicht überraschen. Radikaler als manche Sozialdemokraten, waren es die zu »Hyänen« verklärten Frauen wie Luxemburg, die den theoretischen Diskurs innerhalb der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vorantrieben, den unentwegten Klassenkampf forderten sowie Verrat an der sozialistisch-revolutionären Sache geißelten – und das nicht nur während des Ersten Weltkrieges.²³

20 Joachim Fest, Die Dingsda, in: Der Spiegel 25/1971, H. 16, S. 159, zitiert nach Helmut Peitsch: Rosa Luxemburg in der deutschen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts, in: Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 65/2013, H. 2, S. 155.

21 Klaus Kinner/Helmut Seidel: Vorwort, in: Dies. (Hrsg.): Rosa Luxemburg, Historische und aktuelle Dimensionen ihres theoretischen Werkes, 2. korrigierte Auflage, Berlin 2009, S. 7–9, hier S. 7.

22 Mills: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 8.

23 Vgl. dazu, auch mit internationaler Perspektive, Vincent Streichhahn/Frank Jacob (Hrsg.): Geschlecht und Klassenkampf. Die »Frauenfrage« aus deutscher und internationaler Perspektive im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Berlin 2020.

Ein einst enger Vertrauter und späterer – ebenso entschiedener – Gegner beschrieb Rosa Luxemburg so:

»Diese Freiheit von kleinbürgerlichen Instinkten wirkte innerhalb der deutschen Sozialdemokratie, die ja doch zum größten Teil aus kleinen Leuten besteht, aus Elementen, die auch geistig dem Kleinbürgertum und seiner Gefühlswelt angehören, wie ein störender Fremdkörper, und hierauf führte sich ein großer Teil der Unbeliebtheit, um nicht zu sagen des Verhasstseins, zurück, deren sich die Verstorbene in weiten Parteikreisen zu erfreuen hatte. Sie liebte keine Schonung, weder in der Presspolemik noch in der mündlichen Debatte, und dass sie dabei oft genug erst Schwierigkeiten schuf, wo keine waren, und vorhandene Gegensätze verschärfte, die zu mildern die Klugheit gebot, soll nicht geleugnet werden. Ihre Schriften, und zwar ihre Broschüren genauso wie ihre großangelegte Arbeit über die Akkumulation des Kapitals verrieten in jeder Zeile das feurige Temperament der Verfasserin wie die strenge Schulung an Karl Marx. Auf der Universität in der Schweiz stand sie vor der Entscheidung, ob sie sich der Mathematik und besonders der Astronomie oder der Volkswirtschaft und Politik zuwenden solle. Sie entschied sich für das letztere, wobei sicherlich ihr angeborenes Kampfbedürfnis wesentlich mitgesprochen hat.«²⁴

Rosa Luxemburg war Zeit ihres Lebens »eine Advokatin des Rechts auf Widerspruch«²⁵ und machte von ebendiesem immer wieder Gebrauch. Vielleicht wurde sie gerade deshalb ab 1901 zur »blutigen Rosa« erklärt.²⁶ In einem Porträt in der *Weltbühne* hieß es einen Tag nach ihrer Ermordung: »In Berlin tobt der Bürgerkrieg, und die blutige Rosa ist, als das Pulverfass in Berlin explodiert, ins Reich gefahren, um auch

24 Paul Lensch: Ein Ende und ein Anfang, in: Die Glocke, 4/1919, H. 43, S. 1333 f.

25 Mills: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 10.

26 Julia Killet: Fiktion und Wirklichkeit: Die Darstellung Rosa Luxemburgs in der biographischen und literarischen Prosa, Ochsenvurf 2020, S. 18.

hier die Brandfackel in die aufgeregten Massen zu schleudern. Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot; Deutschland steht in Flammen!«²⁷ Dass Luxemburg keine Bolschewisierung Deutschlands forderte, sondern eine Revolution im Sinne eines freiheitlichen Sozialismus, spielte in den Folgejahren, in denen neben antisemitischer Hetze gegen die tote Revolutionärin von Seiten des nationalistischen – bald nationalsozialistischen – Spektrums²⁸, eine Leugnung ihrer Bedeutung von Seiten der SPD sowie der Versuch einer partiellen – da nicht immer für die Partei günstigen – Inanspruchnahme ihres Gedenkens als Märtyrerin der deutschen Revolution durch die KPD dominierten, kaum eine Rolle, denn sie wurde verklärt, und ihr Andenken glich dem einer stummen Heiligen, die zwar beschworen werden, aber nicht selbst zu Wort kommen sollte.

Der Mittelalterhistoriker Johannes Helmuth hat mit Blick auf die Arbeit von Historikerinnen und Historikern darauf verwiesen, dass diese »in der Tat neohistorisch – die Historiker auf Trab [halten], als erzwänge die Geschichte auf diese Weise gleichsam selbst ihre Erforschung.«²⁹ Dieser Problematik ungeachtet sollte der 150. Geburtstag Rosa Luxemburgs jedoch mehr als genügend Anlass bieten, das Leben und Wirken dieser so wichtigen Intellektuellen, Revolutionärin und Sozialistin zu würdigen. Die im vorliegenden ersten von zwei Bänden versammelten Beiträge versuchen genau das, indem sie sich verschiedenen Aspekten des so bewegten Lebens von Rosa Luxemburg widmen. Sie erheben dabei in ihrer hier präsentierten Form

27 Zitiert nach Piper: Rosa Luxemburg, S. 10.

28 Vgl. dazu exemplarisch: Genosse Ballstrom an Kurt Eisner, 18. Januar 1919, SAPMO-BArch NY 4060/64, Bl. 232, abgedruckt in: Frank Jacob/Cornelia Baddack: 100 Schmäh- und Drohbriefe an Kurt Eisner 1918/19, Berlin 2019, Nr. 41.

29 Johannes Helmuth: Das Reich: 962 – 1356 – 1806. Zusammenfassende Überlegungen zur Tagung »Die Goldene Bulle«, in: Ulrike Hohensee et al. (Hrsg.): Die Goldene Bulle. Politik – Wahrnehmung – Rezension, Bd. 2, Berlin 2009, S. 1138.

weder Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit noch Absolutheit, wenn es um die Darstellung von Luxemburgs Leben und Wirken geht, belegen aber, wie viele Fragen mit Blick auf ebendiese existieren. Die beiden Sammelbände verstehen sich damit gleichfalls als Bestandsaufnahme aktueller Arbeiten und Ideen einer in großen Teilen neuen und jüngeren Generation von Luxemburg-Forscherinnen und -Forschern, die sich im 21. Jahrhundert mit der Aktualität und Bedeutung Rosa Luxemburgs konfrontiert sieht und gewillt ist, sich erneut und auf Basis neuer Zugänge und Reflexionsansätze mit ihrem Leben und Wirken auseinanderzusetzen. Dabei wird zudem eine globale Perspektive eröffnet, denn es kommen nicht nur deutschsprachige, sondern ebenso internationale Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler sowie Aktivistinnen und Aktivisten – bisweilen in Personalunion – zu Wort.

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Rosa Luxemburg and Her Comrade Sisters

The Woman Question in Rosa Luxemburg's Life and Work

Dana N. Mills

In one of the most beloved and retold stories on her life and work, Rosa Luxemburg recounted how she and Clara Zetkin went on a walk that led them astray, and August Bebel, co-founder of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and crucial organizer of socialism of her time, tried to compose an epitaph for them but Luxemburg responded with her own epitaph: »here lie the last two men of German social democracy.«¹ Rosa Luxemburg reexamined, not as the last man of German social democracy but rather as a woman fighting in a man's world, gives us a different angle on her life's work. This chapter seeks to understand Rosa Luxemburg and the Woman Question; how women in her circles influenced her thinking, and how her friendships and collaborations had shaped her life.

There are several reasons for the focus of this chapter as well as choice of method. This theoretical and methodological positioning arises from response to many prevalent accounts of Luxemburg who situate her opposite two men who were central to both her private life as well as her work. Leo Jogiches (1867–1919) was famously her »comrade and lover,«² as Luxemburg biographer entitled their collection of letters. A fellow Jewish socialist who hailed from Lithuania, their relationship had intrigued many in radical history. However, their

1 Paul Frölich: Rosa Luxemburg. Ideas in Action, 3rd Ed. London 1994, p. 192.

2 See Elzbieta Ettinger: Comrade and Lover, Cambridge 1981.

relationship (which no doubt was significant for Rosa personally, it will be argued, as were many others), often brings about sexist undertones in writing and reduces complexities of Rosa's life to a tragic romance. Indeed, Ettinger's biography includes not much analysis of Rosa's work itself, but a dramatic and romantic portrayal of a woman in constant turmoil.³

The second man whose life often structures debates in Luxemburg's biography and theory is Lenin (1870–1924). The Lenin-Luxemburg debate, or perhaps more accurately, the Luxemburgism-Leninism debate (as crucially their own debate had been taken off to completely different angles of respective followings), occupies a disproportionate amount of the writing on and discussion of Luxemburg.⁴ The personal relationship between Luxemburg and Lenin was complex and had its ups and downs. Their ideas evolved in uniquely revolutionary times, and there is no doubt both shared, albeit in different interpretations, an unequivocal commitment to revolution. And yet again, discussions of Lenin and Luxemburg tend to revoke sexist narratives, positioning her as the »other« to Lenin, his emotional, empathetic and rapturous contrary. This reading often reproduces binaries of order versus spontaneity, Lenin evoking the former and Luxemburg the other. Yet, in her spirit, a commitment to dialectics must go beyond binaries and seek complexities which were the essence of both the arc of her biography and her work. Specifically, her writing on women read differently when understood within a broader context of the life and times of her comrade sisters, the women whose work was central to her time while they came in and out of her own life.

3 Elzbieta Ettinger: *Rosa Luxemburg. A Life*, London 1987.

4 There are ample resources to look at for this debate. Most recently Ottokar Luban published a comprehensive and rigorous account; see Ottokar Luban: *Rosa Luxemburg's Critique of Lenin's Ultra-Centralist Party Concept and the Bolshevik Revolution*, in: *Journal of Socialist Theory* 50/2012, pp. 357–365. Jaqueline Rose positions Luxemburg as Lenin's other. See Jaqueline Rose: *Women in Dark Times*, London 2014.

In order to understand why and how women were significant for Rosa Luxemburg, and following the methodological positioning above, it would be helpful to pause and reflect a bit on the unique arc and trajectory of Rosa Luxemburg's life. Born to a Polish-Jewish family in 1871 in the Russian empire, Rosa knew many constraints for her action, as a woman and a Pole. She was disabled from childhood and walked with a limp throughout her life. She pursued further education in Zurich and from a young age it was clear both her temperament and intellectual abilities were singular. And yet, alongside brilliance and truly unique determination and commitment to social justice, Luxemburg's life echoes many who shared her time and faced sexist constraints structuring their life. From casual sexism in remarks concerning her work to intimate violence, she was not immune to the maladies of patriarchy. And so, although forming close bonds with her male allies, female friendships were an ongoing strand of her life, and she collaborated with many women leaders of her time, and was influenced by those who had come before her.

Rosa Luxemburg and Eleanor Marx

In 1889, Rosa Luxemburg was yet to make an entrance onto the international socialist stage. However, one of the most central companions and interlocutors to her, Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), was to make a powerful socialist-feminist intervention. The Second International was crucial for Luxemburg as well as for other women of her time as an organizing arena, and in 1889, at its founding congress in Paris, Zetkin gave a blasting speech on the question of female labor. That speech was translated by another contemporary and comrade sister to Rosa, Eleanor Marx (1855–1898).⁵ Marx, Karl and Jenny's youngest

5 A comprehensive new biography has illuminated Marx's role within the British Labour Movement and Second International anew and placed her work

surviving daughter, was the foremother of socialist-feminism and an important organizer in the Second International as well as in the fledgling Labour movement. Three years before Zetkin gave her speech that Marx translated, she authored with her common-law husband, Edward Aveling, the first text on socialist-feminism on either side of the Atlantic (together with another text they co-authored, »The Working-Class Movement«, published in the same year)⁶ »The Woman Question« (from a Socialist Point of View), especially, sets the stage for many of the discussions about women that would be the backdrop to Luxemburg's own work. In the text, which is a response to August Bebel's »Woman: Past, Present and Future« in English, Marx locates »the Woman Question« within socialism, forcefully showing the inseparability of capitalism and patriarchy. A powerful statement on the treatment of women as well as on the neglect of working-class women within feminist circles of her time, »The Woman Question (from a Socialist Point of View)« is a powerful statement on structural oppression. Marx writes: »The life of woman does not coincide with that of man. Their lives do not intersect; in many cases do not even touch. Hence the life of the race is stunted.«⁷ She continues: »The woman question is one of the organisation of society as a whole.«⁸ The context for analyzing the argument has to be an economic one: »It has not been understood even by those men and women above the average who have made the struggle for the greater freedom of women the very business of their lives. This fundamental fact is, that the question is one of economics. The position of women rests, as everything

in its rightful place. Rachel Holmes: Eleanor Marx. A Life, London 2005, p. 315.

6 Ibid, p. 279.

7 Eleanor Marx Aveling/Edward Aveling: The Woman Question (from a Socialist Point of View), London 1886, p. 7.

8 Marx/Aveling: The Woman Question, p. 5. Holmes notes that although the text is co-authored Eleanor did the lion share of the work.

in our complex modern society rests, on an economic basis.«⁹ This is a foundational statement that would carry through the work of many of Luxemburg's comrade sisters as well as her own. Specifically, the question of women's suffrage and universal suffrage that would underpin the work of the Second International is deconstructed carefully by Marx and Aveling here: »These are the excellent and hard-working folk who agitate for that perfectly just aim, woman suffrage; for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, a monstrosity begotten of male cowardice and brutality; for the higher education of women; for the opening to them of universities, the learned professions, and all callings, from that of teacher to that of bagman. In all this work – good as far as it goes – three things are especially notable. First, those concerned in it are of the well-to-do classes, as a rule.«¹⁰ The Woman Question focuses on the interleaving of capitalist oppression and oppression towards women, and the tendency of those who focus on the ›Woman Question‹ alone to disregard the first for the second.

When Rosa Luxemburg first crossed paths with Eleanor Marx at the Zurich congress of 1893, the former was denied official delegate status due to splits within the Polish contingency; however, Marx had approved of Luxemburg,¹¹ recognizing both the talent of the young woman as well as the hardships she was about to face in the circles they were about to share. Both women organized, educated and agitated in the hope of bringing about a radical new life for those most oppressed. Eleanor Marx's premature and dramatic death in 1898 meant she never lived to see Luxemburg's flourishing career, yet Marx's work as central theorist and organizer in the Second International certainly paved the way for Luxemburg and other comrade sisters to develop their thinking.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Marx/Aveling: *The Woman Question*, pp. 5 and 7.

¹¹ Holmes: *Eleanor Marx*, p. 400.

Clara Zetkin's Role

Clara Zetkin, who had given that historical speech translated in 1889, was undoubtedly one of the most significant people in Luxemburg's life, both professionally and personally. By the time the latter arrived in Berlin in 1898 Zetkin was already well known within the SPD and the Second International, both significant arenas for Luxemburg's work. Her work within socialist-feminism was to be hugely significant within both German radical history and international feminist history. A trained teacher who understood the need for education as part of the radical struggle, Zetkin's exile due to the anti-socialist laws of the early 1880s in Germany put her in a prime position to be interleaved in the founding moments of the Second International, alongside Eleanor Marx. This foundational speech, given on 19 July, echoes much of Marx's argument above.

»Women workers who strive for social equality do not expect to obtain their emancipation from the women's movement of the bourgeoisie which allegedly fights for women's rights. That edifice is built on sand and has no realistic foundation. Women workers are totally convinced that the question of social emancipation of women is not an isolated issue but rather constitutes a part of the great social question. They know very well that this question in today's society cannot be solved without a basic transformation of society. The question of emancipation of women is a child of modern times, born by the machine age.«¹²

Zetkin expands on the question of suffrage within the same speech: »The right to vote which is not accompanied by economic freedom is more or less a change without direction.«¹³

12 Clara Zetkin: *For the Liberation of Women*, in: Philip S. Foner (Ed.): *Clara Zetkin. Selected Writings*, 2nd ed, Chicago 2015, pp. 45–50, here p. 46.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

In 1907, when Luxemburg was already firmly walking alongside her, Zetkin delivered a speech on women's right to vote. Women's campaign for suffrage was intertwined with the work to expand male suffrage: »In countries where the democratization of men's suffrage has already progressed very far or has been accomplished, the Socialist parties must take up the battle for the introduction of universal women's suffrage. They must, of course, at the same time support all demands which are still made at the interests of full civil rights for the male proletariat.«¹⁴ This speech was dedicated to advocating for support for a resolution on women's right to vote, and Zetkin continued: »we socialists do not demand women's suffrage as a natural right with which women are born. We demand it as a social right which is anchored in the revolutionized economic activity and in the revolutionized social state and personal consciousness of women.«¹⁵ Zetkin's work was life-long and rich in themes and ideas. Her commitment to feminist-socialism was unwavering, though she advocated and wrote around many other issues as well. She was a staunch anti-militarist and alongside Luxemburg formed the *Gruppe Internationale*, then the Spartacus League, and she co-founded, again with Luxemburg, among others, the German Communist Party (KPD).

As in every relationship, there were ups and downs. It should be noted here that Zetkin contributed after Luxemburg's murder to one of the biggest controversies that would haunt the latter's legacy when she claimed that she had changed her mind after writing the pamphlet on the Russian Revolution¹⁶ (which would enable »Leninists« to vilify

14 Clara Zetkin, *Women's Right to Vote*, in: Philip S. Foner (Ed.): *Clara Zetkin. Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., Chicago 2015, pp. 98–107, here p. 98.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

16 This debate has been recently revisited. See Peter Hudis response to Jacqueline Rose. Comments on »What More Can We Ask of Ourselves! Jacqueline Rose Reviews the Letters of Rosa Luxemburg,« *Verso Blog*. Online: <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/595-comments-on-what-more-could-we-want-of-ourselves-jacqueline-rose-s-review-of-the-letters-of-rosa-luxemburg>.

Luxemburg as an anti-Leninist; in fact her writing, as well as her private correspondence, show that the female intellectual was consistent in her opinions and critique, yet was warmly enthused about the Russian Revolution from the moment it broke out.¹⁷

The breadth of Zetkin's work can be seen in an essay from 1932 in which she wrote about the »Scottsboro Black Youth,« in which she stood up for eight young black men who were sentenced to death for alleged rape of two white women. Zetkin's scathing critique of the American justice system in the South is remarkably, and sadly, timely: »All those of you who possess a humane mind and heart! Let us save these eight young men from the executioner and the pyre of the electric chair. Their only crime has been that they were born with Black Skins.«¹⁸ Zetkin's analysis of structural racism shows a deep understanding of the connectivity of all oppressions. Perhaps more famously, Zetkin is remembered for opening the last sitting of the Reichstag in 1932 as its Honorary President, being its oldest member, when she was nearly blind and very frail. Her anti-fascist agitation, again, sadly resonates with our own struggles 150 years after Luxemburg's birth:

»The fight of the laboring masses against the disastrous suffering of the present is, at the same time, the fight for their full liberation. The glances of the masses must be steadily directed towards this luminous goal which must not be shrouded by the illusion of a liberating democracy. The masses must not allow themselves to be frightened by the brutal use of force by which capitalism seeks its survival in the form of new world wars and fascist civil strife.«¹⁹

17 For accounts of Zetkin's life see Wolfram Klein: *Clara Zetkin. Vorkämpferin der proletarischen Frauenbewegung*, Berlin 2017; Dorothea Reetz: *Clara Zetkin as a Socialist Speaker*, New York 1978.

18 Clara Zetkin, *Save the Scottsboro Black Youth*, in: Philip S. Foner (Ed.): *Clara Zetkin. Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., Chicago 2015, pp. 167–169, here p. 168.

19 Clara Zetkin, *Fascism must be Defeated*, in: Philip S. Foner (Ed.): *Clara Zetkin. Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., Chicago 2015, pp. 170–175, here p. 174.

She concludes her blasting speech with the words, »fascism must be defeated [...] I am opening this Congress in the fulfillment of my duties as honorary president and in the hope that despite my current infirmities I may yet have the fortune to open as honorary president the first Soviet Congress of Soviet Germany.«²⁰

The two female socialists' personal correspondence reveals warmth and generosity. They shared a political path but their friendship transcended it, and their relationship was a deep emotional connection of care and compassion. It was not always a smooth friendship; notably, for a while, Luxemburg was the lover of Kostja Zetkin, Clara Zetkin's son; they hid the relationship at first so as not to upset Zetkin but in the end were a public couple within SPD circles, and Luxemburg even helped Kostja to get a teaching job at the trade union school. This seemingly did not fracture their friendship, as their correspondence, especially during Rosa's time in prison, was rich. Rosa's letters pass through different registers, from intimate reflections about the world to political reflections about the SPD's turn to the right. Luxemburg's commentary on Zetkin's work shows her respect and understanding of Clara's position in the movement, which was different to hers. In a letter from 24 November 1918, at the height of revolutionary upheaval across Germany, Rosa writes: »Now about the agitation on women's issues! Its importance and urgency is clear to us exactly as it is to you.«²¹ Clara organized and worked closely with Luxemburg throughout their shared life span, both in the SPD and in the International. Zetkin was undoubtedly the best known organizer of socialist-feminism after Marx's untimely death, but Rosa's own writing on women gains interesting perspectives when read against this intellectual backdrop.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 175.

²¹ Rosa Luxemburg: A Letter to Clara Zetkin (1918), in: Georg Adler/Peter Hudis/Annelies Laschitzka (Eds.): *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, London 2013, p. 431.

Rosa Luxemburg on the Woman Question

Rosa Luxemburg wrote consistently, at different points of her life, on inequalities and structural oppressions faced by women. In 1902 she wrote »Russian Women Workers in the Battle,« in which she starts by saying

»Whoever needs convincing that women are just as capable as men of experiencing both citizenship in its highest sense and the noblest of civic virtues would do well to study the history of the liberation struggles that have shaken Russia since the abolition of serfdom. There is not a single newspaper here that doesn't name in lines of gold specific women who lived and suffered as heroes, with the courage of lions and a martyr's enthusiastic readiness to sacrifice – all for the cause of freedom and for the liberation of the people.«²²

The spirit of Rosa Luxemburg's feminism is intertwined in her understanding of structural change in society which can only occur through revolution. Her agitation for socialism from below, a running thread throughout her life, interleaved with her work as an educator, her writing and organizing career, guides Rosa's writing on women. »The revolutionary movement relates to these women as a bearer of culture, in the broadest sense of the word. Not only does it enlighten them socially and politically, not only does it steel their character by enjoining in them the principles of solidarity and self-sacrifice, but it also teaches them the most basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic etc.«²³ Consciousness is transformed in the process of revolutionary organizing itself, thus involving women in all stages of the revolu-

22 Rosa Luxemburg: *Russian Women Workers in the Battle*, in: Peter Hudis/Axel Fair-Schultz/William A. Peltz (Eds.): *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, vol. 3, *Political Writings 1*, London 2019, pp. 13–16, here p. 13.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

tion will be part of their process of liberation, as well as their ability to contribute to the liberation of the entirety of humanity. A strong statement of appraisal of women within the Russian revolutionary movement sums up this article, several years before the revolution of 1904/5 broke out, a revolution that would be crucial for radical history as well as for Luxemburg's understanding of revolution.

»The Russian woman proletarian has become enlisted as a regular member of the fighting international proletariat. And when the Russian revolutionary movement has achieved its immediate goal of toppling absolutism, which will leave the road free for the toughest battle against capitalism, when the morning of political freedom dawns for those millions who are still tamed today by our Little Father's lash,²⁴ the Russian women and Russian women workers will deserve a good deal of credit for the spoils of victory.«²⁵

Perhaps, Luxemburg's sharp understanding of history allows her to capture the fact that Russian women in the revolutionary battle will be wiped out of history; thus she emphasizes here the need to credit them for their work.

In the spirit of socialist-feminism of her time, crystalized in this chapter in the work of Eleanor Marx and Clara Zetkin who preceded her, Rosa Luxemburg saw the woman question as intertwined in all other issues that require displacement of order within society as we know it today. Her sharp mind, »the best brain after Marx,« as Franz Mehring referred to her, and her analytical brilliance shone throughout any issue she put herself to write about. She continued to tackle issues that were at the height of discussion of her time in her unique voice. In 1902 she weighed into a debate in Belgium and attacked

24 An ironic reference to Tsar Nicholas II which Luxemburg often used in her writing.

25 Luxemburg, *Russian Women Workers*, p. 16.

reformism within the Social Democratic movement that had agreed to drop its call for women's suffrage. She unpacks the Belgian social democrats arguments against the right to vote (which she terms »rationale«): »the public is not mature enough to exercise the right to vote.«²⁶ She continues: »as if there were some other school of political maturity for members of the public than simply exercising these rights themselves! As if the male working class had also not already learned to gradually use the ballot as a weapon to defend its class interests and must still learn this!«²⁷ Here, Luxemburg's writing on women sheds light on another element of her thought, the intertwining of democracy within Marxism as essential for the transformation of consciousness. Returning to Eleanor Marx here is telling; Marx was a revolutionary to her core, yet agitated and organized within the fledgling New Trade Unionism (which placed her in a different position with regards to social democracy to that of her father, and much closer to Luxemburg's own position, despite her lasting and scathing critique of German Trade Unionism which was far more conservative than its sibling in Britain). Nevertheless, both women believed that it is necessary to organize within democratic structures to ensure rights in the process of organizing itself.

Targets of Sexism and the Power of Relying on Our Comrade Sisters

Eleanor Marx, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg were targets of sexism in both their life and afterlife. Rosa Luxemburg's significant place at the time within socialist debates elicited as much venom and

26 Rosa Luxemburg: A Tactical Question, in: Peter Hudis/Kevin B. Anderson (Eds.): *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, New York 2004, pp. 233–236, here p. 235.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 236.

hatred as it did camaraderie and discussion. She was never part of the SPD's inner circle, which was essentially older men.²⁸ The Austrian socialist and labor leader Victor Adler (1852–1918) wrote to August Bebel (1840–1913), chairman of the SPD and the author of »Woman: Past, Present and Future« that elicited Eleanor Marx's »The Woman Question«: »The poisonous bitch will yet do a lot of damage, all the more so because she is as clever as a monkey [blitzgescheit] while on the other hand her sense of responsibility is totally lacking and her only motive is an almost pervasive desire for self-justification.«²⁹ Her combative nature baffled her comrades, as can be seen in trade unionist responses to her intervention in the revisionist debate: »One should always be polite to ladies, but Comrade Rosa Luxemburg will certainly not insist on velvet gloves in political matters.«³⁰ Luxemburg's insistence on ideological integrity was part of her way of fighting against sexism. Even within the German Communist Party she was dubbed »the syphilis of the Comintern.«³¹ Fellow socialist Rosa Levine-Meyer (1890–1977) recalls her husband, Eugen Levine (1883–1919), commenting to her on the street: »there goes a woman of quite extraordinary brain. She *frightens me*.«³² Clara Zetkin was quoted as saying it took a strong man like Leo Jogiches to live with Luxemburg.³³ Her strength scared women, too.

In 1907 Rosa spoke to the International Socialist Women's Conference. The speech is revealing of the way she understood herself

28 Jörn Schütrumpf: Rosa Luxemburg, or: The Price of Freedom, Berlin 2008, p. 21.

29 Raya Dunayevskaya: Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1985, p. 27.

30 Quoted in John P. Nettl: Rosa Luxemburg, London 1966, p. 153.

31 Ankica Čakardić: Luxemburg's Critique of Bourgeois Feminism and Early Social Reproduction Theory, quoted in Historical Materialism. Online: www.historicalmaterialism.org.

32 Rosa Levine-Meyer: Levine. The Life of a Revolutionary, Farnborough 1973, p. 69.

33 Frolich: Rosa Luxemburg, p. 33.

within the circle of her comrade sisters as well as her understanding of feminism at that time. »The wish has been expressed that the international women's movement affiliate with the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels. Since I am myself a member and indeed, I am the only member of the fairer sex in this Bureau, I feel inclined to say a few things about it.«³⁴ While discussing with her women comrades the administrative challenges the Bureau faced, she ends on a note of sisterhood and solidarity: »I can only marvel at Comrade Zetkin that she too will still shoulder this workload.«³⁵

Several issues interleave in Luxemburg's approach to the Woman Question, as for the women of her time. In a desperately sexist world, Rosa and her comrade-sisters knew first-hand the power of relying on their comrade sisters. This is not to sugar-coat their relationships; like all human relationships they knew ups and downs, and hot-tempered Luxemburg especially could flare up passionately at her friends, yet was deeply loving in reconciliation. At the same time Eleanor Marx, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg were women leaders in a deeply unequal world. The uniqueness of the socialist movement in which they organized was that it was a movement on the crux of arguing for equality for all, but in which some of its central forces were deeply unequal themselves.

The Second International and its adjacent organizational structures are fascinating from a feminist historiographical point of view as it signals the crossroads between heightened revolutionary action and the burgeoning of social democracy, including campaigns for political and civil rights fundamental to the feminist struggle (especially universal suffrage).³⁶ Ongoing debates in the feminist movement, both

34 Rosa Luxemburg: Address to the International Socialist Women's Conference, in: Peter Hudis/Kevin B. Anderson (Eds.): *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, New York 2004, pp. 236–237, here p. 236.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

36 The archives of the Second International which include the minutes of all congresses, which included universal suffrage as key issue throughout its

in practice and in theory and feminist historiography, resonate with the divides and disagreements Luxemburg and her comrade sisters partook in passionately. The tension between the growing revolutionary impulses, resulting eventually in the Russian and German revolutions, and impulses towards reformism, pushed by the growing parliamentary presence of the SPD and then the Labour Party in the UK, created a divide still unresolved and questions still burning within feminism, between revolutionary tendencies and liberal-reformist groups. As this chapter shows, Luxemburg and her comrade sisters had rigorous and well-argued positions that, despite the content of debates changing today, are still educational when it comes to asking *social reform or revolution?* from a 21st-century feminist perspective. At the same time, Luxemburg and her comrade sisters insisted on the need for social democracy as a sphere of action in all struggles, including feminist struggles.

»Let Us Have Suffrage!«

In 1912 Rosa Luxemburg weighed in clearly on the same issue that bothered Eleanor Marx and Clara Zetkin and sat firmly within the agenda of the Second International, that of suffrage. She begins by her own testimony to comrade sisters from the past: »why are there no organizations for working women in Germany? Why do we hear so little about the working women's movement?« With these questions, Emma Ihrer, one of the founders of the proletarian women's movement of Germany, introduced her 1898 essay, »Working women in the Class Struggle.« She says: »More than a thousand women are

time, are kept in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. A rigorous investigation of the struggle for universal suffrage in the context of socialist history can be found in Eleanor Marx's biographer's Rachel Holmes recent biography of Sylvia Pankhurst (Sylvia Pankhurst: Natural Born Rebel, Bloomsbury, 2020).

organized in unions and are among the most active troops in the economic struggle of the proletariat. Many thousands of politically organized women have rallied to the banner of social democracy: the Social Democratic women's paper [*Die Gleichheit*, edited by Clara Zetkin] has more than 100,000 subscribers; women's suffrage is one of the vital issues on the platform of social democracy.³⁷ Indeed, the spirit in which this chapter is written, of recognizing women's work, often going unnoticed, past and present, in the struggle of liberation for all, is very much apparent in Luxemburg's speech. She continues: »the political and syndical awakening of the masses of the female proletariat during the last fifteen years has been magnificent. But it has been possible only because working women took a lively interest in parliamentary struggles of their class in spite of being deprived of their rights.«³⁸ Luxemburg sharpens her point: »The irresistible progress of the proletarian class struggle has swept working women right into the whirlpool of political life. Using their right of union and assembly, proletarian women have taken a most active part in parliamentary life and in election campaigns. It is only the inevitable consequence, only the logical result of the movement that today millions of proletarian women call defiantly and with self-confidence: *Let us have suffrage!*«³⁹

Luxemburg was far less active than Zetkin or Marx as an organizer, but she intuitively grasped the power of claiming political rights from the ground up. This is a red thread throughout her entire work and characterizes her analysis of women's suffrage: »women's suffrage is the goal. But the mass movement to bring it about is not a job for women alone, but is a common class concern for women and men of the proletariat.«⁴⁰ Luxemburg was a hugely empathetic person and knew that

37 Rosa Luxemburg: Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle, in: Peter Hudis/Kevin B. Anderson (Eds.): *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, New York 2004, pp. 237–242, here p. 238.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., p. 239.

40 Ibid.

organizing can only succeed in bringing down patriarchal capitalism through collaboration from all (the same argument that Eleanor Marx had made in »The Woman Question« in 1886). However, Luxemburg adds further gloss to this argument:

»In truth, our state is interested in keeping the vote from working women and from them alone. It rightly fears they will threaten the traditional institutions of class rule, for instance militarism (of which no thinking proletarian woman can help being a deadly enemy), monarchy, the systematic robbery of duties and taxes on groceries etc. Women's suffrage is a horror and abomination for the present capitalist state because behind it stand millions of women who would strengthen the enemy within i. e. revolutionary Social Democracy.«⁴¹

This is a stronger argument than that iterated thus far; it sees the crux of the downfall of patriarchal capitalism on granting women the right to vote and thus giving them full political rights. The understanding of the possible threats women bear to the state is a radical move within the context of Luxemburg's writing on women, as it was in the context of her time. Perhaps herself being deemed »dangerous« (by the time she had written about this state, she was incarcerated herself) gave her the energy to inspire her comrade sisters. Luxemburg brings this blasting speech to a crescendo with a historical reflection, quoting from Engels as well as Fourier: »in any society, the degree of female emancipation is the natural measure of the general emancipation.«⁴² She concludes:

»Because of the female proletariat, general, equal, direct suffrage for women would immensely advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle. This is why bourgeois society abhors and fears women's suf-

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 240.

⁴² Ibid., p. 242.

frage. And this is why we want and will achieve it. Fighting for women's suffrage, we will also hasten the coming of the hour when the present society falls in ruins under the hammer strokes of the revolutionary proletariat.«⁴³

A famous photograph of Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin shows them walking arm in arm in 1910, Luxemburg wearing a cheery skirt, Zetkin smiling slyly. 1910 was a big year for Clara and for socialist-feminism; it was the year in which she would second Luise Zietz's (1865–1922) proposal to found an International Women's Day at an International Women's Conference in Copenhagen. It was a distinctly socialist organization that gave rise to International Women's Day as we know it today, and it was Rosa's comrade sisters who founded it (Zietz was one of the women who welcomed Rosa when she was freed from prison). Luxemburg's entanglements with her comrade sisters are significant for our understanding of her work as they are for our understanding of feminist history more broadly. International Women's Day is an exemplar for the lasting influence of Luxemburg's inner circle, and her own work, on our understanding of feminism today. She wrote in 1914 on the Proletarian Women's Day: »the party of the disinherited places its female columns in the front lines by sending them into the battle for eight days, in order to spread the seeds of socialism into new fields. And the call for the political equality of women is the first one they make as they prepare to win over new supporters for the working class as a whole.«⁴⁴ There is new maturity in this argument, setting a comprehensive agenda from the start of the article. No doubt the new institutional frameworks for advocacy of socialist-feminism within the SPD and International are helpful in consolidating this robust and coherent message. Luxemburg writes: »for the property-owning bourgeoisie (sic!) woman, her house is the

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

world. For the proletarian woman,⁴⁵ the whole world is her house, the world with its sorrow and joy, with its cold cruelty and raw size. The proletarian woman marches with the tunnel workers from Italy and Switzerland, camps in the barracks and whistles as she dries diapers next to cliffs exploding into the air with blasts of dynamite.⁴⁶ This is a robust statement about the different lives led by middle-class and working-class women and perhaps also allows us to add to Luxemburg's impressive theoretical credentials a critique of liberalism, which echoes strongly with current critiques of liberal feminism. For the middle-class woman, she shows forcefully, there is a sphere in which she can seek protection, in which she can hide from the world. The force, and yet the challenge, of the proletarian woman is that she cannot escape into the private; the lack of »a room of her own« allows her, contra Woolf, to understand the challenges of injustice more vividly. Luxemburg writes eloquently, again in a statement that resonates sharply with our current times, 150 years after her birth: »at a formal level, women's political rights conform quite harmoniously with the bourgeoisie state. The examples of Finland, of American states, of a few municipalities, all show that a policy of equal rights for women has not yet overturned the state; it does not encroach upon the domination of capital.«⁴⁷ Here another layer to her critique is added: sustaining bourgeois feminism, which we can read as liberal feminism, sustains the capitalist state. This is the crux of Rosa Luxemburg's revolutionary feminism – like Clara Zetkin's and Eleanor Marx's – which seeks to overturn the system from its deepest structure of oppression, from the household of the proletarian woman. »Pro-

45 This is a very similar argument to the one pursued by Eleanor Marx in *The Proletarian Woman in the Home*, originally published in *Justice*, in which she defends Clara Zetkin's work of the same title in 1896.

46 Rosa Luxemburg: *The Proletarian Woman*, in: in: Peter Hudis/Kevin B. Anderson (Eds.): *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, New York 2004, pp. 242–247, here p. 243.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

letarian woman, the poorest of the poor, the most disempowered of the disempowered, hurry to join the struggle for the emancipation of women and of humankind from the horrors of Capitalist domination! Social Democracy has assigned you a place of honor. Hurry to the front lines, into the trenches!»⁴⁸

Sophie Liebknecht and Luise Kautsky

Luxemburg's writings on women, as well as those of many of her contemporaries, focus on the need to undo the evacuation of working women, including within their households, as part of the struggle to bring down capitalism that enables that unpaid labor. Clara Zetkin and Eleanor Marx both benefited considerably more from the »spoils of victory« in how they are remembered today in radical history. However, the life of Rosa Luxemburg was sustained with interactions with women who fared substantially less well in how their work was remembered. Perhaps it is intriguing and necessary to begin by thinking of two of Luxemburg's comrade sisters who were the spouses of her male comrades: Sophie Liebknecht (1884–1964) and Luise Kautsky (1884–1964). Rosa's emotional depth as well as her care for her comrade sisters is evident in the fact that her relationship with them transcended the political ups and downs that she had known with their husbands. Her relationship with them is illuminating on many levels: Luxemburg was very able to see her comrade sisters as much more than their husband's wives, while our historiography is substantially lagging behind in that regard (ironically, these women are remembered as »Rosa Luxemburg's friends,« i. e. still in relation to another figure in their lives). Her warmth towards these women, sharing holidays together, writing constant letters even in her busiest

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 245.