

UNITY

Communist Party of Ireland for peace, independence and socialism

*"Those who do not move,
do not notice their chains."*

Rosa Luxemburg

**Rosa Luxemburg
supplement**



Rosa Luxemburg

by Jenny Farrell

ROZALIA LUKSENBURG (Rosa Luxemburg) was born 5 March 1871 in Zamo, Poland. From the age of 15, she was involved with the Polish Workers Party and had to flee Poland in 1889. Luxemburg went to study in Switzerland, and continued to be politically active. She entered into a marriage of convenience in order to secure German citizenship and facilitate her participation in the German labour movement.

In 1898, she moved to Berlin, where she met Clara Zetkin. Luxemburg began publishing newspaper articles on the social and economic problems in Europe, and forcefully attacking German militarism. Immediately after the outbreak of WW1 in 1914, Luxemburg founded the "Internationale" group, which Karl Liebknecht joined, and from which the Spartacus League later emerged (1 January 1916). Together, they travelled the country calling on people to oppose the war and funding of the war.

The anti-war struggle was central to Luxemburg's political life: "When the majority of working people realise ... that wars are barbaric, deeply immoral, reactionary, and anti-people, then wars will have become impossible..."

Liebknecht was the ONLY GERMAN MP in 1914 to vote against allocating funds for war, stating:

"None of the peoples involved in this war wanted it, and it did not break out to promote their welfare - not in Germany or anywhere else. It is an imperialist war, a war to dominate the capitalist world market and secure for industrial and financial capital the possession of important territories for settlement."

Their party leadership accused Luxemburg and Liebknecht of high treason and betrayal of the party. In order to minimise his influence, Liebknecht was drafted into the army. Following his appearance at a Berlin anti-war rally, he was imprisoned from November 1916 to October 1918.

Luxemburg was imprisoned for "attempted treason" in June 1916, first in the women's prison in Berlin, later in Vronke Fortress in the Polish province of Poznan, and finally in Wrocław in "protective custody" until November 1918.

In November 1918, the sailors of Kiel mutinied. This revolt triggered the German Revolution, which swept away the monarchy. It spread quickly, and on 9 November, Liebknecht proclaimed a "Free Socialist Republic of Germany" in Berlin. On the same day, he and Luxemburg founded the newspaper *Die Rote Fahne* (*The Red Flag*). They founded the German Communist Party in December



'For capitalism war and peace are nothing but business' **Karl Liebknecht**

1918/January 1919 and were murdered on 15 January 1919. Their murderer, Waldemar Pabst, was never charged and led a long life in post-war West Germany as a far-right weapons lobbyist.

Such are the bare details of their political lives. However, in order to get closer to them as people, and to Rosa Luxemburg in particular, we publish here her letter to the Russian-born Sophie Liebknecht, wife of Karl Liebknecht.

This letter from Vronke Fortress highlights among other things, that our struggle for a humane existence is not an end in itself, but ultimately envisages a life at peace, and in harmony with nature.

Vronke, 2 May 1917

My dearest little Sonyusha! Your dear letter arrived here in perfect time yesterday, 1 May. It and two days of sunshine have done much to cheer me up. For my heart was very sore these last few days, but now things are looking up again. If only the sun would stay that way!*

I am outside almost all day, strolling around in the bushes, searching every corner of my garden and finding all kinds of treasures. So listen: Yesterday, May 1st, I met - guess who? - a radiant common brimstone! I was so happy that my whole heart pounded. It flew up to my sleeve - I wear a purple jacket, and the colour probably attracted it - then it bobbed up and down the wall. In the



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*afternoon, I found three different beautiful feathers: a dark grey one from a redstart, a golden one from a yellowhammer and a greyish-yellow one from a nightingale. We have many nightingales here, I heard the first one early on Easter Sunday, and since then it comes to the big silver poplar in my little garden every day. I put the feathers in a lovely blue box for my small collection: I also have feathers there that I found in the yard of Bamimstraße** - from pigeons and chickens, and also a beautiful blue one from a jay in Südende***. The "collection" is still quite small, but I like to look at it sometimes. I have already decided to whom I will give it.*

This morning I discovered a hidden violet right next to the wall I was walking past! The only one in my whole garden. How does Goethe put it?

*A violet in the meadow stood,
With humble brow, demure and good,
It was the sweetest violet.*

I was so happy! I am sending you it here, with a kiss pressed lightly on it, may it bring you my love and my greeting. Will it still be little fresh when you get it? Then this afternoon I met the first bumblebee! A very big one in the new shimmering black fur jacket with golden yellow belt It hummed in a deep bass and flew first to my jacket, then in a big arc high above the yard. The buds of the chestnuts are so big, rosy and swelling, shiny with juice, in a few days they will probably pop out their leaves, which look like little green hands. Remember, last year, how we stood in front of such a chestnut with young leaves and you called in droll desperation: "Rosa! (You roll the "R" even more than I do), what can you say? What can you say at such delight?"

And another discovery made me happy today. You may remember, last April I phoned you both urgently at 10 o'clock in the morning to come to the Botanical Gardens and listen with me to the nightingale giving a whole concert

We sat quietly hidden in dense shrubs on stones beside a tiny streamlet; but after the nightingale, we suddenly heard a wistful call, which sounded something like this: "Gleegleegleeglick! I said it sounded like some moor or water bird, and Karl agreed, but we simply couldn't work out what it was. Just think, one morning a few days ago, I suddenly heard the same lamentation near here, so that my heart throbbed, impatient to find out what it was. I had no peace until I discovered today: it's not a water bird, but the wryneck, a grey woodpecker. It is only a little bigger than the sparrow and has its name because it tries to frighten its enemies by strange gestures and head contortions. It lives on ants only, which it catches with its sticky tongue like the anteater. The Spanish call it *hormiguero* - the antbird. Mörike by the way wrote a lovely funny poem on this bird, which Hugo Wolf set to music. I feel like I've been given a gift, knowing what the bird with the sad voice is. Perhaps you could let Karl know about this, he would be delighted.

What do I read? Mainly scientific books: plant and animal geography. Just yesterday I read about the causes of songbirds disappearing in Germany: it is

due to increased rational forestry, horticulture and agriculture, slowly destroying all their natural nesting and feeding habitats: hollow trees, wasteland, scrub, and withered foliage in gardens. It was so painful to read this. I'm not worried about their singing for people, but the image of the silent, unstoppable demise of these defenceless little creatures hurt me so much, I had to weep. It reminded me of a Russian book by Prof. Siber about the destruction of the Redskins in North America, which I read in Zurich: Slowly but surely, civilised people drive them off their land and submit them to silent, cruel annihilation.

I must be unwell that everything shakes me so deeply now. Do you know? Sometimes I feel that

I am not a real person, but some bird or other animal in a failed human form; inwardly I feel much more at home in such a small shred of garden as here, or in a field amongst bumblebees and grass than at a party conference. I can tell you all this: you will not immediately sense a betrayal of socialism. You know, I will hopefully die for the cause anyway: in a street battle or in prison. But my innermost self belongs more to my coal tits than to the 'comrades'. And this is not because, like so many bankrupt politicians, I find a refuge, a rest in nature.

On the contrary, here too I find so much cruelty at every turn that I suffer a great deal. Imagine, for example, that I simply cannot forget the following little episode. Last spring I was on my way home from a walk across fields, in my quiet, empty street when I noticed a dark little spot on the ground. I bent down and saw a soundless tragedy: a large dung beetle lay on its back and defended itself helplessly with its legs, while a whole load of tiny ants swarmed over it and consumed it - alive! I looked at it, took out my handkerchief and began to chase away the brutal beasts. But they were so cheeky and stubborn that I had to fight a long battle with them, and when I had finally freed the poor wretch and taken him far onto the grass, two legs had already been eaten away ... I fled tormented, feeling that I had done him a very dubious favour.

There is long twilight in the evenings now. How I usually love this hour! In Südende I had so many blackbirds, here I can't see or hear any. I fed a pair all winter and now they have disappeared.

In Südende I used to stroll the street around this time in the evening; it is so beautiful when even in the last violet rays of daylight the rosy gas flames suddenly flicker in the lanterns and look so strange in the dusk, as if they were a little ashamed of themselves .

Then the indistinct shape of a porter's wife or a maid scurries through the street, quickly running to the baker's or grocer's to fetch something. The shoemaker's children, with whom I am friends, used to play in the street in the dark until they were robustly summoned home from the corner. At this hour there always used to be some blackbird that couldn't find rest and suddenly screeched or babbled like a naughty child, startled from sleep and flying noisily from tree to tree. And I stood there in the middle of the street, counting the first stars, reluctant to go home, leaving the balmy air and the twilight in which day and night nestled so softly together. Sonyusha, I will write to you again soon. Put your mind at ease and be cheerful, everything will be fine, even with Karl. I will write to Mathilde about your household worries and do whatever I can. Goodbye until the next letter, my dear little bird.

I embrace you.

Your Rosa.

Dr Jenny Farrell was born and educated in the German Democratic Republic. She moved to Ireland in 1985, where she has been living and teaching in Galway. Jenny's special interest is the political understanding of the arts. She publishes widely on these matters and is the author of *Fear Not Shakespeare's Tragedies: A Comprehensive Introduction* (2016) and *Revolutionary Romanticism: Examining the Odes of John Keats* (2017) This is her own translation of the letter.

* Russian pet name for Sophie (Sophie was a native Russian speaker, Rosa was very fluent.

** The Women's Prison in Berlin

*** The district in Berlin where Luxemburg lived

100 Years after the murder of “the Eagle” Takes more than guns to kill a woman

by Marion Baur



WHEN THE Irish Communists greet their sisters on this day we are doing it in the spirit of the centenary of Rosa Luxemburg’s brutal murder by German elite-soldiers on Jan. 15th, 1919.

The Eagle of the Revolution as Lenin called her lives on in our hearts and particularly in our minds.

Rosa and her huge political legacy have been and are being “claimed” by many: Social Democrats of all shades and the world over, people who see their roots in Trotsky’s theories, Liberals even.

They rightly praise her courage and relentless struggle for the working class, they love her “theory of spontaneity”, they admire her deep respect for the opinion of an opponent, they pay tribute to her dignity which shines from the letters she wrote when imprisoned (Jenny quotes beautifully from them in this pamphlet).

I think it is safe to say that no revolutionary in Europe has as many people visiting her grave year after year as Rosa (and her fellow comrade in life and in death Karl Liebknecht).

This January will see well over 100,000 men and women flocking to the “Friedhof der Sozialisten” (graveyard of the socialists) to pay respect knowing that the “grave” is only a plaque. Her body has never been recovered from the Landwehr Kanal in Berlin – Neukoelln.

Many of the admirers of Rosa do not know (are not being told, unless we do so...) the most important aspect of her life.

She was rebellious against the system of capitalism from a very young age. She was a militant anti-war fighter.

She broke away from the Social Democrats (SPD) with the Independents (USPD) in bitter opposition against their support of the Imperialist World War.

This political biography brought her bans from parliament-meetings, court cases, arrests, imprisonment.

But all this became secondary on January, 1st of 1919:

Rosa and Karl stood outside the “Preussischer Landtag” (building of the Prussian state parliament) and declared that the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) had been founded. Rosa described the revolutionary step: “We are back with Marx, back under his banner!”

This was her and Karl’s death-sentence!

Only 15 days later, both revolutionaries were killed, another KPD founder, member, Leo Jogiches, was murdered shortly afterwards.

It is very encouraging to see so many young working class people being fascinated by Rosa though it’s a bit disturbing sometimes when “false prophets” sail on the back of that. But the truth will prevail:

Rosa lived and died as “one of us”, a Communist, her programme lives on in our programme!

“Eagles may at times fly lower than hens but hens can never rise to the height of eagles. Rosa Luxemburg was – and remains for us – an eagle. And not only will Communists all over the world cherish her memory, but her biography and her complete works will serve as useful manuals for training many generations of Communists all over the world.” (Lenin)

Marion Baur was born in Wilhelmshaven/Germany as the daughter of a tailor. A textile-worker since she left school, she is now in charge of a weaving mill in County Derry.

She has been an active member of the Communist Party (first the German DKP, now the CPI) since 1982, serves on the Northern Area Committee of the CPI.

Picture above:
May Day marchers in Berlin 1948

Welfare Not Warfare

International Working Women's Day 2019 is dedicated to Rosa Luxemburg on the centenary of her death

Tribute to Rosa Luxemburg: Lynda Walker
Thursday 7th March-7.00pm to 9.00 pm
Venue: Central Hall, Rosemary Street
Belfast

War is the greatest threat to this planet, to human life and the environment: A critical analysis

Speakers: Thea Valentina Gardellin *Italy*
Clare Daly TD *Dublin* Kerry Fleck *Belfast*
Chairperson: Laura Duggan *Dublin*
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