# Rosa Luxemburg

## *"In Spite of all Her Errors She Was and Remains an Eagle!"*

*By Will Herberg*

"THE life and works of Rosa Luxemburg," Lenin once declared, "should serve for the instruction of generations of Communists in all countries." The political life of Rosa Luxemburg is a clear mirror of the course of the proletarian revolutionary movement during a most important phase of its development. From the the period of its very origin down to its definite crystallization in the fires of struggle, Rosa Luxemburg was one of the best recognized leaders of the revolutionary internationalist wing of the Social-democracy and its outstanding theoretician. In the Polish revolutionary movement, in the German Social-democracy (which in those days occupied a position of undisputed leadership in the world Socialist movement), at International Socialist Congresses, Rosa was always in the forefront—the fiery agitator, the gifted organizer, the profound theoretician!

The process of differentiation within the Socialist movement began almost simultaneously with the consolidation of the national Socialist parties into the Second International. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the differences had already reached the point of open struggle—in France over the question of ministerialism, in Germany over the revisionist offensive of Bernstein, in Russia over economism and organizational questions. In this first phase of the struggle Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky were comrades-in-arms against Bernstein and Millerand. The conflict between revolutionary Marxism and centrism was still in the future.

The world-historical events in Russia in 1905 and the political mass struggles in Belgium and elsewhere at about the same time carried forward the inevitable differentiation process a step further. The rift between the vacillating center and the newly crystallized group of "radical Marxists" grew greater and assumed open theoretical form. Again Rosa was in the forefront, this time fighting with determination against Kautsky himself and exposing the inner nature of the so-called "Marxian center." The three great historical tendencies in the German Social-democracy had now assumed distinct form and were openly fighting for hegemony within the revolutionary labor movement.

August 1914! The imperialist butchery has engulfed Europe! The growing split in the Social-democracy has matured. Opportunism has become transformed into social-patriotism; Kautskyan centrism into a form of social-pacifism in essence indistinguishable from the chauvinism of the opportunists. The "radical Marxists" have taken up the banner of international Socialism, of the revolutionary struggle against war!

Again Rosa is in the forefront! Denouncing the treacherous Social-democracy—"a whited sepulcher," organizing the forces of proletarian mass action and revolution in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties and the bitterest persecution! Spartakus raises its voice!

Spartakus and the November days! Spartakus on the barricades! Soviets spread thruout Germany! Red Rosa is everywhere—leading the flower of the German proletariat for the decisive struggle!

The streets of Berlin run with blood. The Social-democratic leaders marshal the forces of "law and order." Spartakus is "crushed." "Order reigns in Berlin!"

Liebknecht, Radek, and Luxemburg are in hiding. The bloody incitement in the Social-democratic press against Spartakus reaches incredible heights. January 15, 1920! Rosa and Karl are discovered and brutally murdered! But Spartakus cannot be crushed! It rises again in the form of the young Communist Party of Germany, the enduring monument to the glorious Rosa!

Spartakus is international. "The stream of revolutionary Socialism," said Lenin, "for which the Spartakusbund stands in Germany, is represented in all countries." The consolidation of the revolutionary Marxists thruout the world proceeds indeed by stages but proceeds surely to its goal. Thru Zimmerwald and Kienthal on to the Communist International in 1919! In spite of hesitation and wavering Spartakus is there and the name of the *Spatakusbund* is found among the little group signing the Manifesto of the First Congress of the Communist International.

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The theoretical achievements of Rosa Luxemburg in Marxist research, in the study of economic and political questions, in the analysis of the basic problems of strategy and tactics of the proletarian struggle are monumental. Lenin was of the opinion that next to Marx and Engels Rosa Luxemburg was probably the most original and fruitful theoretician in the Socialist movement; if we except Lenin himself it is not very hard to agree with this judgment. In the columns of the German Social-democratic press, in her classes at the Berlin Party School, in innumerable books, pamphlets and polemics, in the flaming *Spartakus Letters* during the war, in the famous *Junius pamphlet*, in the new revolutionary *Internationale* and *Rote Fahne*, Rosa Luxemburg wielded her brilliant pen as the most powerful weapon in the struggle for revolutionary Marxism.

The theoretical achievements of Rosa Luxemburg lie in every field. Her *Introduction to National Economy* is still a textbook deserving the closest study. The *Accumulation of Capital* remains a monumental work of Marxian economic analysis which has evoked the highest praise on the part of those who, like Lenin and Bukharin, criticized its errors most sharply. Of striking interest is that wonderful series of articles on *Social Reform or Social Revolution*, probably the most vigorous polemic against reformism in all its aspects in the West European Social-democratic movement. The masterly work on *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions*, a landmark in the development of Marxist theory, is still a valuable guide for a revolutionary policy on these basic questions. We come much nearer to our own times when we approach Rosa's work during the war and the German Revolution, especially the famous speeches and articles on the programmatic and tactical questions of the Spartakusbund in which the striking similarity of viewpoint with the line of Lenin is clearly visible.

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The differences between Rosa Luxemburg and Russian revolutionary Marxists (in the first place, Lenin) were many and important. They were inevitable differences. They were differences due either to the different stages of maturity of the same movement or else to the different conditions which the revolutionary movement necessarily met in countries as different as Imperial Germany and Czarist Russia. In the first category fall the national and agrarian questions; the rapidly accumulating experiences of the revolutionary struggle convinced Rosa herself of her errors on these questions. In the other category are to be found such questions as organizational centralization, a question that would inevitably take on different aspects under the very different conditions of the Social-democratic movements in Germany and in Russia. The war, the split in the International and the establishment of independent Communist Parties brought another change in the situation and the history of the Spartakusbund and of the C.P.G. makes it clear that Rosa fully absorbed the principles of democratic centralism and revolutionary discipline, in the spirit of Lenin and not of the Party burocracy.

*"In spite of all her errors Rosa Luxemburg was and remains an eagle!"* said Lenin who certainly was not one to forget or to gloss over any differences!

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Rosa Luxemburg does not belong to the working class of any country any more than Marx belongs to the German or Lenin to the Russian workers! She belongs to the international proletariat for it is as the expression of the revolutionary strivings of the proletariat that she has attained world significance. Her life was the very expression of the inner development of the revolutionary movement in its most important phases. It is as the embodiment of the revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary will of the class whose historical mission it is to overturn the very basis of modern society in order to rebuild it on new foundations that Rosa Luxemburg stands before us, alongside of Marx and Lenin!



# In the Communi

## THE CRISIS IN THE FINNISH COMMUNIST PARTY

Under conditions of illegality and bitter White terror following upon the defeat of the Finnish Revolution of 1918, the revolutionary proletariat of Finland succeeded in building up a strong and well functioning Communist Party as well as powerful militant trade unions under left-wing control. The hold of the Social-democracy was loosened from the best sections of the working class. The Communist Party developed a strong press and other legal and semi-legal institutions. The Communist Party of Finland was growing as one of the best sections of the Comintern.

But Finland could not be exempt from the international crisis. The ultra-left line hit the Finnish Communist movement towards the middle of 1928 when the Ecci and the R.I.L.U. ordered a right-about-face in the trade union policies of the Party and in general in the policies of mass work. The tactic of the united front—thru which a powerful Soviet-Finnish Trade Union Unity movement had been built up—was to be given up and to be replaced by the new course of isolation and sectarianism. This new course was championed by Kullervo Manner, the secretary of the Party. It met with the resistance of a large number of the best and oldest Party comrades, especially those active in the trade unions and the mass organizations. It did not take long before these comrades were expelled and the real wrecking campaign inaugurated. The expelled Opposition group retained control of the most important trade unions and mass organizations.

The illegal Finnish Party press overflowed with the worst sort of abuse against the Opposition comrades as "opportunists," "conciliators," "traitors," etc. in order to destroy their influence among the workers. These articles were reprinted verbatim in the organ of the Finnish Social-democracy, *Suomen Sosiali-Demokratti*, and even in the Fascist papers because they too were interested in discrediting the revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. But in spite of all these efforts the numbers and the influence of the Opposition has continually grown.

Towards the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 the Finnish political police—the notorious *Ochrana*—conducted a whole series of arrests of Communists and left-wing workers. (These arrests were made possible thru the carelessness of the Party leaders and also the fact that one of the "loyalite" Party lead-