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Long live Rosa Luxemburg

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*"Who is feminist and is not leftist, lacks strategy.
Whoever is left and is not a feminist lacks depth".*
Rosa Luxemburg

Our Rosa Luxemburg was born on March 5, 1871, in Zamość, a small Polish town then occupied by Russia, into an emancipated and cultured Jewish family. From childhood, Rosa cultivated an immense love for books, reading, and study. Encouraged by the power of revolutionary ideas, and in the hope of the radical transformation of society, Rosa dreamed of and tirelessly worked to build a time free from the servitude, slavery, and exploitation of capitalism. A revolutionary militant, journalist, teacher, radical intellectual, a fearless and brilliant orator, polemicist, a fierce opponent of revisionist theories, writer, tireless reader, loving friend, comrade, and lover.

Rosa is a feminist, socialist, Spartacist, internationalist, anti-militarist, communist woman of intense and memorable life. Growing her flowers, looking after her albums of precious botany, drawing portraits or still life, walking in the parks, sewing her dresses, trying on her beautiful hats, or pampering her cat Mimi, Rosa is a figure who spreads joy and affection among her intimate circle or her wider comrades.

In jail as a political prisoner, she tries to survive the isolation and suffering by asking for books and writing letters; beautiful letters.

"If the body resents confinement, the spirit flies... and talks to the birds! As she herself says: "It is not that I am disturbed by the singing of birds for the joy that, from them, humans draw; but it is the very idea of a silent and inevitable disappearance of these small defenceless beings that causes me grief, to the point of leaving me with tears in my eyes."

Or again in this poignant passage from a letter written in May 1917 to Sonia Liebknecht:

"Suddenly, in that spectral atmosphere at the edge of my window, rose the song of the nightingale. In the midst of this rain, these flashes of lightning, the thunder, one would say the chime of an Argentinian bell. The nightingale sang with passion as if it wanted to drown out the noise of the thunder and light up the twilight. I have never heard anything more beautiful. In the sky, alternating between plum and purple, its song was reminiscent of a silver scintillation. Everything was so mysterious and of such unbelievable beauty that I involuntarily repeated the last line of Goethe's poem: "Ah, and you are not near me".

In the editorial offices of the revolutionary press, such as the Red Flag newspaper of the Communist Party of Germany, founded by Rosa and Karl Liebknecht at the end of 1918, she learnt from the printers and typesetters how many letters and images it was possible to print in red, even with the police on their tail. The urgent words against the bourgeois order and oppression.

Fearless and brave, she did not bow to the restrictions of her time, which claimed to be so virile and masculine. Rosa, a daring woman, daring in a time of cultured men and others less so. Her classes at

the Party Training School are lessons in erudition and simplicity of approach and interaction with the students.

Her writing is rigorous, without concessions or convenient shortcuts. Her intellectual courage is a perennial mark; she did not avoid arid themes and cultivated the best style of the 19th-century pamphleteering verb, that of the red sheets of revolutionary radicalism!

Her works circulate in many languages, and her many flashes of creative conceptual matrix echo her prophetic voice: Socialism or Barbarism! In our time, thanks to the tireless work of remarkable readers, translators, the Letters of Rosa Luxemburg tell us so much about her trajectory, her paths, her beautiful friendships, and her great loves. Here, not as a conventional parenthesis, but as a sincere homage, our gratitude in Brazil to the intellectual work of Isabel Loureiro, who has long encouraged us to read Rosa Luxemburg.

Reading Rosa Luxemburg's Letters is much more than an invitation to enter into her history and the social memory of her time. It is a reading that humanizes us; so powerful is its appeal. It reveals the unconditional friend, the intellectual committed to the cause of the Revolution, the woman sensitive and moved by the apparent, almost imperceptible offal of daily life. How can one not remember the countless books she read? How can one forget the affection and the sensitive words dispensed by her even in moments of acute suffering?

Rosa loved her studies: natural sciences, mathematics, law, and political economy. She read in prose and verse the books that change us and change the world.

Our Red Rosa was rigorous in her studies and theoretical formulations, as can be seen in so many titles. Rosa, red, a socialist, as her great friend and comrade Clara Zetkin well deciphered: "Socialism was, for Rosa Luxemburg, a dominant passion that absorbed all her life, a passion at the same time intellectual and ethical".

Like the other revolutionary feminists, Rosa, the Red, was passionate about the great causes of the proletariat and never ceased to dream of a socialist revolution. After the revolutionary uprisings of 1905 in the Tsarist Russian Empire, Rosa Luxemburg's ideas and her conviction have stood out: the process of working-class people gaining consciousness results less from the "enlightening" action of the party than from the experience of the direct and autonomous action of women workers, as Michael Löwy points out in his writings.

Rosa the Red understood the proletariat as a subject and emphasized class consciousness, organization, and the place of education and political formation in struggle and in a living struggle, as the uprisings of 1968 perceived spreading from Paris and, like today, her thought is updated by Collectives and Social Movements, as is the case of the Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra -MST) in Brazil.

Arm in arm and raised fist. A rose and a red flag in hand. With an anti-fascist red mask on their faces, proletarian women, working and feminist women call for life in 2021. In mourning and in solidarity before the tragedy of the thousands of lives taken by the global pandemic and in Brazil, aggravated by the ongoing genocide, we are alert and firm in denouncing violence against women and femicide, which has also spread like a pandemic.

Our homage today, 150 years after her birth, is to join Rosa's voice to the multitudinous voices of the Women of the Paris Commune, and to wish that the internationalist echoes spread from here, from the south of the world, and join thousands of other voices in honour of her memory and of the many other anonymous but no less important women fighters who took us by the hand here.

Rosa Luxemburg is not dead. She was murdered in Berlin on January 15, 1919, by the executioners of the German counter-revolution. She was brutally executed; shot point-blank in the left temple. Her body was thrown into the Landwehr, one of the canals of the Spree River, and only found on 31 May, five months later. She was buried on June 13, accompanied by a crowd in procession to the Friedrichsfelde cemetery in the same Berlin. Rosa Luxemburg was only 48 years old.

In 1929, the playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht marked the tenth anniversary of Rosa Luxemburg's death with the poem Epitaph.

"Here lies, buried, Rosa Luxemburg, a Jewess from Poland, a pioneer of the German working class, killed on the orders of the German oppressors. You the oppressed ones, bury your discord."

To render our homage to Rosa Luxemburg, in the Lilac Week of Comuna our organisation, is commitment and testimony to the revolutionary tradition, as in Michael Lowy who always tells us how he discovered Rosa Luxemburg. It is energising us in the material force of her ideas, it is a perennial inspiration. Perhaps also the new generations of fighters will read Rosa, to write with the red ink of Rebellion and Hope. Hail to the 150 years of Rosa Luxemburg's living and subversive memory, which is still alive among revolutionary feminists!

Vanda Souto

P.S.

• Anti*Capitalist Resistance. 10 March 2021:

<https://www.anticapitalistresistance.org/post/long-live-rosa-luxemburg>

This article originally appeared in Portuguese here:

<https://www.comunapsol.org/single-post/viva-rosa-luxemburgo-150-anos>

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