

## ROSE «THE RED» IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

«The field of the bourgeois legality of parliamentarism is not only a field of domination for the capitalist class, but also a field of struggle, on which the antagonisms between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie meet. But in the same way that the legal order for the bourgeoisie is no more than an expression of its violence, for the proletariat the parliamentary struggle cannot be more than the tendency to bring its own violence to power. If behind our legal and parliamentary activity is not the violence of the working class, always ready to take action at the right moment, the parliamentary action of social democracy becomes a pastime as spiritual as extracting water with a skimmer. Lovers of realism, who underline the "positive successes" of the parliamentary activity of social democracy to use as arguments against the necessity and utility of violence in the workers' struggle, do not notice that these successes, however minimal, only can be considered as the products of the invisible and latent effect of violence.»

Rosa Luxemburg: «*Once again the Belgian experiment*». *Debate about the mass strike*. PyP. No. 62. Carthage. Argentina 1975, 110

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Shortly after the rise of international fascism in the Spanish state in July 1936, the battalion of communist Basque soldiers (*gudariak*) Rosa Luxemburg was formed in the part of the Basque Country which was fighting a desperate resistance after the loss of the strategic city of Irun. Shortly before this time, the Column Thälmannen was formed in honour of the member of the German Communist Party arrested in 1933 who was tortured, imprisoned and finally assassinated in 1944. The battalion Karl Liebnecht was also formed around this time. These and other political-military decisions show both the communist and internationalist consciousness that put down roots in both the proletariat and the peasantry of the Basque Country, and at the same time, its essential connection with the national rights of its people

The Rosa Luxemburg battalion was formed with the arrival of hundreds of volunteers who knew perfectly well the risks they assumed, after a battle in which the disproportion of means between fascism and freedom was absolute for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. The battalion is famous for its heroism and for the huge number of casualties among its 1,400 volunteers: according to our data, it was the last to leave the Hell of Artxanda (Bilbao – Bizcay). That we know, and assuming the possibility of error, it was probably the only military unit sharing the name of the militant killed in Berlin in early 1919 by troops who obeyed the orders of the Social democracy tendency and who afterwards would be integrated into Nazism in 1923.

The discipline, coherence and fighting moral of Basque Communism ascribed to the Communist International was recognized by all the antifascist forces. This included the tiny Trotskyist group that also fought in favor of the national freedom, although they knew about the growing persecution against their comrades in the USSR. This persecution would also be practiced in Catalonia against the POUM and other groups since May 1937. Similarly, the anarchists, also aware of the historical disputes with the communists, nevertheless maintained a mutual trust in the fight against the fascist invasion. By the summer of 1936 the «excommunication» since 1925 of the Polish revolutionaries by the Communist International was already known, as we shall see.

Then, we ask ourselves: what was felt by those disciplined communists who killed and died in defense of Socialism and the Basque freedom, fulfilling a membership hated by the Third International? What writings from Rosa, about her and against her they could have read, taking into account that those of her authorship were removed in the USSR in the second half of the 1920's and the crushing of the German revolution made extremely hard the dissemination of her ideas? Everything related to the history of the Communist Party of Euskadi is under three locks: from the Francoist repression and the bourgeois falsehoods to the political interest of the PNV to silence the decisive role of the battalions which did not belong to its ideology. From the purges of the Communist Party of Spain against nationalist liberation and under the amnesia imposed by European communists obsessed with annihilating all memory of struggle. With the battalion Rosa Luxemburg we must add a fourth reason: the symbolism of its name. Only very recently has begun to study its heroic and impressive history.

From its origin, the communists fought both against the native bourgeoisie and against the presence of the «Spanish imperialist army» in Basque lands. The first socialist independence movement was that of Basque

communism. Although in the VII<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist International in 1935 the line of the Popular Front prevailed, which subordinated the revolutionary politics to the agreements with the national-democratic bourgeoisie to join anti-fascist forces. This did not prevent some Basque Communists from recovering the Basque national history from its true content, that from the working people oppressed secularly by that local bourgeoisie who were autonomist in the political field and reactionary in the social one, undecided at the last second to resist fascism or join with it: segments of the PNV in the first moment hid, and afterwards fled or even joined with fascism. And those who did eventually support the Second Republic and defended Basque freedoms, did so late, pressured by their popular bases, half-heartedly and without mobilizing the great industrial resources of Basque capitalism.

The war of 1936-44 and the final outcome in which the Nazi-Fascist troops stationed in the Basque Country finally surrendered was also a war of foreign invasion as well as a class war within the Basque people. We cannot now develop this dialectic between the national class struggle and the international class struggle in which Nazi-fascism and Francoism were decisive weapons of capital in crisis, although it is the basis for understanding what follows. In effect, the communists claimed the working nation by giving names charged with symbolism to two of their battalions: Rebellion of the Salt and The tree of Gernika (*Gernikako Arbola*).

The battalion called «The rebellion of the Salt»<sup>1</sup> was in honor of the popular uprising that was self-organizing from 1631 until it was broken in 1634, against the Spanish attempt to cut back the Foral System that recognized the basic social rights, among them the control of affordable prices in products of first necessity for the working people as could be the salt. The increase of the price of salt had the consequence of making the living conditions worse and severely curtailing the Foral System, and also a desired objective for the rising commercial bourgeoisie seeking integration into the Spanish market: the *matxinada*, name in Basque given to the struggles of the *ferrones*, exploited workers of the ironworks, was crushed with the execution of six people.

The battalion called *Gernikako Arbola* (The tree of Gernika) was in honor of the best-known village in which laws were debated and passed into the Foral System. While the dominating ruling class still ruled along each historical period and the working people were marginalized in the decision-making process, but despite this Basque people knew that the Foral System was not so bad as the prevailing order in the Spanish State and that was the reason they defended it even against the unstoppable economic and military

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Mari Eskubi: *Matxinada de la Sal de 1634. May 17, 2011.* (<http://www.rebellion.org/noticia.php?id=128546>)

superiority of the [Spanish] State. When the Spanish State invaded the peninsular area of the Basque Country in 1876 the occupier faced an open, tenacious peaceful resistance and a Foral Administration unsuited to the Spanish bureaucratic system. Urgently needing economic funds and social peace, Canovas negotiated with the Basque bourgeoisie the Economic Concerts (*Cupo*), while the Foral Administration continued working for the benefit of the native bourgeoisie it must now be paid to the Spanish State through a quota every year, or better said, a «reparation of war» according to the valid definition made by Max Weber<sup>2</sup> on his trip to the Basque Country in 1898.

Apart from these bourgeois exchanges, the working people continued defending the symbolic value of Gernika because it represented the social history of the exploited classes and a fairer and equal legitimator of the communal exchange of goods and the sociopolitical norms based on local language and culture, etc. The coherence of the communists naming battalions with the historical *matxinada* of 1634 and with Gernika names is undeniable because they assumed and updated this past fightings in 1936-37 with another national history version which was opposed to the history of the local bourgeois and of the Spanish one, this explains the bombing of Gernika as well as the silence and the attacks of capitalist historiography on the value of the communal way of life in the Basque popular culture. Did not Marx and Engels do the same to support the struggles of the peoples against the colonial exploitation that looted their resources, cultures and common goods?

And it also explains that, once Spanish nationalism was imposed in its republican form within the Communist Party of Spain since May 1937, a purge against the «nationalist deviation» was launched against the communists who defended the independence of their nations<sup>3</sup>. In addition, Stalinism provided another argument for purges: the Marx's ideas about the value of the communal issues, about the communal modes of production, etc., were not so important because the decisive factor was that the world revolution must necessarily follow the obligatory-staged model officialized by the III International. It happened that in the Basque Country, even in those years, there were large extensions of communal and public lands of the provincial councils, town councils, councils, gangs, etc.; which for a long time were coveted by the bourgeoisie supported by the French and Spanish States; the popular resistances to prevent their plunder and privatization were through all kinds of actions, including desperate defensive wars.

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<sup>2</sup> Max Weber: «Dos cartas sobre el País Vasco». *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*. CIS. Madrid, October-Dicember 2002,. 303-314.

<sup>3</sup> Iñaki Gil de San Vicente: *El nacionalismo imperialista del Partido Comunista de España*. BoltxeLiburuak. Bilbo, 2015, 135 & next.

We must say with certainty that the Basque communists knew that history and defended the recovery of communal lands. We cannot say for sure that they knew the long and documented chapters written about the subject by Rosa Luxemburg in her famous work *The accumulation of capital* in December 1912, especially from chapter XXVII to the end, in which she studied meticulously the historical significance of the forms of communal property, the resistance of its peoples to the western invasions, etc. She left written pages about the looting and privatization of the communal goods. He left written pages about the looting and privatization of communal property and the people who lived there, such as those who populated America<sup>4</sup>, but also carefully studied the French invasion of Algeria, possibly involving Basque soldiers under orders of French imperialism. In essence, their ideas are applicable to the Basque Country, sparing the spatio-temporal distances: perhaps it was possible that these ideas, along with other works from her, reached to the Basque communists in some way.

We will never know exactly because the Rosa Luxemburg's praxis was submitted to a relentless censorship and concealment by Social democracy and a few years later by Stalinism. Even before the revolution of 1905, her ideas were beginning to be isolated within the Social democracy tendency and were the object of a Germanic chauvinistic diffused rejection at the beginning and increasingly accentuated against her Polish identity. Increasingly, she had to publish her writings in her Polish party in the face of the increasing «technical» difficulties she encountered in Germany.

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Before the Social democratic bureaucracy had taken under control of the party Rosa began to be known for her theoretical contributions mainly on two decisive questions: the national question in 1896 and the radical critique of Bernstein's reformism in 1899. On the first of them Rosa felt that the context of the last years of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century had changed from the time when Marx and Engels were defending the independence of Poland. According to Rosa, Capitalist development had made Poland the most potent industry area of the tsarist empire, creating a mutual dependence between the Polish and Russian bourgeoisie on the basis of the market unity, and therefore between the Polish and Russian proletariat: it had opened a new phase of the class struggle and which to claim the right of Polish independence was to break the strategic unity of the proletariat, to split it for the benefit of Capitalism. Over the years, Rosa would extend this thesis to the whole of the world class struggle.

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<sup>4</sup> Sergio Abraham Méndez Moissen: *Rosa Luxemburg y los pueblos indígenas de América*. July 31, 2017 (<https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Rosa-Luxemburgo-y-los-pueblos-indigenas-de-America>)

Rosa did not deny in any way the national rights of the oppressed peoples: she defended them with zeal, but she thought that their progressive historical position had already concluded with the development of Capitalism. The rights of peoples could only be resolved with the advance of Socialism when their cultures and languages would be respected by workers' democracy while the State and Capitalism were being diluted, and with them all kinds of oppressions. Until that day, the working classes of the oppressor States and the oppressed peoples had to fight in a revolutionary unity against the counterrevolutionary unity of the Capital.

The facts had already shown by then that national oppression was and is one of the most contradictory social forces that exist, because they can make that the class struggle turn into revolution or counterrevolution, according to what goals are marked and what strategy is used. In this sense, the words of Eric Blanc<sup>5</sup> are revealing when in his long study about Rosa Luxemburg in the Poland from 1898-1903, he argues that her actions had contradictory and tragic effects. The surprising thing is that after correcting and accepting that the imperialist plundering of the «suburbs»<sup>6</sup> of the by then developed Capitalism would only increase, despite this full coincidence with other Marxists, he still insisted on the lack of importance of the liberation struggles.

There are a lot of debates about why Rosa remained firm in her rejection of the right to independence, so much so, that we cannot even summarize the different positions here. For reasons of brevity, we think that the problem lies in his limited understanding of Marxist dialectics. Although there are authors who pay little attention to the dialectic in Rosa, such as Gregory A. Albo<sup>7</sup>, many others do so: María-José Aubet<sup>8</sup>, Lelio Basso, Oskar Negt<sup>9</sup>..., have strongly claimed their mastery of the dialectical method without which understand their great contributions. Then we will see that Rosa Luxemburg did dominate well the dialectic of the political, as she demonstrated in her criticism of reformism and in the generic defense of socialist democracy; but in other problems did not achieve, as in the national problems, the theory of organization, the problem of reproduction schemes of volume II of *Capital*...

<sup>5</sup> Eric Blanc: *Rosa Luxemburgo y el socialismo polaco (1898-1903)* February 6, 2018 (<http://sinpermiso.info/textos/rosa-luxemburgo-y-el-socialismo-polaco-1893-1919>)

<sup>6</sup> Armando Bartra Vergés: *Violencia y despojo en los arrabales del capital*. September 22, 2016. (<https://kmarx.wordpress.com/2016/09/22/rosa-luxemburgo-violencia-y-despojo-en-los-arrabales-del-capital/>)

<sup>7</sup> Gregory A. Albo: *Rosa Luxemburgo y el capitalismo contemporáneo*. March 20, 2018 (<https://kmarx.wordpress.com/2018/03/27/rosa-luxemburgo-y-el-capitalismo-contemporaneo/>)

<sup>8</sup> María-José Aubet: *Rosa Luxemburg y la cuestión nacional*. Anagrama. Barcelona 1977, 36 & next.

<sup>9</sup> Oskar Negt: «Rosa Luxemburg y la renovación del marxismo». *Historia del marxismo*. Bruguera. Barcelona 1980, volumen 4, p. 280. Barcelona 1980, volume 4, 280.

Raya Dunayevskaya<sup>10</sup> argues that Rosa did not understand the «dialectic of the history», and therefore did not grasp the revolutionary potential of the right to self-determination. D. Bensaïd and SamyNair<sup>11</sup>, claim that her dialectic was more Hegelian than Marxist, which explains the deficiencies of her theory of revolutionary organization and the relations with the complexity of the process of raising awareness of the working class and, therefore, the content and the role of «the political» in all aspects of Capitalist society. Michael Löwy<sup>12</sup> also comments about some ambiguity in her «deterministic optimism». Reading the *Junius Brochure* that Rosa wrote in prison in 1915, especially the chapter VII, we appreciate the limitations of her dialectic.

Paul Mattik<sup>13</sup> takes a stance by the Lenin's theses in the debate with Rosa about the schemes of Capitalist reproduction and accumulation and on the decisive role which lies in the production and not in the circulation, as argued Rosa. Mattik rightly adds that neither one nor the other fully understood the meaning of the law of falling trend of the average rate of profit. Henryk Grossmann<sup>14</sup> says that Rosa's «solution» to the problem of the schemes of reproduction in volumen II of Marx's *Capital*, is «a comfortable method» of leaving the theoretical alley in which she has gotten herself, consisting in affirming without proof that there are «gaps» in that part of the Marxian work. Extending his criticism on those who hold ideas similar to those of Rosa Luxemburg, such as Fritz Sternberg, Grossmann's claims to have «no philosophical training». Years later, Beramendi and Fiorabanti<sup>15</sup> will support on this same problem that Rosa had a vision of Capitalism if not linear, at least unilateral.

Continuing with the debate about the deficiencies of Rosa's method when she studied the schemes of reproduction, Louis Gill contends that weakness to the bulk of Marxism of the Second International because of their deficient understanding of Marx's dialectical method because the essential *Grundrisse*<sup>16</sup>, without their study is very difficult to understand the method of *Capital* and they were published for the first time in 1939 and in a very short edition immediately submitted to the vicissitudes of the WW II, so it

<sup>10</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September 2012. 833 & next.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Bensaïd y SamyNair: *El problema de la organización. Lenin y Rosa Luxemburgo*. (<http://danielbensaid.org/Lenin-y-Rosa-Luxemburgo?lang=fr>)

<sup>12</sup> Michael Löwy: *Actualidad revolucionaria de Rosa Luxemburgo*. July 21, 2013 (<https://kmarx.wordpress.com/2013/07/21/actualidad-revolucionaria-de-rosa-luxemburgo/>)

<sup>13</sup> Paul Mattik: *Luxemburgo versus Lenin*. March 2008 (<https://es.scribd.com/document/199832057/Paul-Mattik-Luxemburgo-vs-Lenin-1935>)

<sup>14</sup> Henryk Grossmann: *La ley de la acumulación y del derrumbe del sistema capitalista*. Siglo XXI, México 1979, 270 & next.

<sup>15</sup> J. G. Beramendi-E. Fioravanti: *Miseria de la economía*. Península. Barcelona 1974, Volumen 1 «Del marxismo científico al marxismo dogmático», 161-183.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Gill: *Fundamentos y límites del capitalismo*. Trotta. Madrid 2002, 359.



was not until the 1950's when it was possible to begin to be studied carefully.

Ernest Mandel<sup>17</sup> does not enter into the debate about the limitations of Rosa's method in her critique of Marx's reproduction schemes, but, in addition to correcting something to Grossmann, actually explains that Rosa raised a question that can only be solved if one takes a step forward in the revolutionary theoretical reflection, entering to debate nothing less than the theory of the capitalist crisis. Here, in the decisive Marxist theory of the crisis, L. Gill recognizes that Rosa Luxemburg, although she was wrong in her critique of the schemes of reproduction, she connected with Marx's theory when she explained that crisis arises from the historicity and transience of the Capitalism<sup>18</sup>, which earned for her the strongest rejection from Social democratic reformism that defend the thesis that capitalism is perpetuated by itself and that only with the reform can be changing it step by step towards Socialism.

While the dialectic of Marx and Engels links in a processual totality inside of the national contradictions, of organization and spontaneity, and of the «collapse» of Capitalism, Rosa's Hegelian dialectic reduced this complex and contradictory totality to an almost automatic and almost objectivist and deterministic movement that reminds us of the unfolding of the Idea. Norman Geras says that Rosa's work has been interpreted as a kind of «political fatalism»<sup>19</sup> because a superficial reading gives the feeling of an «inevitable collapse» of Capitalism, but that this is only a distortion or caricature. Michael Lowy<sup>20</sup> has written extensively about the philosophy of praxis inserted in Rosa Luxemburg, confirming in other words what was also demonstrated by Raya Dunayevskaya when she assured about Rosa that: «[...] in her case it could be said that intellect becomes will, becomes act»<sup>21</sup>.

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We can say that some of Rosa's difficulties stemming from the limits of the method she used were solved thanks to the role of the philosophy of praxis in the political struggle, in the brilliant complaint against reformism, which is the second debate, by 1899, to which we have referred above. Actually Bernstein did not add anything new to the previous reformisms. His merit

<sup>17</sup>ErnestMandel: *El Capital. Cien años de controversias en torno a la obra de Karl Marx*. Siglo XXI. México 1985, 143 & next.

<sup>18</sup>Lous Gill: *Fundamentos y límites del capitalismo*. Trotta. Madrid 2002, 554.

<sup>19</sup>Norman Geras: «Luxemburg, Rosa». *Diccionario del pensamiento marxistas*. Tecnos. Madrid 1984, 470.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Lowy: *La filosofía de la praxis en el pensamiento de Rosa Luxemburg*. November 7, 2014 (<https://kmarx.wordpress.com/2014/11/07/la-filosofia-de-la-praxis-en-el-pensamiento-de-rosa-luxemburg/>)

<sup>21</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 770.



consists of having synthesized them coherently in a single book. Bo Gustafsson recognized that was Rosa Luxemburg who made clear that Bernstein had no new ideas<sup>22</sup> that, as the author says, were not already in Lange and in other Neokantians, chairs socialist, reformist socialists within the Social democracy itself [...] For Rosa Luxemburg, the Bernstein's doctrine was «composed of bits of every possible system»<sup>23</sup>. Nestor Kohan indicates that Bernstein's attack against the Marxist dialectic, answered by Rosa<sup>24</sup>, is part of the current reactionary and reformist opposition to Marxism.

Mattik is right when he states in the quoted text that Rosa's criticisms against the reformism are the most powerful of all complaints, clearly suggesting that Lenin was not equal to it either. Although both were educated in the theoretical horizon of the II<sup>th</sup> International, Rosa was who first made sure of Bernstein's brazen reformism, and especially the one who first intuited the ambiguities of Kautsky while Lenin took more years. Undoubtedly, the agile and penetrating political dialectic that underlies her classic work, *Reformism or Revolution*, allowed her to glimpse, even dimly, but certainly before anyone else, Kautsky's background of economic determinism. In the critical question of the reformist ideology on the advance of socialism through social reforms, Rosa synthesizes the contributions of various reformist authors in a unique block formed by trade unionism, social reform and the political democratization of the State as the «means for the progressive realization of the socialism»<sup>25</sup>. The facts proved her right.

But a more important critique still lies here: «Bernstein declares that the law of the Marx's surplus value is a mere abstraction [...] a product of the imagination»<sup>26</sup>. The surplus value, basically said, is the food for Capitalism, denying its existence, to reduce it to an abstraction, denies the objectivity of Capitalism by substituting it for an idyllic society, without exploitation or class struggle. The blind need to increase surplus value to increase profit and overcome inter-bourgeois competition leads capitalism to toughen, intensify and extend wage exploitation, develop militarism and cut its own democratic system. From this theoretical certainty based on the scientific veracity of the law of surplus value, Rosa predicted what follows:

«As a result of the development of the world economy, the intensification and generalization of competition in the world market, militarism and politics of the large fleets have become, as instruments

<sup>22</sup> Bo Gustafsson: *Marxismo y revisionismo*. Grijalbo, Barcelona 1975, 152.

<sup>23</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Reforma o revolución*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, volumen I, 112.

<sup>24</sup> Néstor Kohan: *Rosa Luxemburg y la reflexión marxista sobre el poder*. December 11, 2012 (<https://kmarx.wordpress.com/2013/12/11/rosa-luxemburg-y-la-reflexion-marxista-sobre-el-poder/>)

<sup>25</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Reforma o revolución*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, volumen I, 66.

<sup>26</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Reforma o revolución*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, volumen I, 89.

of global policy, a decisive factor in the interior life as in the exterior one of the great powers. If it is true that both world politics and militarism represent an ascending phase in the stage that Capitalism is currently going through, then bourgeois democracy must logically move in a downward direction»<sup>27</sup>.

The criticism against reformism was not only theoretical. A few months after this telling off, Rosa proceeded to criticise the practice of the French reformism when Socialist Millerand joined the government in 1899. In a 1900-1901 text about the crisis in France, Rosa enumerated the practical trilogy, political and theoretical mass mobilization that pushed up French Socialism, analyzing the turn to the center of Socialism that was part of the centrist government:

«1) Their slogans are the most advanced, so that when they compete in elections with the bourgeois parties they assert the pressure from the masses that vote. 2) Constantly they denounce the government before the people and shake public opinion. 3) Its agitation inside and outside the parliament attracts more and more numerous masses and thus they become a power with which the government and the whole of the bourgeoisie must keep in mind. When Millerand entered within the cabinet, the Jaurès' Socialists closed these three ways of approaching the masses [...] The first consequence of Socialist participation in a coalition cabinet is, therefore, the cessation of the most important Socialist activities and, above all, of parliamentary activity: *political education and clarification of the masses*»<sup>28</sup>.

This criticism of French Socialism announced what would be the German reformism some few years later and, very especially, it is actually a complaint against the current reformist parliamentarism, a claim backed by the history of more than a century. Affirmed now that the parliamentary activity has to seek both political education and clarification of the masses, puts in the pillory all the parliamentary policies in the Basque Country.

Once the revolution of 1905 broke out, Rosa turned into herself: she did not hesitate to threaten a printer with a gun to publish revolutionary pamphlets, as he refused to do so. As a result of the decidedly reactionary behavior of the churches, an indignant Rosa wrote: «And this is the response to the attacks of the clergy: Social democracy in no way combats religious creeds. On the contrary, it demands total freedom of conscience for every person, and the greatest tolerance for each faith and opinion. But, from the moment that the priests use the pulpit as a means of political struggle against the working class, the workers must fight against those who want to cut their

<sup>27</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Reforma o revolución*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, volumen I, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *La crisis socialista en Francia*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, volumen I, pp. 132-133.

rights and their freedom. Because the one whom defends the exploiters and the one who helps to perpetuate this regime of misery are the mortal enemies of the proletariat, already wearing a cassock or the uniform of police»<sup>29</sup>.

Rosa Luxemburg's theoretical-political effort was destined to emancipate the militancy from the reactionary content of religion, especially when she openly designed politics, but she was also searching to increase theoretical training within a party as powerful and growing as the German one in 1905 in which only 10% of its members had some knowledge about Marxism<sup>30</sup>, while the subscribers to the theoretical journal *NeueZeitno* exceeded 1.5% of the militancy<sup>31</sup>.

Along the summer of 1906 Rosa wrote to some friends that: «Revolution is magnificent ... Everything else is nonsense»<sup>32</sup>. It was in this climate and in the debates that took place when she also wrote the words that introduce this text about the role of violence and the mass strike in parliamentary politics. Her praxis took herself, as before the writing of the text and as after the one, to jail. The bureaucracy of the party marginalized her even more, because of her direct criticisms and because these criticisms were based on a profound dialectic of the class struggle, as it is rediscovered in the next description of the social powers that is more acceptable at present, in the current complex Capitalism, than in the simpler one of 112 years ago:

«It is in this huge and multicolored general confrontation between Capital and Labor, which reflects the complexity of social organization and political consciousness in each sector and in each district. The scale extends from the organized union struggle of a selected and proven layer of the proletariat of the great industry until the unashamed protest of a handful of rural workers and the first brief tremors of an agitated military garrison; from the well-educated, elegant riot of the workers of starched cuffs and hard collar in the offices of a bank to the timid murmurs of a rough meeting of dissatisfied policemen in a dirty, dark and smoke-filled guard post»<sup>33</sup>.

Rosa is detailing the rich and contradictory complexity of the ascending dynamics that can conclude in revolutions, if huge blunders are not made. She shows how even lower sectors of some repressive forces can be partially or totally added to that process. And it is on this eminently

<sup>29</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *El socialismo y las iglesias*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, Tomo I, 191.

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<sup>31</sup> B. Gustafsson: *Marxismo y revisionismo*, Grijalbo, Barcelona 1975, 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Clara Zetkin, Monday, March 15, 2018 ([https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Clara-Zetkin-sobre-Rosa-Luxemburg-La-obra-de-toda-su-vida-fue-preparar-la-revolucion?id\\_rubrique=2653](https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Clara-Zetkin-sobre-Rosa-Luxemburg-La-obra-de-toda-su-vida-fue-preparar-la-revolucion?id_rubrique=2653))

<sup>33</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Huelga de masas, partido y sindicatos*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, Volumen I, 214.

dialectical method, in which she sustains the explanation of the revolutionary strategy:

«Precisely because the bourgeois legal order has existed such long time in Germany, because it has had time to exhaust itself until its end, because democracy and bourgeois liberalism have had time to die, here it cannot even speak of bourgeois revolution. That is why, in the period of popular political struggles in Germany, the last historically necessary objective can only be the *dictatorship of the proletariat* [...] this task cannot be carried out at once; it will be consummated in a stage of huge social struggles»<sup>34</sup>.

This Marxist vision was rejected in daily practice by the political-union bureaucracy. In a letter to Clara Zetkin in 1907, Rosa says about the bureaucrats: «[...] they have committed themselves completely to parliament and parliamentarism, and whenever something happens that transcends the limits of parliamentary action, they feel powerless; no, worse than impotent, because they do everything they can to force the movement to return to parliamentary channels, and they will furiously label as "enemy of the people" anyone who ventures beyond those limits»<sup>35</sup>.

In 1910 after strong debates that confronted Rosa with bureaucracy and led her to break with Kautsky, Rosa wrote an article about the possible worth of the lessons of 1905 and the General Mass Strike in the Germany being then furrowed by a new wave of strikes and mobilizations to extend to all popular sectors the right to vote<sup>36</sup>, carrying it to the editorial department of the newspaper. The reply says that the party leadership has decided not to publish her article because the most important thing at that time is to prepare the budding election campaign.

During those days, while the bourgeoisie restrained with its legality and with the support of the Social democratic bureaucracy the leftist struggles, Rosa prepared by the end of 1912 the book *The accumulation of Capital* «whose publication was delayed the maximum time by the leadership of the party»<sup>37</sup>. The bureaucracy knew perfectly well that the book questioned the roots of the Social democratic politics in every way, and hence its boycott. In fact, the Social democracy had boycotted Marxist texts since the 1870's along with decisive debates for the European and world revolutionary process while, at the same time, created a «Marxism»<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *Huelga de masas, partido y sindicatos*. Obras escogidas. Pluma, Colombia 1976, Volumen I, 256-257.

<sup>35</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 775.

<sup>36</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 792-793.

<sup>37</sup>Jacques Droz: «La socialdemocracia alemana (1875-1914)». *Historia General del Socialismo*. Destino, Barcelona 1979, Volumen II, 64,

<sup>38</sup> Monserrat Galceran Huguet: *La invención del marxismo*. IEPALA, Madrid 1997, 399.

compatible with Capital through the ineluctable thesis of «historical necessity» of socialism, which nullified the crucial role of organized revolutionary consciousness in the crucial daily class struggle. That «Marxism» was one of the responsible for the «betrayal»<sup>39</sup> of Social democracy.

5.-

It is here, in this Gordian knot of organized praxis that politically concatenates all the forms of class struggle, where we must introduce the debate about the party theory and spontaneity in Rosa Luxemburg and of Rosa Luxemburg, an artificial and interested debate enlarged by who will want to face Rosa with the rest of the revolutionary forces. Now we must remember for a few moments what was said above about the limitations of Rosa's Hegelian dialectic and especially in her party theory because «she did not foresee the inner counter-revolution»<sup>40</sup> within the party, a mortal danger that Lenin always kept in mind in the essentials of his party theory although he always adapted it to new needs, while: «Rosa Luxemburg's predominant concept -a unified party, a unified international- was largely responsible for the many false interpretations of her concepts of spontaneity and organization»<sup>41</sup>.

In the first debates about the theory of organization, Lenin responded to Rosa saying that she had not responded to any of his concrete arguments that he presented, but she had responded only to generalities that were not in question, with which the problem of the method of Rosa above seen in this theme is again repeating: overestimate the general and abstract. But it is doubtful that Rosa could have read Lenin's answer because Kautsky refused to publish it<sup>42</sup>, which is another example of internal censorship. However, those «generalities» that shunned the debate are valid in the present<sup>43</sup> because they remind us precisely of the issues of socialist rights in militant life that should not be forgotten.

There is no doubt that the delay in creating an independent revolutionary party from the Social democrat greatly facilitated the defeat of the German revolution of November 1918, the location of Rosa and Liebknecht and their assassination. The Bolsheviks repeatedly avoided their total

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<sup>39</sup> CCI: *Cómo el socialismo alemán acabó traicionando a los trabajadores*. September 3, 2014 (<https://es.internationalism.org/en/node/4041>)

<sup>40</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 846.

<sup>41</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 847.

<sup>42</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 842.

<sup>43</sup> Raya Dunayevskaya: «Rosa Luxemburgo, la liberación femenina y la filosofía marxista de la revolución». *Una trilogía de revolución*. Prometeo Liberado. México, September, 2012. 843.

destruction, and Lenin maintained his clandestine militancy at decisive moments, thanks precisely to his organizational form<sup>44</sup>.

Rosa Luxemburg was shot dead on the night of January 15, 1919, shortly after being struck violently on the head with a rifle butt. She was 48 years old and lived her life on the run. Shortly before her death, while she was being arrested and taken to the car, she was harangued with insults by her captors: «communist», «Jewish», «whore»... She was one of the thousands of victims of the counterrevolution led by the Social democratic government who were allied with the most criminal elements of the political right. The Bolshevik revolution had triumphed in October 1917, being the spark of other revolutionary flames, among which, the German revolution of late 1918 stood out. The German bourgeoisie has never forgiven her: even in 1962 the «democratic» government of Federal Germany continued to try to justify her murder<sup>45</sup>.

Upon hearing the news, The Bolsheviks praised her merits, along with those of Karl Liebknecht and the other Communists exterminated. Two months later, the opening speech of the First Congress of the Communist International began by honoring their memory with everyone present standing<sup>46</sup>. In February 1922 Lenin wrote:

«Rosa Luxemburg was wrong in the problem of the independence of Poland; she was wrong to examine Menshevism in 1903; she was wrong in the theory of the accumulation of capital; she was wrong in July 1914 when she defended with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others the unity of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks; she was wrong in her prison writings, in 1918 (otherwise, she corrected herself, when was released at the end of 1918 and the beginning of 1919, most of her errors). But, in spite of all her mistakes, Rosa Luxemburg was and will continue to be an eagle; and not only will it be always a fond memory for all communists, but her biography and her *complete* works (whose edition is being delayed too long by the German Communists, who only partly deserve to be excused for the unprecedented number of victims who have been suffering in their hard struggle) they will be very useful teachings to educate many generations of communists of the whole world»<sup>47</sup>.

Viewing history from the present, Rosa Luxemburg made four major blocks of criticism against the Bolsheviks: the problem of the peasantry;

<sup>44</sup> M. Jhonstone: «Un instrumento político de nuevo tipo: el partido leninista de vanguardia», *Historia del marxismo*, Bruguera, 1983, tomo 7, (I). 447-456.

<sup>45</sup> David Arrabalí Campos: *El asesinato de Rosa Luxemburgo*. January 31, 2009 (<http://www.mundoobrero.es/pl.php?id=1116>)

<sup>46</sup> Lenin: *Discurso de apertura del Congreso. 2 de Marzo*. Obras Completas. Progreso, Moscú, 1986, Volumen 37, 507.

<sup>47</sup> Lenin: *Notas de un publicista*. Obras Completas. Progreso, Moscú, 1986, Volumen 44, 440.

the problem of nationalism; the problem of Constituent Assembly and the problem of socialist democracy. Of these four criticisms, in our opinion, it is in the last one where Rosa is quite right, although always specifying the space-time limits. With respect to Rosa's relationship with Lenin, Norman Geras affirms that their differences have been frequently exaggerated and that they were united by many other things<sup>48</sup>. According to Mary Alice Waters, the differences between Lenin and Rosa were basically three: the national question, the question of the revolutionary party and the question of the Bolshevik revolution, but even so Rosa Luxemburg always supported him<sup>49</sup>.

Similar to the misrepresentation of Gramsci by Eurocommunism in order to justify, using his prestige, the unconditional support for Capitalism, with Rosa Luxemburg the Social democrats and the bourgeoisie, like the Stalinist bureaucracy, created what was called «Luxemburgism», which amalgamated at different times the accusations of «ultraleftism», «spontaneity», «councilism», «Trotskyism», «centrism», «humanism», «anti-Leninism», etc.

In its Stalinist version, the «Luxemburgish» was condemned in the plenary session of the Communist International executive of March-April 1925, and then her books were withdrawn from libraries and bookstores, defying Lenin's willingness to publish her works. In 1931 Stalin attacked her by accusing her of oscillations from one extreme to another one, from the ultraleft to Menshevism, of having invented the theory of permanent revolution, etc., in a brief letter about the history of Bolshevism<sup>50</sup>. According to various reports and waiting for more data, the private correspondence between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg was still unedited at the end of the 1980's.

What does Rosa *the Red* provide us at present? We find a decisive idea in the words of Clara Zetkin immediately after her murder: «The work of her whole life was to prepare the revolution»<sup>51</sup>. Other ideas that are a little softer are provided by María-José Aubet:

«Can something be learned from her legacy? Today, faced with the dead or agonizing path of the organized labor movement, the exhaustion of the path of Stalinist "communism" but also of the Social democratic alternative as an anti-capitalist force, Rosa Luxemburg's

<sup>48</sup> Norman Geras: «Luxemburg, Rosa». *Diccionario del pensamiento marxistas*. Tecnos. Madrid 1984, 471.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Alice Waters: «Introducción». *Obras escogidas. Rosa Luxemburgo*. Pluma, Colombia 1976, Volumen I, 7-44.

<sup>50</sup> Stalin: *Sobre algunas cuestiones de la historia del bolchevismo*. Obras. Ediciones Lenguas Extranjeras. Moscú 1955. 95-96

<sup>51</sup> Clara Zetkin, Monday, March 15, 2018 ([https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Clara-Zetkin-sobre-Rosa-Luxemburg-La-obra-de-toda-su-vida-fue-preparar-la-revolucion?id\\_rubrique=2653](https://www.izquierdadiario.es/Clara-Zetkin-sobre-Rosa-Luxemburg-La-obra-de-toda-su-vida-fue-preparar-la-revolucion?id_rubrique=2653))



voice invites us to rethink our analytical tools for dealing with the new -and old- forms of exploitation in today's world. Rosa Luxemburg's antidogmatism, her anti-bureaucracy, her loyalty and faith in the revolutionary capacity -excessively "naive"? - of "the popular masses", her complaint of the authoritarian drift and sclerosis of the Social democratic parties and their defense of fundamental rights, even in revolutionary moments, makes her figure as perhaps the best continuator of Marx, not forgetting that she, unlike Lenin, Trotsky, Mao, etc., moved, acted, thought and wrote within the framework of a then already highly industrialized country of advanced capitalism»<sup>52</sup>.

In addition to these contributions, we want to conclude with two others. One of them is the decisive contribution of Rosa's praxis to the emancipation of working women, as shown in her article by 1912 in which, apart from asking why there is no a women's organization in Germany, she sharply separates the movement of the women workers from the bourgeois ones, defenders of Capitalism, and expounds her ideas about domestic work that does not produce value contrary to the verbiage of reformist academic feminism<sup>53</sup>. Andica Cakardic<sup>54</sup> has shown that Rosa's *The accumulation of capital* destroys bourgeois feminism by not taking into account the role of domestic work in Capitalism. For not extending, the entire work of Raya Dunayevskaya demonstrates the Marxist feminism of Rosa *The Red*.

The other contribution is the slogan «socialism or barbarism» popularized by Rosa Luxemburg in the *Junius Brochure* of 1915, which is so topical at present. Ian Angus has traced the origin, which was attributed to Engels because of a very similar phrase, discovered that it was Kautsky in 1892 who gave him the precise form in a brief text for the Erfurt program. He said that «we must move towards socialism or fall again in barbarism» which was adapted by Rosa as «advance to socialism or return to barbarism»<sup>55</sup>. Only four years later, in 1919, Preobrazhenski and Bukharin deepened this further with the slogan «chaos or communism»<sup>56</sup>: from 1915 to 1919 the lethality of the WWI had been multiplied, the revolutionary wave of 1917 had broken out and the financial capital showed his antisocialist hatred with no reservation.

<sup>52</sup>María José Aubet: «Rosa Luxemburg en el movimiento revolucionario y en la II Internacional: sus críticas a Lenin y a la revolución rusa». November 9, 2011 (<http://www.mientrastanto.org/boletin-163/notas/rosa-luxemburg-en-el-movimiento-revolucionario-y-en-la-ii-internacional-sus-critic>)

<sup>53</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *El voto femenino y la lucha de clases*. (<https://www.marxists.org/espanol/luxem/1912/mayo/12.htm>)

<sup>54</sup>AndicaCakardic: *Crítica de Rosa Luxemburgo del feminismo burgués y de la primera tentativa de la reproducción social*. September 18, 2018 (<https://marxismocritico.com/2018/09/18/critica-de-rosa-luxemburgo-del-feminismo-burgues/>)

<sup>55</sup>Ian Angus: *El origen del eslogan «Socialismo o Barbarie» de Rosa Luxemburg*. November 14, 2014 (<https://marxismocritico.com/2014/11/14/el-origen-del-eslogan-socialismo-o-barbarie/>)

<sup>56</sup>N. Bujarin-E. Preobrazhenski: *ABC del comunismo*, Fontamara, 1977, 134-136.

We cannot dwell here on how history has confirmed this suicidal path to Capitalist self-extermination and how it was denounced by Marxism since the mid-XIX century -being already present in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 when the possibility of the «collapse of the classes in rivalry»<sup>57</sup> was admitted- or how E. Thompson shocked the bourgeois and reformist intellectual placidity with his theory of extermination as «the last stage of civilization»<sup>58</sup>.

The dilemma between «Socialism or Barbarism» that afterwards has risen up to «Communism or Chaos», is the political-strategic expression of the debate about Capitalist «collapse», about the contexts for the revolutionary leap to socialism as the prelude to Communism. Everything points out that we will have to make that leap in a global framework subjected to the seemingly unsolvable contradictions between Capital and Labor. One of these is the destruction of the capacity of the planet and its ability to recycle. Also, the social and ecological catastrophe generated by the irrationality inherent in the law of surplus value that Bernstein rejected its existence, and that Rosa *the Red* demonstrated that it did exist.

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<sup>57</sup> Marx y Engels: *Manifiesto Comunista*. Obras Escogidas. Progreso Moscú, 1978, Volumen I, 111.

<sup>58</sup> E. Thompson: «Notas sobre el exterminismo, último estadio de la civilización», y «Rectificación: Sobre las “Notas...”». *Comunismo*. Madrid N° 8 1982 and N° 9 1983, respectively.