

MY NAME IS ROSA LUXEMBURG

Created by Marianne Auricoste from letters, articles and speeches
of Rosa Luxemburg.

Translated and reworked by Pam Gems.

CAST

ROSA LUXEMBURG

NARRATOR

SINGER/READER

NARRATOR Rosa Luxemburg was born in March 1871, at the time of the Paris Commune. It seems an apposite period, although it was also known as La Belle Epoque. Which it wasn't, at least for most people.

She came from a cultivated, middle class Polish-Jewish family who moved to Warsaw in order that the children might get a good education. While Rosa was still small she suffered a hip ailment and was in bed for a year. Afterwards, there was a slight limp, the illness may have been the reason for her short stature.

Poland, at that time, was under Russian domination. Children in school had to speak Russian, they weren't allowed to speak their own language. Thus, subversion was probably a natural climate of Rosa's life from the start. At all events, although she was a brilliant student, she won no awards at school. She was dubbed rebellious from the beginning. What is very interesting is that from the beginning, from her adolescence, she was drawn, not to the Polish nationalist movement, so much a part of the beleaguered country, but to the Proletariat Party, the Marxist Party, known then as the Socialist Party.... the party of the people.

SONG OR POEM:

There are those who feel it
From the beginning.

There are those who can't accept
An unjust and miserable society.

They feel in their growing flesh
The misfortune of others.

And for them
Everything that doesn't move towards the light
Is dirty.

DURING THE NEXT SPEECH ROSA ENTERS, TAKES OFF HER HAT AND COAT AND SITS DOWN AT A DESK, DOWN LEFT.

NARRATOR While she was still in her teens she had to leave Poland in a hurry to avoid being arrested for political activity. She managed to persuade the local Catholic priest of her desire to convert in order to marry, and her need to escape family opposition. He arranged for her to be hidden under straw in a peasant's cart, and she got into Austria. From there she went to Switzerland, where she could study - men and women were admitted into universities on an equal footing. She was also safe politically. And in Zurich she met a group of young Poles in the same situation as herself, and who shared her revolutionary ideas. One of them was Leo Jogiches, a rich and pedantic young revolutionary who was to become the companion of her life, and, at this time, her lover.

ROSA Darling.. Paris, April the fifth... I'm in the hotel, trying to write the proclamation, and I don't want to do it! It's not a question of the work, it's a question of you! I want to be with you, if I were with you I could do anything! Today at the Adolfs I had such a stabbing need of you that I nearly called out loud... I'm frightened of finding myself at the station, buying a ticket! I try and console myself by imagining our meeting, hurrying back together.. sitting on the sofa side by side, with me in tears as I am now -

I've even had to destroy your letters in case of a search, I don't even have those. Now I can feel you getting irritable because I'm not talking about work. Right. I got the money, and the papers. I like your speech.. just one or two of the expressions... darling, your Polish is terrible.

NARRATOR She completed her doctorate on Polish industrialisation

NARRATOR Zurich University. The whole of this time she was working to establish a people's party in Poland where the Proletariat Party was leading thousands of workers on strike while the Russian revolutionary movement was still being confined to acts of individual protest. But she turned more and more to Germany, then the active centre of socialism, and to the celebrated Kautsk regarded as the theoretician and heir to Marx. She settled in Berlin, contracting a white marriage with the son of German friends in Lubeck. Thus she became a German, able to take part legally in German politics. And she was becoming known, particularly at the Congress of the Internationale. She took on Bernstein, attacking his revisionist theories.

ROSA The whole theory of reform is nothing more than a renunciation of social revolution. It suggests social reform, not as a means of struggle, but as an end in itself. Bernstein makes the point himself in the most striking way when he writes: 'For me the final struggle, whatever that may be, is nothing. The movement is everything.' It's sentimental rubbish!

SONG/POEM

What?

What is she talking about?

Shut up! Sit down!

Who does she think she is?

Anyway, what is she doing on the platform?

Who let her up there?

What do we want women for?

What do they know?

Shut her up, somebody.

Get back in the kitchen.

Besides,

What is she on about?

Getting everybody upset,

That's not what we're here for.

Somebody tell that woman to be quiet. She's out of place.

ROSA

AT HER DESK I've just had your evil postcard. My golden one.. how can you be so vile? I know you're annoyed with me and it hurts.. but you must let me leave in stuff I know is right. Anyway, it's a waste of time your bullying me.. I shan't take the least bit of notice. Still, as you see, I can't stop myself writing to you again.

God I'm worn out! But don't worry.. I may be small, but I'm very tough. My speech went wonderfully well.. once I was up on the platform, I felt entirely at home. I'm going to speak in Dresden and Leipzig..and Berlin! It's easy! If only the rest were so simple.

Darling, cheer up. My days go well.. really. I'm up before eight.. hop out for the papers and letters and back under the eiderdown to read anything important, a cold splash every day, then warm milk and bread and butter on the balcony and an hour's walk in the Tiergarten.. whatever the weather! Work, then a sumptuous 60 pfennig lunch in my room. A rest on the bed, more work or reading .. cocoa at six, work again.. and then out to post my letters.. I love that bit. Back to soft-boiled eggs, bread and butter with cheese or sausage and some more hot milk, and then I attack Bernstein..
aha!

I like working in the evenings. I've made a red lampshade for my lamp and it gives such a lovely rosy glow, and I work near the balcony window so I get lots of fresh air. I wind up the alarm about midnight, get some water for the morning, and hop under the bedclothes. It's so wonderful to be alone.

Look, I'm not coming to Switzerland. You're coming here! I'm counting on the fields to do you good. We'll go for long walks and I shall annoy you by picking all the cornflowers. We'll be like Adam and Eve - you know, when I was in Silesia nobody asked for my papers once, not even when I was doing open political work. We'll get a little house in the middle of a village, or in the forest.. you're to think about it, and be happy, d'you hear? From your loving wife.
Wish me luck in Stuttgart.

ROSA GIVES THE SPEECH FROM "SOCIAL REFORM OR REVOLUTION".

SHE MOVES APART, DRAGS OFF HER HAT, PICKS UP A PEN AND SITS

AT THE DESK, TO WRITE TO LEO.

ROSA Darling, I had to telegraph, to reassure you at once. The speech was an unbelievable success! I changed so much that there wasn't time to learn it, I was in a bad mood, and I really did expect the worst. But somehow, when I got up there and saw so many faces, so many people, I suddenly had so much energy that I went on for an hour and a half without drawing breath! I made them laugh.. they cheered..... and when I got to the verdict at Dresden I got so indignant that I made them angry too, and people began to shout, and women, and men were crying. A good many Russians there.. masses of Poles...AND... (THE NARRATOR HANDS HER A LETTER WHICH SHE RIPS OPEN EAGERLY).... you're pleased with me!

Oh, my beloved,, I've read your letter a hundred times! But what's all this? You say you're just a figment of my strong imagination? What do you mean? My dearest.. everything I do is for you. My first thought when I write, when I speak is.. will it please him? It's your opinion that matters, it's you who give me courage.. when I'm so tired that I can't work, it's letting You down that worries me. The letter to Kautsky was a tribute to You, to your thinking.

Oh my love, we must be together. We're still young, we should be living together as man and wife. Let's do it... have a place of our own.. our own books, our own furniture.. our own front door. Think of it.. a few friends.. regular work.. now and then a day in the country. And even.. could it be possible.. a baby? Dare I mention that?

I wish you'd been with me today. A little boy came up to me in the park. He was so small, so beautiful in his little coat. He stopped right in front of me and looked into my face, and I had this terrible longing to pick him up in my arms and run as fast as I could with him back here.. I wanted to keep him, for my own. Oh my dear, can there never be a baby?

And no more squabbling, right? We'll live a calm and ordered life. Do you know what upsets me most? I feel old and ugly already. It's such a shame.. you won't have a pretty

ROSA wife to take into the Tiergarten. Darling, do come. What's to prevent it. With a bit of good will, it'll be splendid. We'll hide from the world together - I just want you to carry me about in your arms.. you'll say I'm too heavy, as usual.

I don't want to write about work today. Just come. The two of us. Hurray. We won't get too thick with the Germans.

NARRATE Rosa played an important part in the plans of the Internationale. She understood the internal problems of the other parties, particularly the Russians, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. And she began to be heard in the most important party of all, the German Socialist Party. But the enforced separation from the tactiturn Leo, whom she was beginning to outshine, was imposing strains on her loving and passionate nature.

ROSA AT DESK Darling.. Thank God for your letter, I haven't stopped torturing myself, wondering when this mess between us will be over. When I was in Zurich I felt that you didn't love me any more.. that perhaps there was someone else... and that, in any case I wasn't good for you, that I couldn't make you happy.. whether anyone else could... anyway, this idea struck me one night when I couldn't sleep and everything became clear.. your hesitation about coming to Berlin, the way you've been.. your letters.. everything. I decided that I must make it easy for you, not try to influence you. If he loves me and wants to live with me, he'll come, if not, it'll finish. I've been staying in, getting used to the idea of being on my own. And when I cheer up and think of new work, or the spring, or that you could never live with anyone else, I push the thought away in order to survive, and work. And now your letter, and it seems that there IS a future for us. Are you sure? Do you really know what you feel? Are you sure it's not just inertia? I must know.

SONG/POEM

Why are you frightened of me?
 If you're sure of your feelings,
 Why complain?
 You're sure of me.

We only have to live,
Work together at the
Fight which we share.
I want to share with you.

It's not necessary
To ask questions all the time.
There's no battle,
Unless you want it.
Can it be
From the love I need?

I wasn't trying to compete
With the man I love.
I wanted to see our victory
In the reflection of your eyes.
We will win, together.

I admit, I do want to win. But I don't want to rival you.
I want us to push forward together,
And create something out of nothing.

There's so little time,
There's never enough of it.
I can feel death reaching out towards me,
There isn't enough time.

I need you,
You must see it.
So urgently,
You must see that I need you.

There is so much to be done.

ROSA Oh Leo!.. if only we could run off to the moon, or Madagascar....
 somewhere where they've never heard of Polish politics.
 Darling idiot, don't go on about lack of courage and all
 that. You say you want to be 'influenced' by me.. honestly,
 can't you see the affectation of it? You go on being bookish,
 literary, fictional... talk less, stop thinking about
 yourself.. don't think about us, you, the past. Get here

ROSA and start living with me, then everything will be all right. We've been talking for EIGHT years.... we haven't LIVED a single month! I'm so tired of wandering, and yet being alone all the time that I feel myself literally vanishing when I get your letters and see six pages of dissertation on Polish Socialism. I'm so tired. Please let's begin to live, my love. Please.

THERE IS A LOUD KNOCKING AT THE DOOR. SHE SWEEPS UP THE PAPERS AND HIDES THEM.

NARRATOR In 1904 Rosa was condemned to 3 months in prison for sedition against the Kaiser. It was her first prison sentence. She wrote to Karl and Luise Kautsky from Zwickau prison.

ROSA IN PRISON Many thanks for your card. Don't worry about me, I'm very well, surrounded by sunshine, books, and amiability towards life, so don't expect too many letters! Seriously, I'm only allowed to write one letter a month, but I shall get any letters you send, I hope. Give everybody the news... my thoughts are with the union and the miners.. my heart with you.

SHE SITS, DEPRESSED AND FRIGHTENED. BUT ORGANISES HERSELF AND WORKS. LIGHT OR SOUND CHANGE.. HER RELEASE. NARRATOR BRINGS HER HAT AND COAT. SHE RISES, OVERJOYED.. CROSSES TO HER TABLE, SITS DOWN, HAPPY TO BE HOME. BUT HER SPIRITS EVAPORATE IN FATIGUE AND LOWNESS.

ROSA Leo? I came across Mother and Father's letters last night. I read them all again and cried.. I wanted to lie down and never get up again. More than anything else I hated all these politics which stopped me writing to them for weeks on end. I hadn't time! And that's still true. I even hated you, for getting me into all this. Remember how you stopped Madame Lubeck from coming to see me? In case she got in the way? And she wanted to tell me that Mother was dead.

I have to tell you what I feel.
I went out in the sun today and felt a bit better. Yesterday I felt like smashing everything.. the whole political, or

ROSA rather this bloody parody of political life that we lead. What is it but human existence sacrificed to so much intellectual snot! If I believed in God I should think he'd smite us down for it.

NARRATOR In 1905, revolution broke out in Russia. From Berlin, Rosa travelled under an assumed name in an unheated train full of troops sent to restore order. She reached Warsaw, still under Russian domination, fought ardently on behalf of revolution, was arrested three months later and escaped death only by a fortunate intervention on her behalf. She regained Germany by way of Finland, and took part in the Socialist Congress at Mannheim in 1906, having many discussions with Lenin. At this time they were on good terms, though they disagreed over the role of nationalism, and were later to disagree over strategy. The Polish Rosa saw nationalism as diversionary and inimicable to international socialism. Lenin saw the need to offer respite to peoples under Russian domination. Later Lenin, aware of the Russian temperament, saw the need for a strong, disciplined Party. Rosa, from her direct association with the uprisings in Warsaw, and her work in Germany, queried the need for a central elite, and veered towards pervasive influence rather than imposed power. Their different circumstances imposed different solutions. Meanwhile, Rosa kept her German associates in touch with events.

ROSA Friends. You will want to know what has been happening in Warsaw. There have been enormous difficulties with printing, so forgive us if we haven't kept you informed. People are being arrested daily, and there is the risk, all the time, of being arrested and shot, which doesn't help the nerves. Nonetheless, despite everything, the work goes on.. big meetings in factories, pamphlets printed nearly every day, and we are getting the paper out. Strikes are the sores of a revolution, they don't impede it. There is a class feeling, a silent heroism developing here among people that I would greatly love to show to the dear Germans. Workers come from everywhere.. sharing their

ROSA pay with those who are unemployed, even putting in fewer hours in order to share existing work rather than see sackings. It's all done so simply and spontaneously that the Party only hears of it incidentally. And the openness and friendliness between Polish and Russian workers has to be seen to be believed.. just another phenomenon of revolution. In all the factories that are self-run, committees elected by the workers decide on hours, working conditions and pay.. the boss has ceased to be the master.

And don't be misled. Not being in Warsaw you may think the struggle over because we've had to go underground. Not at all. Organisations are growing all the time. Despite the state of siege, socialists are setting up unions of every kind. Relationships are being clarified and the work is going forward as if political liberty were already achieved. And the police can do nothing about it! They're powerless against this spontaneous movement of the masses.

LIGHT CHANGE. ROSA BEHIND BARS.

ROSA My dear friends.... I was arrested on Sunday the fourth, just as I'd got my visa and was ready to leave. Well, it can't be helped.. this way will have to do just as well... don't take it to heart too much. Vive the rev. For the moment I'm incognito but I don't think it will last long. Things look bleak

but never mind, we live in stirring times and anything can happen. Be brave .. pay my rent for me and make light of everything. I'm so proud that in the whole of Russia there has been this oasis where everything has gone so gallantly and so well. We're forming a cell here.

NARRATOR For Rosa this abortive revolution was of the utmost importance. She believed passionately in the necessity to learn from events, from life itself, and for her the strikes were an affirmation of revolutionary struggle. She was the first to see the slide of German Social Democracy towards reformism,

NARRATOR and integration into capitalistic society, and she never ceased to denounce this. As a result, she became somewhat isolated. Though she remained in close touch, she was, from 1907, increasingly denied influence in the decisions of the German party. In 1910, after living in the closest intimacy with his family, she broke with Kautsky, accusing him of reformism, though she was to remain close to Luise to the end. She came a schoolteacher at the party school in Berlin and her courses provided the basis for her major book 'The Accumulation of Capital'. It was during this period that her long liaison with Leo ended. He was briefly unfaithful to her, and this she could not forgive. Although, jealous and possessive, he wished to retain his hold over her, her remorseless clarity preventing her from sustaining a relationship that was not totally committed and face to face. They were to remain close working companions to the end, after a period of passionate mutual bitterness.. and Leo did not long survive her. Meanwhile, despite difficulties of direction, Rosa stayed within the party and wrote and spoke constantly, with increasing popularity.

NARRATOR From the Junius Pamphlet. (Date)

ROSA Christmas(Date.) 'The festive atmosphere in Berlin has been quite spoiled. Pious churchgoers have hardly had time to dry their eyes over the lovely canticle 'O lovely Noel, days of grace' etc. before being upset by the vexing news. The wretched inmates of the local asylum have chosen this of all seasons to to pick up some sort of poisonous infection. They've been dropping like flies, already more than 150 deaths by the time the bells have rung in the New Year. However, it takes more than a catastrophe such as this to fluster our high-minded and courageous authorities at the Town Hall. Coolness and efficiency réîgns. Victims have been identified, verified and docketed. Presented with wholesale agony on the agenda, we see our local councillors dealing with crisis with a steadfastness of classical nature. Odd then, that the affair has created such a stir, such a

ROSA

sense of dissonance, even public resentment. For heavens sakes, why? Everyone knows that workhouses exist. We all know that there are people.. tramps, criminals, prostitutes..who prefer, shall we say, the shadow to the light. But we think of them as inhabiting another world.. distant, somewhere outside society. Between us and them there is a wall. The filth that exists outside is no concern of ours.

And now, this sudden disruption. A break, a tear. It's as if, in the middle of a serene and cultivated evening, something untoward should happen.. something ugly..awful... a glimpse of something horrible. Under the frivolous and heady froth, under the gleaming shine of society, we perceive an abyss... a view of bestiality, of barbarism. A picture of hell. People vomiting in agony before our eyes as they search the dustbins for rubbish. A woman, with a baby at her breast, jack-knifed in spasm. Riffraff, clawing and writhing, soiling the very floors of the asylum itself... painted women staggering from the stews, clutching at us. Wretches whom we normally pass with eyes averted are forcing themselves upon us! They are breaching the wall! A wall, which we see, for the first time, to be made of no more than paper.

Because although the doctors may peer into their microscopes, may even isolate the intestinal bacterium attacking the afflicted, in the end, it makes no difference. In the end the true bacillus, the real murderer of the inmates of the Berlin workhouse.. is capitalism.

Every day in this city, as elsewhere, the poor and homeless collapse and die from hunger and cold on our streets. No-one is perturbed no-one does anything. The corpses are merely removed, recorded in police reports. The life of the city is unaffected. What has made a sensation this time is the size of the phenomenon! Even beggars become a social force when they form a mass. The poor, the sick, the homeless, the abused, the deprived, as individuals are ignored. But not in the mass. The weak, the exploited majority.. majority..... cannot.. cannot attract society's attention.

ROSA Except in the mass. In the mass, attention is paid. Must
 it be only to a mass of corpses?
 In March, 1848, after the barricades, the Berlin workers carried
 their comrades, the dead insurgents, to the royal chateau,
 and forced the despots to look down upon their victims.
 I say we should hoist up the poisoned bodies of our Berlin
 poor. They are our flesh, our blood! We'll carry them into
 this fine New Year as victims of an appalling regime,
 a regime that allows people, human beings, to live and
 die in such misery. Long live the revolution! '

SONG/POEM

Rosa the Red,
 Rosa the rose.

Rosa, the possessed,
 Rosa, the coolest of them all.

Rosa the songthrush,
 Rosa the lion.

Rosa the militant,
 Rosa the lover.

Rosa the modest,
 Rosa the proud.

Rosa with insight,
 Able to tell it.

Rosa the eagle,
 Malevolent eyed.

Rosa the steely,
 Rosa the delicate,

With all the information
 To create a storm.

All the precision
Of a conqueror.

The lover of things,
Of austerity.

Rosa the impudent,
The over-impetuous.

Secretly kindly,
Openly warm.

A burning impatience,
Which knows how to wait.

A driving impulsion,
Held in control.

The dream is on the way,
It will be reached.

Rosa will live,
Rosa will fail.

Not dismantled,
Merely assassinated.

Rosa smiling,
Rosa angry,

In the horizons,
Of our reasoning.

NARRATOR On February the 20th. 1914, Rosa Luxemburg was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for inciting the military to disobedience. She made a speech from the dock.

ROSA I want to say one thing. In his exposition, the prosecutor has seen fit to pay particular attention to my modest self. He even describes me as a great threat to the security of

ROSA the state. He even descends to calling me Rosa the Red. What is more, he attacks my character by implying that if not convicted I shall flee the country. I don't intend to reply to his personal attacks. But there is one thing I want to say to you, and it is this. You do not understand the nature of Socialism. Last year, your colleagues worked overtime in order to condemn our people to five years in prison. Did any of the accused take flight during the trial? They could have done so. Do you think that this avalanche of sentences has made one Socialist waver in his or her beliefs? Our work scorns judicial threat. It prospers and spreads despite all the prosecutors in the world. You fear that I will abscond. If you were in that position.. yes ..yes, I believe that is what you might feel it prudent to do. But a Socialist .. no. Socialists answer for their actions. And they laugh at your sentences..

NARRATOR In June she was brought before the court again, accused of insulting the army. The defence called a million soldier witnesses and the case was adjourned sine die. The feeling of war was in the air. At the end of July, 1914, there were demonstrations calling for peace in several German towns. The Socialists split into three groups, The right wing ..the reformist centre, Kautsky and Bernstein.. and the left... Rosa; and Karl Liebknecht. The approach of war was the dividing factor, forcing people into camps, either towards the growing nationalistic militarism, which Rosa had predicted would end in a major war, or into defiance against capitalistic militarism as being totally against the interests of the working classes everywhere, from whatever country.

On the first of August, Germany declared war on Russia, and on the third of August, on France, On the fourth of August, the Socialist deputies in the German government voted for military credits, in support of the war. The Germans invaded Belgium. In France Socialists entered the government, in support of the war.

Rosa, in prison, scribbles. She hands a paper to the narrator.

NARRATOR READS 'This war is an imperialist war, for the domination of world markets. The German war machine, like those of England and France, seeks to mobilise the most noble instincts, the revolutionary feelings and hopes of the people everywhere into the service of chauvinistic hate. The liberation of the Russian people and the liberation of the German people... that should be the aim of government, not their useless slaughter. The work of government is care for the people, not their murder. We must have an immediate peace treaty, peace without annexation, reparation, guilt or blame. We must have a peace which humiliates no-one, which seeks no revenge nor viciousness. The only peace which will endure is a peace which is based on the international solidarity, the reasonable understanding of ordinary people everywhere, on their fair treatment, and on liberty for the individual.'

On her release from prison a year later, Rosa was quickly picked up again and shut up without trial as a dangerous person. From prison, she wrote her pamphlet: 'The Crisis of Socialism.'

ROSA Everything has changed. What was to have been a simple six weeks advance on Paris has taken on the proportions of world conflict. Immense massacre has become a daily event, without the solution, whatever that may be, advancing one inch. The political bourgeoisie are trapped by the very furies they have invoked. The orgy is over. No more patriotic yelling in the streets, no more rumours of Russian terrorists, bombs under the bridges, the French at the gates of Nuremburg. Where are all the crowds in the cafes who deafened us with national songs.... ran about yelling rape .. looters .. invasion .. to the barricades..... what's happened to the atmosphere of sanctified killing? There's been so much talk of righ^eous bloodletting that the policeman on the corner has begun to look like the last repository of peace and virtue. But now, a change. In the bleak atmosphere of these last, ghastly days one hears a very different sound..... the raucous cries of vultures, hyenas prowling the fields of battles.

ROSA Cocoa.. gunpowder! Ten million tents! Ersatz coffee, a hundred million kilos of bacon .. immediate delivery for cash on the nail! Shells.. pistols .. cartridge belts ... wedding receptions for the widows of soldiers fallen at the front..contracts with the army...

downright irresponsible not to take advantage of such offers.

And the cannon fodder that embarked full of patriotism in August.. September - where are they? Rotting in the cemeteries.. in Belgium.. in the Vosges. The dividends of war are ripening there all right. What a harvest!

You can hardly move for the forest of hands grabbing for the spoils.

Wallowing.. seeping pus ... wading in blood... that is how society presents itself. No longer the smooth, well-licked appearance of culture, philosophy, morals, peace, justice. Now we see the wild beast, the true colours.

German Socialism has been, to quote a journal 'the jewel of conscious proletarian organisation.' We see, in this witches sabbath, its imminent collapse. It is a catastrophe of world-wide implication.

But we are not lost. So long as we learn, we shall bring back victory. And if Socialism, the ^{living} guide of the people, can't learn, then it must give way to those who CAN create a new world.

NARRATOR A statement from Karl Liebknecht, Rosa's main ally on the Left. May 24th. 1915.

'The principle enemy of the German people is in Germany. It is German imperialism, the German war party. This is the enemy that German people must fight. We are one with the German people. We have nothing in common with this government of political oppression, of social slavery. I say.. nothing for the government .. everything for the people.'

The war dragged on, accompanied by food shortages which brought

NARRATOR more and more protests from the German people. The divisions between the Socialists increased. Those in the centre agitated helplessly. But in December 1915 nineteen deputies in the government voted against further war credits. And in January, 1916, a conference of the Left discussed propositions elaborated by Rosa. The theoretical platform of left-wing socialism was shaped, under the name of a left-wing journal.. Spartakus. Thus Spartakism was born. On the 18th. of January, 1916, Rosa was released from prison. On May 1st. she and Liebnrecht took part in a demonstration in Berlin. The police, losing their heads at the sight of so many people in Potsdammer Square, began to lash out at everyone in reach. Liebnrecht, in the centre of the Square, was heard to call out: 'Down with the government, down with the war!' before he was arrested. The cries of 'Long live Liebnrecht!' echoed for hours, together with the shouts 'Down with the war! We want peace!'

Liebnrecht got four years and on the 10th. of July Rosa was imprisoned yet again. She had had five months of liberty, and was to remain in prison for the rest of the war. She and Liebnrecht drew even closer together and became the creators and leaders of the Spartakist movement. In their absence in prison, Leo became the mainspring. From her cell, Rosa kept in touch.

SONG/POEM

So they've buried me in prison,
 For who knows how long.
 Walls as horizons,
 For who knows how many years.

I went where I belonged,
 Where the fighting was.
 I still feel the hands,
 See the faces.

And I needed it,
 The respite.
 They'd nearly done for me,
 In here.

You can't see anyone,
 No one can see you,
 What is a prisoner,
 But somebody absent when called for.

They use my release,
 To get co-operation.
 I shan't get out that way.
 I'll stay impatient.

What keeps me going,
 When I'm away from it all,
 Is thinking about it.
 Thinking about the struggle.

I know how to live here,
 I know how to survive.
 If there's one thing I am sure of,
 It's that this is the way for me.

Spiders will do,
 For visitors.
 They'll do for my love
 Of company.

And when I get out,
 It'll be Because I'm strong.
 No capitulation.
 No being used that way.

Rosa the Red is a flower,
 And what has more courage,
 More will, less grief,
 Than the rose in a storm?

NARRATOR She wrote to Mathilde Wurms, a colleague, from Wroncke Prison,
 December the eighth, 1916.

ROSA In spite of the fact that it made me furious, I'm answering your
 letter at once. Brief as it was, every line revealed

ROSA

how much you've been giving in. All this whining about it not being your fault, about being misled ... take a good look at yourself! Take a good look at people who are really in trouble, really suffering. See how they behave. When you talk about we, who do you mean? Certainly not the world you and I shared not so long ago.. you mean the rubbish you're mixing with now. What's all this nonsense about not going out much? Not much is better than not at all. I can't stand all this subjective, half-assed whining.. it's as though you're a different zoological species, I never could stand it much, and not at all now.

You're ready to take some vital action, you say, but they'd only throw you inside and 'what use would that be?'

You're nothing but Tradesmen, the lot of you! Two pennorth of heroism for a five pound profit, nothing means anything to you unless you can see some immediate, prompt advantage to yourselves. It makes me sick. You haven't the faintest understanding of the kind of simplicity and honesty that can make someone say: 'Here I am. This is where I stand, God help me, I can't do otherwise.'

It's just as well history isn't totally made by people like you or we'd all be under Ghenghis Khan still.

As far as I'm concerned I've never been particularly soft, and lately I'm hard as steel. No concessions from now on, in politics nor in friendships. And as soon as I get out of here I'm going to smash you and your whey-faced lot. How's that for a New Year's wish?

Look, the thing is to try and live like a human being. Which means being firm and clear-headed and in good spirits, whatever the situation. To stay human, to be human means throwing in everything. It means offering your whole life and, at the same time Living.. living every day, every drop of rain, every patch of sunlight. I can't tell you how to do it, I haven't got the recipe, alas, I only know one IS it. And you knew it when we took all those walks together. Remember how the sun coloured the fields? It was important. The world IS a good place despite all the horrors. It would be even better without all the mealy-mouthed moaners.

Well, greetings anyway. You're all right, in spite of everything. Happy New Year.

NARRATOR And she wrote to her friend, Luise Kautsky, who was worried and low, with so many friends in prison.

ROSA Are you in a better state of mind, Luise? Try not to worry, it doesn't help. I remember when I was in prison in Warsaw, I was so weak from a six-day hunger strike that the commanding officer had to carry me into the cage which was the visitors area . . I must have looked like a wild animal in a zoo. My poor brother was crying so much with his face pressed against the wire that he couldn't see me and kept say: 'Where are you? Where are you?' I know you understand my own feelings better now.. thanks. It is a bit like having been skinned alive. I find I shake at the least thing.... a year of Barninstrasse, four months of ceaseless work, and now these seven months of solitude have had their effect. And there are seven more months to go. Never mind. Things will get better, especially when it starts to get warmer. When we're together again I shall sit on your lap in the big armchair and Hans will play Au Clair de Lune, or the second movement from the Pathetique for us, and everything will be all right.

NARRATOR Rosa was still in prison when the Russian revolution broke out in October, 1917. She was deeply excited, and analysed, admired, and criticised the actions of the Bolsheviks, and their measures after their victory. The schism between the Spartakists and the rest of the German Socialists widened. Rosa was happy and elated, but she feared the outcome of the Bolshevik revolution, and their chances for success. Above all, she mistrusted western social democracy.

ROSA Are you rejoicing for the Russians, Loulou? If they don't pull it off it won't be because of the statistics that reflect their backward state of development.. which is what your judicious husband will already have worked out. It will be because the gutless social democratic idiots of the west will sit on the sidelines and let Russia bleed to death. Believe me, even that will be better than being exhorted to live for La Patrie, and die for the flag! The effect of this historical act will transcend centuries, take my word for it. Oh God, I hope I can see it from outside, and not from in here!

NARRATOR And a letter to Sonia Liebnecht, written from Breslau Prison in December, 1917.

ROSA It's a year since Karl was imprisoned, a year since you gave me the lovely Christmas tree. My third Christmas behind bars. Never mind. We are shut up for the night at ten, so I lie on my bunk, dreaming in the dark. And yesterday I felt happy, in spite of the bed as hard as stone, in this cell so far from anywhere that you might as well be in your grave. Nothing but the occasional sound of a train, a long way off, the steps of the guard outside, coughing away in the damp ... all so meaningless. And yet I feel happy. Shadow can be as sweet as velvet if you know how to look at it. And honestly, the sound of the grit under the guard's feet.. that's life, singing. I really do believe that life is a unique secret. I wish I could send you the key, make you happy whatever the circumstance, live with enchantment, as I do - and I don't mean imaginary happiness, I mean real, tangible joy. Oh, if I could only share it!

Oh Sonitssscha! I saw something so awful. They unload the sacks of soldiers' clothing in the exercise yard.. we mend it and clean it and send it back to the army.... sometimes it's soaked with blood. The other day two buffalo were pulling the cart, I've never seen them close before. Poor beasts. The loads are so heavy, I don't suppose they last long. This time they couldn't get over the cobbles through the gate and the soldier beat one of them so cruelly that a woman called out, and asked if he hadn't any pity. 'Nobody's got any pity for me!' he said. They did get through the gate in the end, after a lot more blows -- believe me, Sonitschka, even the hide of an ox tears in the end. I happened to be standing near the one that was bleeding and it looked at me and its poor black face and soft eyes had the look of a child that's been beaten and doesn't know why. I started to weep, I couldn't stop. It was as if we were sisters.. she would never see the green fields of Rumania again, only rotten straw and open wounds ... we were as powerless as each other. And all the time the soldier was whistling the latest tune with his hands in his pockets. There it was, war in all its glory.

NARRATOR READS FROM PROCLAMATION Men and women workers! Demand amnesty for political prisoners! Support those who suffer on your behalf! Fight for those who have led the struggle against the lies and oppression you have suffered these last four years. Their liberation is a task of honour! The western front cannot hold! Militarism is sunk! Capitalism will follow! Arm yourselves for the social revolution!

NARRATOR In November, revolution breaks out in Hamburg and Bremen, and then in Cologne, Hanover, Munich and Berlin. On the eighth of November Rosa is released. The same day there is a large Spartakist demonstration in Berlin. On the eleventh of November armistice is signed by a new government which includes socialists. The republic is proclaimed.

ROSA But what a republic.

NARRATOR Citizens murdered in their beds!

ROSA An old game we all know.

NARRATOR Liebnecht assassinates two hundred officers!

ROSA Liebnecht assassinated!

NARRATOR The Spartakists overrun the Town Hall!

ROSA Spartakists with machine guns attack newspaper offices!

BOTE Liebnecht loots! Liebnecht bribes soldiers! Liebnecht incites revolution!

ROSA The Spartakists are marching on Parliament!

NARRATOR Honourable members forced to flee without hats or umbrellas..

ROSA ... and they're hard to come by nowadays. These are the ludicrous rumours that have been circulating about our movement. Every time a tyre bursts on a street

ROSA

somebody shouts 'The Spartakists are here!' They've even come to Liebnacht asking him to spare their families in the massacre to come!

Nonetheless, behind all the rumours, something serious is happening. There has been an organised campaign to undermine the people and to intimidate the workers and the soldiers, and to strike at the Spartakist movement before people can become aware of its true aims and objectives. This is not a new game. We know who's been setting the people against us. We know that it is the social democrat conformists. They are afraid of us. And with good reason. They hate us.

No Spartakist

has broken into a single building. But we do intend to break down the domination of the class system and the bourgeoisie. And because we don't intend to assassinate anyone, that doesn't mean that we don't intend to push forward remorselessly in the name of the people's revolution. Why are they trying to caricature us as lumpen proletariat adventurers? Why are they screaming pu tsch.. bloodbath .. assassination, and all the other rubbish? I'll tell you why. Because they want to strike at the people's revolution itself. But they'll lose. We are not going to shut up. Some of the less conscious workers and soldiers may be manoeuvred against us for the time being. But it won't last. Nothing.. I tell you, nothing will stop the iron march of revolution. Our voices will be heard! The people will hear us! And it won't be the bakers and the fishmongers and all the others who are being told to fear us who will be swept away.. it will be YOU. it will be you and all the double faced, pocket-lining, counter-revolutionaries who deface the name of progress that you invoke and use as a ladder for your own advancement. It is you who will be unmasked as traitors.. it is You who will be destroyed!

NARRATOR

From the 16th. to the 21st. of December there is a Congress of the Council of Workers and Soldiers. The Spartakist programme drawn up by Rosa is published. At the turn of the year the

NARRATOR Congress of the foundation of the Spartakist Party takes place.

ROSA The Spartakist League is not a party which wants to assert power over the working class. It doesn't seek to make use of workers. It will never take power without the clear and unequivocal voice of the great majority of working people.

NARRATOR From the day of her release, Rosa's life is feverish. From November she is in Berlin, editing the Spartakist journal. Meetings, conferences, articles, speeches .. she never stops. Her face now shows the marks of suffering.. of bereavement.. of prison.

SHE TAKES OUT A PAPER.

NARRATOR Rosa's last letter. It was to Klara Zetkin, her close friend and colleague for many years. Dated January the 11th. 1919.

ROSA I got your long letter today and I can actually answer it! You've no idea what it's been like these last weeks - nothing but work, work and more work, against a background of terror and flight - no time for letters! On the whole, everything's magnificent. The movement spreads all over Germany. Of course, the violent political crisis in Germany hinders us.. it's hard to work systematically - still, a good education for us all, we have to take history as it comes. There is still fighting in Berlin, and we've lost good people... Meyer, Ledebour and, we fear, Leo have been arrested. I must stop now.

NARRATOR On the 5th. of January, the people of Berlin rose against the social democratic majority government of Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann. On the 11th. Noske's troops, mainly drawn from outside the city, entered Berlin and began a pitiless and bloody purge. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht refused to leave. Rosa wrote her last article 'Order Reigns in Berlin'. It appeared on the 15th. of January, 1919.

Probably betrayed, they were arrested during the night of the 14th. of January. They were taken to the headquarters

NARRATOR of the cavalry division of the guards. There they were beaten unconscious, then taken to the nearby zoological gardens, where they were assassinated. Rosa's body was thrown over a bridge. It was recovered from the river some months later.

LIGHT CHANGE.

ROSA Order reigns in Berlin, proclaims the bourgeois press.
 Order reigns in Berlin, say Noske, Ebert. Order reigns in Berlin, say the victorious troops as they are welcomed by the petty bourgeois waving handkerchieves in the streets. The assassins of truce have come to negotiate with rifle butts, over the heads of prisoners beaten to a pulp, their skulls split against a wall.
 Our course fails. Our direction falters. But a new direction can.. must be set up ~ a direction which comes from the people and which the people choose. We are at the height of our challenge. This defeat is a link in the series of historical defeats which constitutes the agony and the force of international socialism. That is why victory will flower out of the roots of this defeat.
 'Order reigns in Berlin'!
 They are fools. This order is built on sand. Out of the chaos to follow, the revolution rises again, with a terrifying roar.
 I was.. I am .. I will be!

(ANONYMOUS LETTER TO ROSA LUXEMBURG, FOR USE AS PROGRAMME NOTE.)

"They dragged you out of prison. I'm told the soldiers beat your head in with rifle butts and kicked you to death. They hid your body, the military witnesses disappeared, and the officers accused of the crime went free.
 We need you. We're fighting for life.. for feeling.. for beauty. We're fanatical in our search for fulfilment,

for life, and that's what your letters are all about..before I read them, I don't think I understood what revolution meant. We need you more than ever now that things are so black. Perhaps we're nearly there; or perhaps it will take a long time. I don't know. But I promise you this. No stone statues .. but your memory honoured in every new season, every bright new spring in the world. Here's to next year."