

“RED ROSA”:
ROSA LUXEMBURG’S UTOPIA OF REVOLUTION

MAURO PONZI

ROSA LUXEMBURG was an outsider in many ways: she vehemently supported internationalism within the Polish political landscape, in which the “national question” of the independence and unification of Polish separated territories prevailed; she argued directly with Lenin about the democracy in the party and in the communist state; her views were in stark contrast to the German Social Democratic party (SPD) on the question of war credits; she was, in theory as well as in practice, a representative of women’s liberation.¹ Her political and intellectual career goes beyond any usual scheme; she has been an exception literally. Therefore, it is difficult to reconstruct the complex origins of her thought, because its philosophical and political sources are mixed and functionalized to an original and peculiar world view, which deals with the political and social situation of that time.

To grasp the Jewish root of Rosa Luxemburg we must contextualise her cultural path and focus on the hidden character of this root. It should be immediately said that the vision of the world of “Red Rosa” was essentially political and that her ambition to change the world was based on a belief in reason and rationality of the political project that reduced all other dimensions, until they almost disappeared. However, just as in the case of Karl Marx, the Jewish matrix of her thought emerges precisely in the utopian radicalism of her positions. In her revolutionary fury, Rosa Luxemburg wanted to establish social justice, she wanted to reconstruct the order shattered by capitalist profit in a palingenesis that, theoretically, had to involve the whole world – hence her internationalism. To clarify why he wrote a biography on Rosa Luxemburg, John Peter Nettle claims: «Two aspects of her life seem to stand out: her death – which retrospectively creates a special, if slightly sentimental, interest in a revolutionary woman brutally murdered by the soldiery; and her disputes with Lenin in which she appears to represent democracy against Russian Communism».²

Red Rosa’s communism is based on a basic experience, on the «soviet republic», on the «councils of workers, soldiers and peasants» as it had been in the first months of the Bolshevik revolution. Not only did this model fail in the German November revolution in 1918, but it had already been replaced by a «dictatorship of the proletariat» which later turned out to be a dictatorship of the communist party in the Soviet Union. Luxemburg understood this transformation very well, so much so that she had argued with Lenin precisely about the lack of democracy in Soviet structures. Red Rosa struggled to «go beyond», to build a model of society that did not exist, not even in the Soviet Union of Bolsheviks. Some people wanted to see a rabbinic root of Marx’s positions, recognizing in his ethical fury, in the thirst for justice, in wanting to put things right, a sort of secularized *tikkun*: namely the secularisation of messianic waiting. The world is “out of joint” – as Derrida suggests in his book *Spectres of Marx*³ – and the German philosopher wanted to

¹ See: *Fifty-one key feminist thinkers*, ed. Lori J. Marso, London-New York, Routledge, 2016.

² JOHN PETER NETTLE, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 1.

³ See: JACQUES DERRIDA, *Spectres of Marx*, New York-London, Routledge, 1996.

“put it right”.¹ Likewise, some scholars see in the exasperated internationalism of Rosa Luxemburg a secularized vision of the messianic waiting deriving from the influence of the religious practice of her maternal family.²

To retrace Rosa Luxemburg’s intellectual itinerary, we must dislocate her position in Poland at this time, we must move the point of observation towards the East, contextualize the years of her formation and the genesis of her political convictions. Looked from this point of view, some of her beliefs and even some political decisions acquire unexpected, incomprehensible values and implications in the German or French cultural context. Luxemburg was born in 1871 in Zamość, near Lublin. She was the fifth and youngest child of a timber trader, Elias Luxemburg, and Line Löwenstein. At the time, Poland did not exist as an autonomous state, but was divided into three parts, respectively belonging to the Russian Empire, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The region in which Rosa Luxemburg was born was part of Russia and so Rosa, technically, was a Russian citizen. Her family, Jewish like a third of the inhabitants of Zamość, was not particularly religious, but followed the line of integration. Her family did not speak Yiddish but Polish and they could also speak German and Russian. Her father, Elias (1830-1900), was a well-off merchant, who studied in Germany, her mother, Line Löwenstein (1835-1897), liked and read German literature.

Zamość was the center of the modernization movement for Judaism called Haskalah, which developed the ideas of enlightenment, a rationalist and liberal movement that considered the use of Yiddish to be a form of self-segregation and preached collaboration with the central government and integration with civil society. Rosa’s attention to hegemonic cultures derives from her family, and in particular from her father, a convinced exponent of Haskalah. The “modernization” of Judaism and the desire to enter fully into “civil society” gave no space for Polish nationalism: the question of national unification seemed to the followers of Haskalah a secondary and “provincial” question. These positions, considered elitist, put the movement in opposition to Polish nationalism and later to the Zionism.³ The Polish bourgeoisie, in which many German or Hebrew surnames are noted, had become the ruling class and did not feel in opposition to the tsarist empire. The primacy of politics in Rosa Luxemburg and the rationality of her choices, her attention to the social dimension and her will to improve the economic-political conditions as well as her lack of interest in nationalism and the “Jewish question” must be traced back to the imprinting of the Haskalah at the time of her education.

Her family moved to Warsaw in 1873, where, from 1884, Rosa attended the female gymnasium, in which Russian was the spoken language. Jews had a dominant position in the trade of textiles, tobacco and clothing and constituted the majority of the craftsmen. At the same time, however, Warsaw was the center of Polish nationalism.⁴ Anti-Semitism exploded in Warsaw on Christmas night of 1881 in a pogrom lasted three days. Wistrich claims that this pogrom shocked young Rosa who, twelve years old, had to go home

¹ SHLOMO BARER, *Doctors of Revolution*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2000, pp. 108-151 and 1170-1178.

² AVRAHAM BICK, *Merosh Tsurim*, Pedut, Jerusalem, 1971.

³ «Rosa Luxemburg, like many other revolutionary Marxists, saw both Zionism and Diaspora Jewish nationalism as fundamentally regressive in the perspective of a coming apocalyptic trash between the antithetical worlds of capitalism and socialism» (ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg. The Polish-German-Jewish Identities of a Revolutionary Internationalist*, «Leo Baeck Institute Year Book», 57, 2012, p. 242).

⁴ «There was also the large influx of *Litvaks* – the Russian and Yiddish-speaking Jews who had migrated from the former eastern parts of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Their growing presence gave rise to constant xenophobic jibes and intensified anti-Jewish agitation – especially given their Russian cultural orientation. This was a demographic and cultural change which would later affect Luxemburg’s political clash with the *Bund*» (ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 244).

alone after school.¹ Many years later she wrote about it to her friend Luise Kautsky: «I imagine that again I must enter an overcrowded gigantic hall, the glaring lights, the ear-splitting noise, the mass of people pushing against me ... and I feel an urge to suddenly run away! ... I have horror of crowds».²

Since the years of high school Rosa showed a combative character and organizational capacity, linked above all to trade union issues. Despite her excellent academic performance, in 1887 the school council denied her the gold medal «because of her rebellious attitude towards the authorities».³ She participated in the clandestine revolutionary group *Proletariat*, reconstituted in 1888 by Marcin Kasprzak, a Social Democratic worker, and she studied the works of Marx and Engels. It was Kasprzak himself who helped Rosa Luxemburg to migrate to Switzerland in 1889 because she was wanted by the Tsarist police. In 1890 she enrolled at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics of Zurich, which she abandoned two years later to matriculate in the faculty of political science. There in 1891 she met Leo Jogiches, a member of the Social Democratic Party, to whom she remained emotionally and politically bound for a long time. In July 1893, Jogiches founded in Paris the Social Democratic magazine «Sprawa Robotnicza» [Worker’s Cause] whose principal animator and director was Rosa Luxemburg. In August 1893 the congress of the Socialist International was held in Zurich, and the «Sprawa Robotnicza» group came into conflict with the majority of the Polish Socialist Party for the question of the national independence of Poland.⁴ Later the group of the magazine founded the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland (SDKP), a party that rejected nationalism in the name of solidarity among Polish, Russian, Latvian workers, in short in the name of internationalism.

In 1897 Rosa graduated; her final dissertation was about the industrial development of Poland in which she demonstrated the strict dependence of Polish economy from Russian economy. This explains, among other things, why she insisted so much on the necessary solidarity of the international proletariat in its struggle against capitalism and imperialism. In Zurich, Rosa came into contact with “Western” socialism, influenced by French and German political exponents as well as Polish and Russian exiles. In some phases of her struggle against the nationalism of the Polish Socialist Party, Rosa Luxemburg also clashed with the *Allgemeine jüdische Arbeiterbund*, a party of Jewish workers who organized Polish, Russian and Lithuanian workers and which was active in Eastern Europe from 1897 to 1935.⁵ The Jewish specificity of the “league” treated the problem of territoriality as a low priority, in the name of internationalism and opposed it to Zionism, according to which the Jewish question should have been solved by abandoning the territories in which Jews suffered discrimination. The *Bund*, however, the League of Jewish Workers, wanted to fight in the territories where Jewish workers lived and worked (Poland, Russia, Lithuania, etc.).⁶ The Bund wanted to “modernize” Judaism and collaborate with the major European socialist parties, it considered emigration to Palestine a form of escapism, and it preferred the political and trade union struggle and proposed that Yiddish should become the national language of Jews. In 1910 the Bund founded, together with the SDKP, i.e. the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland, the

¹ See ELZBIETA ETTINGER, *Rosa Luxemburg: A life*, London, 1988, p. 14 f.

² ROSA LUXEMBURG, *Briefe an Karl und Luise Kautsky*, ed. by Luise Kautsky, Berlin, 1922, p. 181.

³ JOHN PETER NETTL, *Rosa Luxemburg*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 76.

⁴ See JACOB LEIB TALMON, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1981.

⁵ See ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and the Jewish Labour Movement 1893-1903*, in *Jewish History. Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Albert Rapoport, S. J. Zipperstein, London, Halban, 1988, pp. 529-545.

⁶ See J. JACOBS, *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe. The Bund at 100*, Palgrave, Hampshire, Basingstoke, 2001.

youth organization *Tsukunft*. However, the relationship between Rosa Luxemburg and the *Bund* was always very stormy and ambiguous. Rosa vehemently criticized every form of nationalism, considering it an impediment in the internationalization of the workers' struggle and firmly expressed her disagreement with Polish nationalists and her views against the Jewish "separatism" of the *Bund*.

Rosa Luxemburg's position on the "modernization" of Judaism fits perfectly not only in the tension between "identity", typical of Western Jews, but also in the typically German tradition. Heinrich Heine for instance, at the beginning of the 1820s, was active in the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, which, in the name of modernization, also supported the possibility of being baptized as a pure formal act in order to enter in civil society.¹ In short, the Jewish culture in Germany and Central Europe was crossed by movements of enlightenment and rationalist matrix, which had a secular vision and more pragmatic beliefs about Jews' political emancipation and fought for democracy and social rights, overlooking the religious question.² To understand Rosa Luxemburg's position on the Jewish question, one has to place it in the framework of the debate on the national problem among Polish Marxists. They were at first against the claim of national independence, but since the 1890s, the socialists took a nationalist turn. National liberation was placed at the center of all the policies of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and theoretically systematized in the writings of Boleslaw Limanowski and Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz.

Robert S. Wistrich fully grasps the problem of Rosa's "revolutionary internationalist" identity, defining her «Hebrew-German-Polish».³ Indeed these three components coexist and interact in the formation of ideas and in the political practice of "Red Rosa". The question of which of these components prevail is complex and the only partial answer can be: certainly not the Polish one, which must be related to her Jewish root and her "German" formation. She represents another case of that "Jewish-German tension" of which Irving Wohlfarth speaks.⁴ Until now the Jewish root of Rosa Luxemburg has been underestimated or treated marginally – apart from the aforementioned Wistrich and some rare exceptions.⁵

Rosa never talks about her Jewish origins, except in the letters, in which she refers to the Bible and to her mother, born Line Löwenstein, who descended from a family of rabbis.⁶ Wistrich insists that the Jewish root of Rosa Luxemburg emerges if one considers her Polish origin because it is there, in that "decentralized" and delocalized context, that one understands better her positions and above all her "hidden root". The political commitment of Rosa Luxemburg and the foundation of the Polish Social Democratic Party should be placed within the framework of the activities of the Jews of Central Europe who were divided between the search for a separate identity and the affirmation of the

¹ See WALTER HINCK, *Die Wunde Deutschland. Heinrich Heines Dichtung im Widerstreit von Nationalidee, Judentum und Antisemitismus*. Frankfurt a.M., 1990; BRUNO KARSENTI, *La question juive dans les modernes: philosophie de l'émancipation*, Paris, PUF, 2017.

² See WALTER GRAB, *Juden und Demokratie. Zwei Jahrhunderte sozialen und politischen Engagements in Deutschland*, in *Jüdische Lebenswelten. Essays*, ed. A. Nachaman, J. H. Schoeps, E. van Voolen, Berlin, Jüdischer Verlag, 1992, pp. 336-351.

³ R. S. WISTRICH, ROSA LUXEMBURG, *The Polish-German-Jewish Identities of a Revolutionary Internationalist*, pp. 239-266.

⁴ IRVING WOHLFARTH, "Geheime Beziehungen". *Zur deutsch-jüdischen Spannung bei Walter Benjamin*, «Studi Germanici», n.s., xxviii (1990), 80-82, pp. 251-301.

⁵ See ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, New York, Barnes & Nobel, 1976, pp. 76-92; L. JOSEPH HEID, *Juden in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung vor, während und nach dem Großen Krieg, Spurensache. Das Vermächtnis Rosa Luxemburgs für deutsche und israelische Linke*, ed. by A. Timm, Tel Aviv, 2009, pp. 17-46.

⁶ See A. BLICK (SHAULI), *Me-rosh tsurim. Metaknei hevra al taharat ha-kodesh shalshet ha-yihusin shel avot ha-sotsialism*, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 76-90. On Jewish roots of Rosa Luxemburg, see HANNAH ARENDT, *Rosa Luxemburg 1871-1919*, in *Men in Dark Times*, London, Penguin, 1973, pp. 39-61.

rights to enter the “civil society” which then took shape in Zionism and in the *Haskalah* movement. Rosa Luxemburg’s Jewish roots are to be found within this “Enlightenment” and rationalist movement that has a long tradition and of which Rosa’s political activity is the most modern variant.¹ Rosa, unlike her mother, was not able to integrate her Jewish heritage with Polish and German culture. She remained a Jewess without roots, without tradition and without country.²

In her dissertation, entitled *Die Industrielle Entwicklung Polens* (1898), Rosa Luxemburg underlines the economic dependence of Poland from Russia.³ This work provides the economic basis for her political choice and sufficiently explains the aversion or indifference of Rosa for independence and for Polish nationalism; her aversion to nationalism has an economic cause and a political-strategic cause: starting from the interests of the working class, Luxemburg has an “internationalist” view of politics and therefore the Polish national question becomes irrelevant. It should also be noted that, from a strategic point of view, Rosa addressed the economic problems of Poland at that time (and therefore also the problematic relationship of dependence with Russia) drawing on a double theoretical-political matrix: the Marxist and the Jewish one. We must not underestimate all the debate going on in those years on the political role that the Jews wanted and had to play in Poland, in Latvia and in Russia that led to the foundation of the *Bund*.

This double matrix created a tension within Rosa’s political thought, since the internationalist vision did not prevent on the one hand the emergence of an autonomy of thought and even of a political autonomy precisely towards Russia – later becoming USSR – (her polemic with Lenin is known), and, on the other hand, the autonomy of the political action of Jews in Europe, in the territory (Polish or Lithuanian) as an alternative to the search for an extra-European land supported by Zionism. Rosa Luxemburg’s political choice was to achieve a political, social and economic liberation “here and now” both in the sense of revolutionary and trade union action and in the sense of the political action of Jews to reach social emancipation.

Wistrich repeatedly emphasizes that Rosa’s firm statement against any form of nationalism made her unpopular among Poles, Germans and Jews.⁴ Luxemburg declared in very drastic terms her condemnation of the *Bund* and of its separatism in the name of internationalism. However, her attitude (and that of Jogiches) was ambivalent, since there was a tactical difference: they were still organizations that fought for the rights of German, Polish, Jewish and Russian workers. In short, it was one of the many controversies within the workers’ movement of those years, mainly divided between “revolutionaries” and “reformists”, that is, between Social Democrats and Communists.

When the fight between the Polish Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of the Kingdom of Poland, founded by Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches in name of internationalism and against the priority of the “Polish national question”, became violent, in 1910, the PDSF and its press organs («Naprzód» and «Przedświt»), accused Rosa Luxemburg and her party of wanting to russify Poland. Julian Unszlich (Sedecki) defined the party of Rosa Luxemburg and also the *Bund* «Social Litvakism». “Litvak” was a pejorative word in use in Poland to describe Jews. In November 1910 Rosa Luxemburg reacted violently

¹ ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Laboratory for World Destruction. Germans and Jews in Central Europe*, Lincoln-London, University of Nebraska Press, 2007, p. 99.

² See ELZBIETA ETTINGER, *Rosa Luxemburg. A Life*, London, Pandora, 1988, p. 12 f.

³ «In her doctoral dissertation, published under the title *Die Industrielle Entwicklung Polens* (1898), Rosa Luxemburg buttressed her opposition to Polish independence with economic arguments, suggesting that the Kingdom of Poland was dependent on Russian markets and that its “organic incorporation” into the Russian state was in the interests of the Polish working class» (ROBERT S. WISTRICH, *Laboratory for World Destruction. Germans and Jews in Central Europe*, Lincoln-London, University of Nebraska Press, 2007, p. 116).

⁴ R. S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 250.

on the organ of her party «Mlot» [Hammer] fiercely criticizing the anti-Semitism of the PDS and Sedeki. She called the anti-Semitic campaign in Warsaw as a “literary pogrom”: in this anti-Semitism, Luxemburg sees an alliance between Christian clerical reactionaries and liberal progressive thinkers under the common banner of barbarism. Wistrich emphasizes the fact that regarding the “Jewish question” Rosa Luxemburg aligned herself with Marx’s positions, that is, she considered it irrelevant, like any other “national” question, which could only be solved by revolution and then by the liberation of all humanity. This strong political motivation, this fundamental idea that should have solved all other questions, is obviously characterized by a strong utopian component. Many biographers and historians of political thought have accused Rosa Luxemburg of having lost touch with reality and of underestimating the importance of nationalism, of identifying with a ‘homeland’. Her homeland was neither Poland, nor Germany, and not even Judaism, but the revolutionary struggle.

Hannah Arendt, inspired by the biography of Rosa Luxemburg in two volumes published by Nettl, bitterly criticized the mythicization of the figure of the revolutionary because of her extremist positions. Arendt grasps the political aspect of Rosa Luxemburg’s biography and considers her murder to be the end of the revolutionary utopia. She underlines the fact that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were killed by the *Freikorps*, an illegal paramilitary organisation, «under the eyes and probably with the connivance of the Socialist regime then in power».¹ The *Freikorps*, adds Arendt, were «a paramilitary organisation from which Hitler’s storm troopers were soon to recruit their most promising killers». In 1919, they were under Noske’s command, the expert in military and security matters of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Again in 1962 a press release from the Federal Republic of Germany claimed that the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had been completely legal: «an execution in accordance with martial law».² Red Rosa’s death was a point of no return of the German Left. The execution of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht provoked an irreparable fracture in the German left (in particular between Communists and Social Democrats) which condemned all revolutionary efforts to failure and paved the way for the advent of Nazism. Nettl claims that «the first reason for Rosa Luxemburg’s importance in the history of political Marxism is the unique moment of her death». He means that «her death in action ended any possibility of giving effective battle to the Bolsheviks».³ The death of Rosa Luxemburg thus marked the end of every possibility of Bolshevik revolution in Germany, but also the end of every alternative to the dictatorship of the party within the international communist movement. In the space of a few months, many leftist leaders were physically liquidated: Hugo Haase, Gustav Landauer, Leo Jogiches and Eugene Leviné. Even the conservative Walther Rathenau was murdered. All of them were political men of Jewish origin, observes Hannah Arendt, all exponents, in a different way, of the assimilation of Jews to German culture and society.⁴

The political defeat was followed by the condemnation to oblivion. There is almost a *conventio ad excludendum* against Red Rosa: Poles reject her for her anti-nationalism, Jews because of her indifference to the “Jewish question”, the Communists because they considered her «extremist and deviationist», the Social Democrats because she was «revolutionary», the liberals because she was considered a «subversive and bloody terrorist».

¹ HANNAH ARENDT, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 35.

² See «Bulletin des Presse-und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung», February, 8, 1962, p. 224.

³ JOHN PETER NETTL, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 2.

⁴ See HANNAH ARENDT, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 36; R. S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 265.

After Lenin’s death, Stalin decided to «bolshevizize» the German Communist Party and sent Ruth Fischer from Vienna to liquidate the deviationists. The positions of Rosa Luxemburg were not assimilated to those of the «enemies of the people» or those of the «revisionists», they were simply forgotten. Her works were not reprinted except in the Fifties in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) in a limited edition of selected writings, in whose apparatus all her political and theoretical «errors were minutely indicated».¹

Wistrich claims that Rosa Luxemburg’s Jewish root emerged at critical moments, that is when she was attacked by her adversaries, who attributed to her all the defects and criticisms usually reserved for Jews. In short, Rosa was victim of the clichés and prejudices of anti-Semitism. When she arrived in Berlin she came into conflict for political reasons with almost all the members of the SPD and she suffered from the prejudices of those who isolated her and underestimated her as a woman, as a Polish woman, as a Jewess, as it emerges from her letters to Leo Jogiches.² Once again it was the radical opposition between nationalism and internationalism the reason express heavy and violent judgments against the nationalist components of Socialists and against the separatism of the *Bund*. In short, her position on the Jewish question – which sometimes earned her the accusation of anti-Semitism – is linked to the specific Polish situation. Her political strategy consisted of accentuating internationalism to achieve a reversal of capitalism and the establishment of communism that would solve all human problems, including the Jewish question. Criticism considers today this position as characterized by utopian traits and it is easy to see within traces of the secularization of the messianic waiting that was also found in Marx’s thought (and therefore it is easy to identify in this the hidden Jewish root both in Luxemburg and in Marx), but at the time, the political revolution seemed to be imminent—and it actually broke out in 1917 in Russia and in 1918 in Germany. So the Jewish question, according to Rosa Luxemburg, was not on the agenda, there were more urgent issues to tackle. It should be noted that Rosa participated very actively in the convulsive events of those years: she argued directly with Lenin about the lack of democracy in the new revolutionary state, she organized the revolution of workers’ councils in Germany, in 1918 she was the victim of the repression of the troops led by the SPD. Red Rosa was a victim of her utopia.

At the SPD congress in Lübeck, Rosa Luxemburg was sharply criticized by almost every member of the party for her extreme leftist positions. Within the organ of SPD «Vorwärts» the «new arrivals from the east» were criticized with animosity, and also slightly haughtily. Wolfgang Heine, a supporter of Bernstein’s reformism, stated in the congress that Russian and Polish Jews abused German hospitality. Wistrich sees in these statements the emergence of fear towards Russia and a latent anti-Semitism present in the German Social-Democratic party. This means that, within the German Social Democracy, Rosa’s positions were considered connected to a “local” situation like the Polish one. This judgment, which tended to exclude her from the party leadership, were true from a certain point of view: the radicalism with which Luxemburg criticized nationalism stemmed from the whole internal discussion of Polish left parties and the presence of the *Bund*. However, this connection to the Polish situation was also a way of isolating her extremist political positions that provided no time for reformist or revisionist mediation.

When, in 1905, Luxemburg supported the Russian revolution and the assault on the winter palace, the bourgeois press in Germany launched a campaign against “Bloody Rosa”, in which all anti-Semitic elements were used. Satirical newspapers accentuated her physical flaws by producing caricatures that used all prejudices against Jews. Conservative

¹ See HANNAH ARENDT, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 55.

² See R. S. WISTRICH, *Rosa Luxemburg*, p. 262.

newspapers proposed the expulsion from Germany of this «Polish Jewess» that was hurled against the established order. Even within the SPD, in its revisionist component, Rosa was seen as a «Russian patriot». This political judgment resumed the one of the Polish Socialist Party, which had accused Luxemburg of wanting to «russify Poland». Gustav Noske, an expert in military matters of the SPD, who – it is good to remember – was the one who in 1919 commanded the troops that massacred Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht – was particularly critical of these comrades «who came from the East to give lessons to the German proletariat». In his memoirs, published in 1947, Noske claims that there is nothing anti-Semitic in his statement: «Marxist Jews who came from Eastern Europe in the SPD tended to turn socialism into a dogma and the clichés in a faith». ¹ The demonization of radicalism leads him to claim that these «Jews of Eastern Europe» had developed the «secret science» of Marxism that was incomprehensible to German workers.

Red Rosa, Jewess without homeland, conditioned by the fury of her internationalism, fell victim to her own utopia, she tried to realize a social and political revolution, to build a republic of councils of soldiers, workers, and peasants, missing the valuation of the fighting forces. But her choice was rational and conscious. An ideal and political choice that inherits the tradition of the *deutsche Aufklärung* and the *Haskalah*. The “Spartacus League” was led, as we said, by a group of intellectuals, mostly Jews, who believed that the rationality of their positions would be sufficient to mobilize the proletariat against the social democratic government and against the reactionary and imperialist forces. Rosa Luxemburg represents a radical variant of German, Polish, Russian assimilated Jews – Hannah Arendt means of “good Europeans”² – who tried to rationalize, to improve, to “revolutionize” civil society to free oppressed humanity. She fits into the tradition of other German-speaking Jewish thinkers, whose best-known representatives are Heinrich Heine and Karl Marx.

¹ GUSTAV NOSKE, *Erlebtes aus Aufstieg und Niedergang einer Demokratie*, Offenbach am Main, Bollwerk-Drott, 1947, p. 27.

² HANNAH ARENDT, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 42.