

## **Rosa Luxemburg, a life**

The freedom from prison promised me some time for relaxation, but, in fact Karl and I had so much more to do.

I would like to take some time to reflect on my life. As a child, I was bound by a limp and, as I entered my teenage years I continued to excel at school, yet was once denied a medal due to my "oppositional attitude towards authorities". I didn't have many friends and women weren't allowed to study at university in Russia, so I moved to Zurich, at the age of nineteen, where I studied philosophy and politics. When I eventually learned about philosophers such as Marx and other influential thinkers and familiarised myself with the current and historical political economy, I decided to get a little acquainted with the activity of my local socialist movement, and as time progressed, I fervently hoped to remain true to these ideas and ideals. Here, I met exiled Russian revolutionaries and I will never forget the moment when I first looked into their eyes. My favourite writer at this time was the Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who certainly influenced my later interest in writing. I seldom found myself unengaged in a piece of literature, I supposed I viewed it as a form of escapism from the horrors enduring Europe.

Some years later, my partner Leo and I, whose face overwhelmed me with warmth and happiness, formed the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. It was an illegal organisation, so, I spent my evenings and nights in the city, editing the newspaper and pamphlets with which we would share around during the day. The building was in an attractive old area and I often spent hours admiring the view. In Poland I cemented my reputation as a public speaker, educator and organiser, and hoped to enlighten others on science and philosophy, as Francis Bacon once said, "knowledge is power".

In the midst of all this came the revolution in the winter of 1905, where my partner and I were involved and later promptly arrested and sent to jail for around a year. Russian society was at its downfall when it began; voting discrimination, low wages, high levels of unemployment and the defeat of the Russian navy during the war against Japan. That day I had packed my bag with the bare necessities only- a spare dress and a jumper- we knew it'd be a cold day.

I was released from prison one year later and a few years later came the beginning of World War One. It was unforeseen, yet to my dismay, the SPD cowardly supported the outbreak. Following this betrayal, Karl Liebknecht, Clara Zetkin and I co-founded the anti-war Spartacus League, named after Spartacus, a courageous gladiator who led the largest slave revolt against Rome. We distributed anti militarist newspapers, but many members of our group were imprisoned for doing so. We began to lose hope as support for the war was too great. It was a great trial for us- the newspapers, major political parties and the general population supported

the war and killings of thousands. In publications I called myself Junius, named after the founder of the Roman Republic. We eventually organised a vast anti-war rally, attended by 100,000 people at the beginning of May, in 1916.

Then, later on in the year, Rasputin was assassinated by Russian nobles, who had already once tried assassinating him by poison during a dinner and soon later, the Bolshevik revolution ended the authoritarian regime of Russia.

Once World War One had ended, Germany was in an awful state and became associated with shame and humiliation. In the November of 1918, the Treaty of Versailles, a peace treaty demanding Germany to take full responsibility for the war was signed, limiting Germany's army and taking away land.

In January 1919, government officials fired the police chief of Berlin, Eichorn, who had refused to oppose demonstrating workers a few months earlier and the next day he stated in front of 200,000 people 'I got my job from the revolution and I shall give it up only for the revolution'. In protest of his dismissal, and a few other events, 500,000 workers, led by Karl Liebknecht and I demonstrated in the centre of Berlin. We drew our inspiration from the revolution in Russia which had taken place in 1917, a few years earlier, although ours was badly organised leading to many people leaving after just a few hours. It was later crushed by the Freikorps, a right wing paramilitary group, who were sent in by President Ebert. They still had weapons from World War One and support from the government, giving them a huge advantage.

After this, Karl Liebknecht, Wilhelm Pieck and I were arrested and sent to a Berlin hotel. I watched what they did to Karl and Wilhelm, they knocked them out to the point of unconsciousness with rifle butts. I knew that the same method would shortly bring about my own demise.