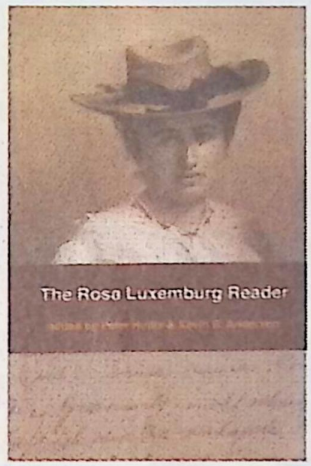
A Passionate Communist

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In words of the American feminist writer Adrienne Rich, "Rosa Luxemburg travels into the twenty-first century like a great messenger bird, spanning continents, scanning history, to remind us that our present is not new but a continuation of a long human conflict changing only in intensity and scope."

The life and work of Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919) speak to the search for a liberating alternative to the globalisation of capital. More than any other Marxist of her generation, Luxemburg theorised capitalism's incessant drive for self-expansion, focusing particularly on its destructive impact upon the technologically underdeveloped world.

The Rosa Luxemberg Reader, edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (First Indian Impression: August 2005, published in India with permission from Monthly Review Press, New York) exhibits the total range of Luxemberg's contributions by including for the first time in one volume substantial extracts from both her economic and political writings.



The Rosa Luxemburg Reader
edited by
Peter Hudis & Kevin B. Anderson

This 447-pages' book contains a 30 pages' long introduction by the editors on life and writings of Rosa and the next pages are categorised into five parts. The editors of this book sketch the entire life of Rosa in several thousands words. From this introduction we come to know that Rosa was born on March 5 of 1871 to a Jewish family in Zamsoc, in the Russian-occupied part of Poland, where she joined the revolutionary movement as a teenager. She attended the University of Zurich from 1889 to 1897 where she wrote a doctoral dissertation entitled The Industrial Development of Poland. In 1893, she attended the Third Congress of the Second International in Zurich, where she encountered such luminaries as Frederick Engels and Georgi Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism. In Zurich, in 1890, that Luxemburg met the Polish revolutionary Leo Jogiches (1867-1919) who became her comrade and lover for the next seventeen years. Luxemburg's independent character came fully to the fore upon her move to Germany in 1898, where she became active in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), then the largest socialist organisation in the world.

Some of the major writings of Rosa Luxemburg are The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to the Economic Explanation of Imperialism (1913), Introduction to Political Economy (1913), where the dissolution of primitive communism from the ancient Germans and the Incas to India, Russian and Southern Africa has been analysed, Slavery (evolution of slavery in Greece and other ancient civilizations) and Martinique (portraying Rosa's fervent opposition to European colonialism in the Caribbean island of Maritinique) have been contained in Part One of this Reader under the title "Political Economy, Imperialism and Non-Western Societies." Part Two titled as "The Politics of Revolution: Critique of Reformism, Theory of the Mass Strike, Writings on Women", in particular, contains her writings on Women from 1902-14 and addresses questions like Women's Suffrage and Class Struggle or The Proletarian Woman. Part Three of the book under the heading "Spontaneity, Organization, and Democracy in the Disputes with Lenin" reflects on Rosa's famous debate with Lenin over the great Russian leader's overemphasis on organisational centralism. Part Four "From Opposition to World War to the Actuality of Revolution" conveys to the readers the anti-militarist character of Rosa and contains her speeches and letters on War and Revolution 1918-19. Part Five styled as "Like a Clap of Thunder" is the aggregate of Rosa's selected correspondence from 1899-1917.

Luxemburg remains the best-known woman theorist in the history of Marxism. She was quite aware of the male chauvinist attitudes that permeated many of her men party comrades and she fully supported the work of close friend's like Clara Zetkin in projecting women's emancipation as an integral dimension of socialist transformation.

Luxemburg had to pass a number of years in prison which took a heavy toll on her health. Her long time comrade and lover Leo Jogiches did not marry her for the 'sake of the party' although Rosa wished to experience marriage and motherhood despite her immensely busy life of politics and writings. The relationship broke after 17 years' of bondage but she did not collapse owing to this emotional shock. She grew a little limp in her legs in childhood because of an accident and she was also hated for her Jewish origin even by some of her socialist party comrades. But nothing daunted her infallible spirit, courage and wisdom. As an anti-war pacifist she was arrested on January 15 of 1919 along with her party comrade Liebknecht by members of the Freikorps, forerunners of the Nazis who had been armed by the then reactionary German government and both were brutally murdered the same day. Her disfigured body was not discovered for months afterwards.

Finally, to conclude in John Berger's tribute paid to Luxemburg, "Intrepid, incorruptible, passionate and gentle. ---She loved workers and birds. She danced with a limp. Everything about her fascinates and rings true. One of the immortals."

The book is available at 'Prothoma' book shop of Shahbagh Aziz Super Market, Dhaka.