

## *Editor's Note*

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Rosa Luxemburg wrote nearly a thousand letters to Leo Jogiches, her lover and comrade. The letters were published in the original Polish in three volumes (*Róża Luksemburg, Listy do Leona Jogichesa-Tyszki, 1893-1914*, Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1968-1971), expertly edited and annotated by Professor Feliks Tych. Professor Tych subsequently found and, in 1976, published some additional letters, two of which are included in this selection.

Luxemburg was a prolific letter writer. She corresponded with her parents in Warsaw and with each of her four siblings, with friends and comrades, and with socialists all over Europe. Almost all her letters are now available and many have been translated into English. However, this is the first English translation of her letters to Jogiches.

In preparing this volume, I had several options: publishing all the letters; selecting letters dealing with Luxemburg's involvement with the Socialist International, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (SDKPiL), the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD); or concentrating on her personal relationship with Jogiches. While the first two would have provided students of the European, and especially the Polish, Russian, and German socialist movements, with a wealth of

material, they would have left Luxemburg as she is at present—faceless.

The third choice would reveal a woman, hitherto unknown, whose sex did not diminish her political stature and whose politics did not interfere with her private life. It would also expose the fragility of the concept that a woman cannot, without giving up love, realize her talent.

Annotations presented another dilemma. Fortunately I was reminded by Elena Wilson of her husband Edmund's remark about a work "knee-deep or waist-deep or neck-deep in huge footnotes." I have kept them to a bare minimum. The only time when Luxemburg allowed herself to be herself was in her letters to Jogiches. To let their spontaneity be diminished by the weight of footnotes would have defeated my purpose.

And finally the translation. If "traduttore-traditore" is true, it is peculiarly true for love letters written in Polish and rendered into English. That love has an international language must be sadly denied by every translator. The Polish language of love with its wealth of tender, intimate words, and the possibility of creating words, inimitable words, private, yet understandable to an outsider, cannot be adequately translated into English due to the differences in cultures and in the morphology of the two languages.

In her letters to Jogiches, Luxemburg does not write, she speaks to him. Sometimes it is a monologue, sometimes a dialogue, that she carries on with herself or with him. This sets the letters apart from those she wrote others. The latter are fine specimens of epistolary art. Moving and witty, sharp and businesslike, their tone is modulated according to the recipient. This is not true of her letters to Jogiches. Technically she follows the pattern of spoken rather than written language; emotionally she knows no patterns, no inhibitions (even if she claims she does), no restraints (except for letters she wrote after she broke with him—then every word is carefully weighed and weighted).

Luxemburg was a woman of impatient temper and great passion. This is reflected in the tone of the letters more than in the words, in the rhythm more than in the language. It is the tone and the emotional cadence that I have attempted to preserve, even if it meant deviating from a merely "correct" translation of the text. I felt I should not be more "correct" than the author lest I risk losing what is most gripping in the letters—authenticity.

I took liberties when a literal translation would have contradicted her spirit. Sometimes I translated the same Polish word in different ways, not to make her language richer but to get closer to her truth; her "dear" may well be also "my dear," or "my love," or "my dear one," depending on her mood and on the mood of the letter. Lexically and etymologically the English "dear" and the Polish *drogi* are identical, yet contextually, and especially conventionally, there is a vast difference between them.

The letters are often a continuation of Luxemburg-Jogiches conversations. They pick up where a conversation left off, and, as in a conversation, Luxemburg often jumps chaotically from one subject to another, leaves a thought hanging, a phrase disturbingly ambiguous. Whether it was ambiguous to Jogiches we will never know. Sometimes he demanded clarification, but given his idiosyncrasies, it did not necessarily mean that he could not follow her. Be that as it may, it would be presumptuous for me to "fill in" where she did not, to substitute an explication for a shortcut. Naturally the letters were not meant for publication. It would have offended Luxemburg to see them published; it would have angered her to see them "elaborated."

Another problem was posed by Luxemburg's mingling of different languages with Polish. She spoke German, Russian, and French, and was familiar with Yiddish, English, Italian, and Latin; her letters at times resemble a Gobelin tapestry. She mingled the languages out of haste, sometimes throwing

in an incorrect foreign word (an additional problem), at others quoting an entire conversation in another tongue. With some exceptions, I decided to sacrifice this multilingual flavor for the sake of clarity and fluency. An inordinate number of footnotes and constant interruptions in the text did not seem to me a good substitute for the pungency of her letters.

The letters, numbered by me, are arranged in four sections in chronological order, with occasional rearrangement for thematic continuity. Each section is preceded by a biographical note. The dates of the letters, mostly missing, were determined by Professor Tych, the Polish editor, after long and meticulous research. A number of my footnotes are based on his findings. Any editorial deletion is indicated by ellipses in brackets: [. . .].

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