Rosa Luxemburg: Letters to Jogiches

THE THREE LETTERS printed below are published in full for the first time in English. (They were originally written in Polish). Rosa Luxemburg was one of the great Marxist thinkers of the turn of the century. Born in Poland on March 5, 1871, she soon became active in the Social Democratic movement. Opposed to the PPS (Polish Socialist Party), particularly on the question of the independence of Poland, she and a group of young Polish revolutionaries formed a revolutionary Social Democratic Party, which Rosa Luxemburg represented for many years in the 2nd International.

Among the members of this Party were a group of people who later became prominent in the early Communist movement, the best known of them being Dzerzhinsky, later leader of the Cheka in revolutionary Russia. In this group was also Leo Jogiches, the recipient of these letters. Leo Jogiches lived for many years in Switzerland and, as will be seen from the letters, an intimate and complex relationship developed between him and Rosa. Jogiches started out as the mentor and critic of Rosa, but she was soon way above him; “an eagle” as Lenin described her. Luxemburg never married Jogiches, because, as shown by the third letter particularly, they grew apart mentally. When Jogiches finally came to Germany the relationship was at an end.

However politically, Jogiches remained a friend of Luxemburg, doing much organisational work, bringing out the famous Spartacus Letters which Rosa Luxemburg wrote from jail in the first world war. He was with Luxemburg at the foundation of the German Communist Party and after her murder, published much of her writing and defended her views.

Rosa Luxemburg has been ignored for many years in the revolutionary movement, and that is not the least of the crimes of the Stalin period, but is at present being read and studied again, having very many important things to teach us in the present period of the revolutionary struggle. These letters give an insight into the personal life of Rosa Luxemburg, an aspect which is not often described.

HENRY ZIMMERMANN

Paris, Thursday evening, (5th April, 1894).

Here I am sitting at home (i.e. at the hotel) at the table and trying to deal with the Proclamation. My Dziodziu! I really don’t feel like it! My head aches and feels heavy, on the street noise and a horrible din, in the room it is hideous. . . I would like to come to you, I can’t go on! Just think, another two weeks at least because next Sunday I cannot prepare for the lecture because of the Proclamation, I must therefore wait until the follow-

1 Term of endearment which Rosa Luxemburg used for Leo Jogiches.
ing Sunday, and then there is the Russian speech and then I must go and see Lavrov.

Dziodziu, when will all this finally end — I am beginning to lose my patience, I am not concerned about the work, but about you! Why did you not come to me here? So that I may have you with me — no work would cause me any trouble then. Today at the Adolfs, in the midst of the discussions and preparations for the Proclamation, I suddenly felt such tiredness and such desire for you I almost screamed out. I fear the old devil (the one from the old times in Geneva and Berne) will suddenly grab me and lead me to the Gare de l'Est. . .

To console myself, I imagine how the engine whistles, how I take my farewells from Jadzia and Adolf, how the train starts to move—when I go to you. Dear God, it seems to me that more than the whole mountain chain of the Alps separates me from that moment Dziodziu, and I shall arrive in Zurich and how you will be waiting for me and how I shall crawl out of the carriage at last and run towards the exit of the railway station and you will be standing in the crowd and you will be unable to run towards me, but that I shall come running towards you!

But we shall not kiss each other immediately, no, not at all, that only spoils it, it doesn’t mean anything. We shall only go home quickly and look at each other and smile at each other. And at home — we shall sit on the couch and embrace each other and I shall burst out crying — just as I am doing now.

Dziodziu, I don’t want this, I want it to happen earlier! My precious, I can’t go on. Unfortunately, as I fear a house search, I have for safety’s sake burned your letters, and at the moment I have nothing which could console me.

If you knew what kind of Polish you write! You will cop it from your wife for that — you’ll see. No doubt you will be angry now — in the whole letter not a word k dyelu.3

Here, to console you, a few words k dyelu. I liked your Proclamation very much, apart from a few formulations. If that informer is really in Zurich, try to meet him and entice out of him this unfortunate issue of the (Workers') Cause4, that is very easy.

Is there no telegraphic news from Wlad (yslaw Heinrich) about the effect?

2 Paris railway station. Trains for Switzerland leave from there.
3 (in Russian in Cyrillic script in the letter) = to the point, relevant.
4 Workers' Cause (Sprawa Robotnicza). Organ of the Social Democrats of the Kingdom of Poland.
Friday: I have received the money, books and letters. Am sitting over the Proclamation. Keep well and write.

Send me the issue of the Ateneum dealing with tariffs and the cuttings, which Janek (Bielecki) had.

Your R.

Berlin, between the 12th and 20th July, 1898.

My only one, why are you so sad? Be of good cheer, for you have a capable little wife. Your wife will work hard and will earn a lot of money and will have enough not only for herself, but will also send each month a little money to her Daddy and another little bit to her Dziodziu, and all this without great difficulty, easy as winking. To be serious, my idea to write short notes about Poland, France and Belgium for Parvus, was simply an idea of genius, for not only does it not take much of my time, not only does it not cost me the least mental effort, not only do I get money for subscription to newspapers, apart from all this I also earn money that way. Because of these notes I must read the newspapers constantly and assiduously, which means I am always up-to-date with political affairs. Furthermore, Parvus is also pleased and thanks me profusely. So in that respect everything is in order. As for my idea for the Leipziger (Volkszeitung) I shall add information about its results to this letter tomorrow after receiving a reply from Sch (onlank). But I shall not tell everything, not in summary form, whether good or bad. So Dziodziu, and don’t you dare to think of re-claiming your security money from the Community! You little scoundrel, that money stays there for your doctorate, and even if you already have citizenship, it shall go straight to the Bank under seal, until you sit for your examinations. For your living expenses, your own money is sufficient, and (if the thing with Schonlank works out) I shall have every month, I estimate, a minimum of 100 Mark. No, no, don’t laugh, please. I shall put the balance sheet on the table at the end of the month.

Probably you have been without a cent in the last few days, but you couldn’t write to me about it earlier, could you? So that I might have been able to send you 10 Marks immediately from my reserves. I am swimming in opulence here at present, I don’t

5 *Ateneum* — literary and political monthly which appeared in Warsaw from 1876 to 1901 and from 1903 to 1905. The letter refers to articles which dealt with the customs duties between Russia and the Kingdom of Poland, and the influence of the Russian customs duties on the economic life in the Kingdom of Poland, and which appeared in the *Ateneum* in 1890, 1891 and 1894. Rosa Luxemburg used them in her doctoral thesis *The industrial development of Poland* on which she was working at the time in Paris.
spend the whole amount, which you send me, although I paid for the newspaper subscriptions out of my own pocket till now, and although, if you'll excuse the expression, I eat like a horse.

You want to know how I spend the days, very well. I awake in the morning at about 8 o'clock, hop into the entrance, grab the newspapers and letters, then crash into the warm bed and read the most important thing. Then I have a cold rub down (regularly every day), then I get dressed, drink a glass of hot milk with a sandwich (the milk and the bread are delivered every morning) on the balcony, then I get dressed properly and go to the Tiergarten for a one-hour walk (regularly, daily and irrespective of the weather). After that I return home, take off my coat and write my notes for Parvus or some letters. I lunch at about 12.30 at home in my room, for 60 Pfennig, wonderful and very nourishing meals. After eating every day, bump on to the sofa to sleep! At about 3 o'clock I get up and drink tea and I work on the notices or write letters (depending on what I did in the morning) or I read.

From the library I got Bluntschli's *History of public law*, Kant's *Critique of pure Reason*, Adler's *History of social political Movements*, well and also *Capital*. Between five or six o'clock I drink cocoa, continue to work or even more frequently I go to the post office to post the letters and notices (I very much like doing this). Towards eight o'clock I eat dinner (don't get a shock): three soft eggs, cheese or sausage sandwiches and a glass of hot milk. Then I start on Bernstein (Oy . . .). Towards ten o'clock I drink another glass of milk (a litre every day). I like working in the evenings. I have made a red lampshade and sit at my desk, close to the open window leading to the balcony; the room looks very pretty in the pink dusk and from the garden fresh air comes through the balcony.

At about twelve o'clock I set the alarm clock, hum softly to myself, prepare the dish of water for my morning rub down, then I get undressed and bump into my feather bed. Satisfied, Dziodziu? So am I. Golden Dziodziu, leave me alone with her Ladyship and those people. Firstly my sister is coming to visit me, then we shall meet you and thirdly it is the silly season here now. In one word, till the beginning of the Parliamentary session and the lectures I neither need or wish to see people, that is people in whom we might be interested.

Furthermore, I have contact with the most important of them by letter; with Br(uhns), Sch(onlank) and Par(vus), through whom

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1 Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, author of a *History of General Public Law and Politics* published in Munich in 1864 and a number of subsequent editions.

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34 AUSTRALIAN LEFT REVIEW—MAY, 1971
I can fix everything that is necessary. When Sch(onlank) comes here, he will introduce me to the best people in the country.

In the meantime I am delighted to have holy rest from all Swabians\(^2\). Agreed? Now as to our reunion. I shall certainly not go to Switzerland, but you shall come here.

You and I, we must both get rid of those impressions from the past; also I tell you again, that I count on you to come to the fields with me, and to annoy you, I shall pick cornflowers in the field. That you'll be able to live there is beyond question. During the whole time I was in Upper Silesia, no human soul asked me for papers, although I openly carried on agitation, but I shall check everything exactly with Bruhn and in the worst case I shall get you some documents for a short time from some Swabian; we shall live somewhere in a little village among fields and woods, alone, like Adam and Eve and in a single room. But for all this we must await the arrival of my sister. Are you looking forward to our reunion?

Now for a few words about business. Write and tell me to whom should I send the thesis. A few corrections I will send you tomorrow, when Humblot returns them to me. Shall I send you something from my newspapers? Although I am pleased that you have to go to the "Leseverein"\(^3\) nevertheless one can't read much there all at once. Perhaps I shall send you the Vorwärts\(^4\) every other day? Because I read it immediately and normally there is nothing in it to cut out. Or the Leipziger Volkszeitung\(^5\). (What a wonderful paper!)

Now Dziodziu, you will write and tell me in detail what you do all day, what you eat and whether you go for walks. And about the doctorate. And make sure you always read a good book, for I don't want a fool for a husband! About the work on Bernstein, in my next letter. Kisses.

Your wife.

P.S.: As far as the Seidels are concerned, everything is all right. I received a letter from them today. I am sorry that your relations with them are strained. I fear that you acted in too petty a fashion. You don't have to keep a strict account in dealing with them, in view of the favours they rendered me; they make no differentiation between us, and their "besceremoniosity"\(^6\) towards you was largely because of their attitude to me.

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\(^2\) Szwaby in Polish — used frequently by Poles to describe all Germans.
\(^3\) Library in Zurich.
\(^4\) Central daily newspaper of the Social-Democratic Party.
\(^5\) Social Democratic newspaper in Leipzig, for which Luxemburg wrote for many years, being on its editorial board for some time.
\(^6\) In Russian in the text = unceremonious behaviour.
My dear Dziodziu! Yesterday morning I received your express letter, this morning the registered one and at lunchtime the second one. Dziodziu, I meant to write you a letter last Saturday without awaiting your reply, but you won’t believe how much work I have all the time now this Press Commission¹ was formed, then I had to travel to Janiszewski because of my article, etc. And in the midst of this whirl, between one job and another, I was not in a condition to write to you, particularly as I had received no reply from you. From now on I shall write in any case whenever I feel like it and time permits.

First of all briefly about Polish matters. My precious, from afar, and without seeing what turn things have taken here, you propose to me an incorrect tactic. To write a la Marysia² or generally to enter into sharp polemics regarding the independence of Poland, that would simply mean to fall into a trap, into the trap which the people from Przedwit³ have laid for me. They are out to cause me to quarrel with the local proletarians, and I am out to see that this doesn’t happen. My reply had been in Morawski’s hands long before your letter arrived. In the note by the Editor in the last issue you will have read about it. They really were unable to print it in this issue. Whether my reply will satisfy you — I don’t know. I think it was the suitable tone for the situation here. Thanks to the Press Commission I will be able in fact to lead the Gazeta Robotnicza, and make the people from Przedwit so ill, that they will leave. Next Sunday we have the second meeting — with Morawski — and the matter will be decided on the spot. You get excited and yet the real problem here is not to allow oneself to be provoked, and to pursue a calm tactic, like the one I started at the Party Congress,⁴

¹ She is talking of the Press Commission of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), in the part of Poland annexed by Prussia, and of its newspaper, the Gazeta Robotnicza (Workers’ Paper).
² Without further particulars.
³ Przedwit — Journal of the Polish Socialists in London.
⁴ Rosa Luxemburg’s joining of the Socialist Party in the part of Poland annexed by Prussia at the 5th Congress was discussed in the Gazeta Robotnicza, in a special editorial headed “About the Congress”, in which her decision is welcomed, but not without some accompanying ill-will, that “Rosa Luxemburg has finally become a Polish Socialist", and that it was pleasant instead of an enemy to meet a friend who adored the same god as ourselves”. This was to stress that the Party remained on the basis of its Programme for the independence of Poland and that Rosa Luxemburg’s joining openly showed that she also supported this programme. (Footnote continued on next page).
to remain firmly in the saddle, so that no one from Przedwit will be able to unseat me.

I don't feel any more like writing about business. But I add that the tactic of explanations from Posen and Upper Silesia, aiming to exert pressure on the Germans, directly contradicts that which is necessary. The point is that the locals find protection with me against the Germans and not the other way around, and as for Posen and Upper Silesia, I have already written to you a number of times, my precious, that nothing can be achieved in this way. People are beasts and they either do nothing or they do it in such a way that one gets sick and tired of it (as happened to me with the Poseners with their idiotic decision, by which they contributed to the dissolution of the PPS). I can only rely on what I do myself.

Now as to private matters. Of course, you are right, that for some time now we have been leading a separate spiritual life, but this in no way began only in Berlin. We were already spiritually estranged for years in Zurich. The last two years in Zurich — it is firmly entrenched in my mind that I felt terribly lonely. But then I wasn't the one who cut herself off and separated herself from you, it was the other way round. You ask whether I have never asked myself: how do you live, how are you going? I can only smile with bitterness. Oh yes, I asked myself these questions thousands of times, and not only of me, but also of you, loudly and consistently. But always got the reply that I did not understand, that you do not rely upon me, that I can give you nothing, etc. Until I stopped asking and showed in no way that I saw anything or was interested in anything. You write and ask how I could believe that you were interested in somebody else, as no one else could satisfy you or understand you. I used to say that to myself too.

But have you forgotten, that you have repeated to me hundreds of times recently that I also do not understand you, that you feel lonesome with me also! Wherein lies the difference, then? Only when I realised that, did I begin to believe that I no longer existed for you. That I reacted differently to such thoughts in 1893? But then, haven't I changed since then? At that time I was a child, today I am an adult, matured person, who understands perfectly how to control herself, even when I have to swallow

Rosa Luxemburg replied to this immediately in a letter to the editor. But in the following issues there was only an editorial note (to which Rosa Luxemburg refers in her letters to Jogiches): "We must ask Comrade Luxemburg to have patience until the next issue for her answer to the article 'About the Congress'." The reply duly appeared and called forth further attacks from the editors and the Party leadership.
my pain with gnashing of teeth, to allow nothing, but absolutely nothing, to be noticed. You simply refuse to believe under any circumstances, that I have matured and am no longer the same person as eight years ago.

Now another thing. You constantly ask how I could have accepted so calmly the idea of ending our relationship. Whether this happened "calmly" I shall not deal with here. But how did I in any case reach that position? I'll tell you the whole secret: I realised particularly after my last stay in Z(urch), that you have completely lost sight of my spiritual make-up, that for you I am only someone who is distinguished from others, at most, by the fact that I write articles. I, on the other hand, particularly here, when I see everywhere the kind of women other people live with and how they adore them and how they pray to them and hold them for God knows what, how they literally subject themselves to their rule, I remember at every step, how you treat me, and it became clear to me that you have lost every appreciation of and have forgotten my mental make-up. And this realisation was for me the most convincing — and the most painful proof that your feelings for me have cooled.

You ask whether I am prepared from now on to lead again a common mental existence with you. The answer is clear, but remember, that it depends on you to realise this. To live in the way we have in the last few years makes it impossible to build a common mental life. If you abandon your present disbelief that I can understand you, that I can interest myself in your inner life, etc., only then is an understanding possible between us. I could still tell you many, many things, but truly I have no more strength to write about all that. When you are here, when we finally begin to live, then we will tell each other everything. And perhaps it will then even be superfluous to talk about it.

I shall write to Forrer in the next few days, this matter is dragging on unbearably. You know, when I think about where we are going to set up our home, I again return to the original plan: perhaps to settle for six months somewhere in the South? For here it is impossible to live together openly, and without that it would be a caricature, which I fear more than loneliness. After all we need quiet in our life together and how can you find it here if you have to hide your relationship? Think about it. What's new with Anna? I did not write to her. You can probably guess why. I kiss you many times.

Your R.

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5 This refers to Rosa Luxemburg's divorce from Gustav Lubeck whom she married only to enable her to obtain German citizenship.