

Letters from our readers

20 January 2011

On "The Nation and the Tucson massacre"

Mr. Martin, keep up the good work. Nowhere else do I read such cogent, factual reporting. If I could articulate my thoughts about the issues you discuss here, this is the form they'd take. Thank you.

Peace,

JLA
Atlanta, Georgia, USA
17 January 2011

I cannot help but think that the only explanation for the performance of the *Nation* magazine, among all the supposedly liberal political magazines with the same tendency, is that it has been infiltrated by the CIA or some other government agency(s), or that it has been corrupted by the influence of foundation money, or both.

CR
17 January 2011

I want to thank the excellent editorial staff of WSWs for all of your outstanding coverage of the Tucson shooting incident. I especially like that you made clear the connection between far right rhetoric and this shooting which took place at a public function of a Democratic representative (even though congresswoman Giffords is not what anyone would call progressive). Thank you also for so clearly showing how the entire bourgeois left has labored to obfuscate this obvious connection between the repeated calls for violence from the far right and this violent act.

I also want to state that I find the corporate media's attempt to attribute the entire incident to Jared Loughner's alleged mental health problems to be highly problematic. As a mental health professional with over two decades of experience in a variety of treatment settings, including a college counseling center, I can attest to the fact that just because Mr. Loughner was mandated to receive a psychiatrist's evaluation before returning to school does not mean he had or has mental health problems. Many people believe that mandated counseling or evaluation are simply tools to prompt someone to get needed help, but they are very often used as ways to marginalize or get rid of troublesome students (or workers, for that matter). Until there is clear evidence, I would not assume that Mr. Loughner is mentally ill.

In spite of our supposedly enlightened attitudes toward mental health care, there are still few things that are as stigmatizing or as sure to cast

doubt on a person's credibility as mandated mental health care.

RW
California, USA
18 January 2011

On "The Tucson shootings: A warning to the American people"

I feel so very sorry for the injured and dead in Tucson. This is just a horrible thing. I don't know whether or not it was politically motivated, motivated by the "second amendment remedies" or targets, or merely a horribly mentally ill young man. One thing I do know, every time something is cut, in any austerity program, the first thing cut is medical care, mental health care, children's insurance, etc.

Even if Loughner's family had called the mental health department in their state, they would have been told there was/is a month or two or three until they can be seen. Sure, the college can kick him out until he comes back with a paper saying he's okay, but how long it would take to get that? Anyone ever try to make an appointment with a psychiatrist?

We need single payer health care in the US. And of course, now that they are talking deficits, health care will be one of the "entitlement programs" cut. It's a shame that these people were killed and injured. It's horrifying. Another thing that is horrifying: if this young man could have had mental health services, this may never have happened.

Patricia G
15 January 2011

On "US Federal Reserve chief rules out loans to the states"

I missed this fine essay the day of its posting, but I am glad I read it! I appreciate the context that Mr. Grey uses, which is the reality, and that is an attack on the working class. The quotes of the writer with the *Wall Street Journal* toward the end of the article are

illuminating, and expose the true feelings of the Wall Street financial parasite class toward the workers:

"lower wages can make US industries and companies overall more competitive...."

If people don't know who the real enemy is, they should now.

Thanks Mr. Grey!

Edward E
California, USA
16 January 2011

On "World economy faces deepening turmoil"

"...the ruling classes everywhere seek to make the working class pay for

the historic bankruptcy of the profit system.”

How devastatingly true is that? While our wages and benefits decrease, their profit margin increases proportionally.

Daniel
16 January 2011

On the persecution of WikiLeaks

We the people of the world cannot accept the bogus charges that the US Government intends to bring against Julian Assange. There needs to be a unified voice of the people saying, “You the government are no better than the Nazi Party’s SS. By prosecuting Assange you are revealing your true nature, therefore we can no longer permit any government of this nature to have any authority or power over its citizens. You must therefore be removed from power, and the same penalties you suggest for Julian Assange should be imposed on those who have suggested them.”

Chris R
Queensland, Australia
17 January 2011

On “The historical falsification of Rosa Luxemburg’s heritage by the German Left Party”

Thank you for the excellent writing.

My understanding of the real tragic element of Rosa’s political life was the inability to build the revolutionary party in time in Germany, forcing her and her cohorts into a tailism of sorts as the revolutionary situation matured in the country.

Lenin’s political genius and success was that he recognized early, and drew all the concrete organizational issues that flowed from his analysis, of the need of a revolutionary party purged of any anarchist or opportunist elements. Only such an internally coherent party could respond in a timely and decisive manner during a revolutionary crisis.

There is a statement of hers to a friend who she was trying to keep from leaving the social-democratic movement of the time, that even the worst worker’s party is better than none at all. Part of her conception was that it was important to remain within the Social Democracy, as being outside of it would isolate revolutionaries from workers.

Even after Social Democracy voted in war credits, the revolutionary wing did not break organizationally with the Right Social Democrats. During the war, as the crisis drove the Left and Right wing apart, the Independent Social Democrats were actually cast out of the party, rather than split with the Right wing.

The Independent Social Democrats contained both an opportunist wing as well as the revolutionary elements, and this would prove to be deadly as the crisis matured in Germany. The Independents split power with the Social Democrats as the war ended, helped to confuse and stymie the worker’s councils as they tried to take power in post-war Germany, and subsequently gave time to the reactionaries to re-stabilize bourgeoisie rule.

It was only nearly two months after the revolutionary situation had matured that Rosa and her cohorts launched the communist party in Germany.

Building a party under the fire of events is tremendously difficult, and

the immaturity of the party let it stumble during the later events in January 1919 in Berlin which lead to her and Karl’s assassination.

This is obviously not a dead question, as the class struggle starts to heat up many confused and amorphous groupings will arise in the first attempts of workers to confront capital. It is no slander to this real revolutionary to both celebrate her history and writings while learning from what was mistaken in her policy.

Coley O
17 January 2011

Thank you for your passionate and intelligent defense of my hero, Rosa Luxemburg. It is astonishing how similar the parliamentary deputies and the treacherous trade union leaders of her days are to today’s Left Party and trade unions in Germany, then as now thrown in sharp relief by an economic crisis which does not allow the opportunistic political maneuvers of former days.

I appreciate especially that you called attention to how Rosa Luxemburg’s “The Russian Revolution” was misused by the Left Party. The work is too often called as witness against the Bolsheviks for whom she actually expressed admiration and full solidarity here and elsewhere. It does not help that so little is known about her (especially in this period) so that the apparatchiks of the Left Party can think of hiding their nakedness behind her skirt.

In fact “The Russian Revolution” was written in jail just after the Bolsheviks led the Soviets to state power and before the failed revolution in Germany on November 9, 1918 and its subsequent learning experience for Rosa, ever quick on the uptake. She sent the work to Paul Levi from jail, but decided to leave “The Russian Revolution” unpublished so as not to burden the Bolsheviks abandoned by their allies inside the country and threatened by Allied invasion outside. It was not until 1922 that Levi actually published it as revenge against his party, which had turned against him.

You note correctly that Rosa Luxemburg criticized in this work the Bolsheviks for their agrarian and national policies, but should have added, I think, how “criticism” expressed in a full-throated manner was one of the glories of socialism before Stalin. As well, Rosa had one more objection: having very limited amount of information in a jail cell of a nation at war, she disapproved of Lenin’s treatment of the Constituent Assembly giving “All power to the Soviets”, as his very maximalist program had it.

She sounded a very different tune just a year later when she addressed the founding convention of the German Communist Party in December of 1918. A short, mildly hunchbacked and stocky Jewish lady who spoke German with a Polish accent, she stirred those who had heard that speech to the core of their being. Many have a left an account emphasizing how she brought clarity and direction to the left which was floundering and weighed down by the opportunists who were attempting to and eventually succeeded in setting up the bourgeois parliament, taking power away from the Worker’s Councils and drowning its leaders in blood.

To take a few step back for the period between her initial assessment of the Bolsheviks and the speech in December 1918, there were numerous revolutionary opportunities wasted. The sailors mutinied in Bremen at the

close of the war and formed a soviet, but the right-wing, parliamentary leader Noske appeared and chilled the situation. This was

the beginning his alliance with the army which crushed various revolutionary attempts, eventually murdering Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, her closest ally, who was rushing about from barrack to barrack in Berlin after the Armistice attempting to set up a People's Republic. He declared it regrettably two hours too late after Ebert appeared on the balcony of the Reichstag and beat him to it in the light manner pseudo-left types talk the talk. Then, evidently, Ebert walked the walk back to his lunch in the parliamentary cafeteria.

This experience behind her, Rosa repeatedly called in her address to the founding congress of the Communist Party for the rule of Worker's Councils which, she emphasized, was devised in imitation of that Soviet which gave Lenin and Trotsky the mandate to form a government in its name. "To those who participated in the Revolution of November 9, and who nonetheless shower calumnies upon the Russian Bolsheviks, we should never cease to reply with the question: Where did you learn the alphabet of your revolution? Was it not from the Russians that you learned to ask for workers and soldier councils?"

She raved against the trade union leader who called on workers to join a fascist force carrying out anti-Bolshevik massacres in the Baltics and cautioned against the many disoriented elements who eventually succeeded in setting up a parliament kept in power by the Freikorps, her murderers. Most importantly she emphasized how the purely political maneuvers which worked in better times were giving way to a powerful new driving force, the economic crisis.

With the massive collapse of industries, there arose in Germany a situation evident in the Mehgreb today, when the masses driven by economic misery move unexpectedly on their own ahead and outside of the constraints of the unions and traditional parliamentary political organizations. This is not therefore the time to try this and that within the limits of what seems possible as many lefties propose. She leaves no room for doubt. "What is incumbent upon us is that we should deliberately concentrate all forces of the proletariat for an attack on the very foundations of capitalist society." All power to the Workers Councils.

There is no minimum/maximum difference in her socialist program, not a cobbling together and compromise among progressive currents, nor an adherence to a period when bourgeois democracy is installed as a stepping stone to socialism at a later stage. No, Rosa Luxemburg, like Trotsky, linked arms with Lenin in this revolutionary period. Fully

aware where the bourgeois parliament that Ebert/Scheidemann were calling for in the Councils would (and did) lead, she finally saw as Lenin had earlier and the Maoists in Nepal fail to see now, that setting aside revolutionary struggle to establish a functioning parliament in the rapidly changing revolutionary situation just gives the bourgeoisie time to regroup, gather its forces and crush the hopes of those who believe in this two stage model of revolution. It happened with sickening frequency throughout the last century.

Unlike the Left Party, Rosa Luxemburg is not thrashing about experimenting pragmatically with this and that to see what political combination works. On the contrary, she makes very clear that she is calling for the immediate implementation of what Marx and Engels called for in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, that is, the appropriation by the Workers Councils of "the means of production and the instruments of power". As for the Left Party desperately attempting to lead the workers and soothe the bourgeoisie at the same time, Rosa Luxemburg surely got their number:

"They will be unable to quench the fires of the economic class struggle and at the same time they will fail to satisfy the bourgeoisie". Their days are numbered.

Rosa Luxemburg is sadly neglected in modern scholarship and put to disreputable purposes by the pseudo-left. As you noted, she deserves better. Lot better.

AL

Toronto, Canada

15 January 2011



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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