

## “About the revolution, the party and the decline of capitalism”

### Discussion on the occasion of the presentation of translated texts by Rosa Luxemburg

Tunis, 14 October 2016

#### Introduction

How relevant are Rosa Luxemburg’s analyses today? How does Tunisia’s left discuss her thoughts within the current context? On October 14, a text collection of Rosa Luxemburg, translated into Arabic, was presented at the North Africa office of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS) in Tunis. The book is entitled “About the revolution, the party and the decline of capitalism”. Three speakers presented different angles. Dr. Zeineb Ben Said talked about the political thought of Rosa Luxemburg and her political analysis of the situation in Europe before WWI, and the lessons that could be relevant for the actual North African context. Mr. Houcine Rhili presented the economic work and analysis, and Dr. Saleh Mosbah contextualized the presence of Rosa’s works and political views in the region since its discovery by the Arab Marxists and its early translations in the 1960’s.

#### About the book

The publication is a collection of texts that were chosen by the “Focus point Rosa Luxemburg at the RLS” head office in Berlin and translated from German to Arabic by Mr. Ahmed Farouk and Dr. Mohamed Abu Zaid.

The texts give an overview of the extended work and reflection of Rosa Luxemburg and present her most important theories, in relation to capitalistic accumulation and its historical conditions, her positions towards social democrats in Germany and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. It is available for download [here](#).

#### The Debate

“The issues and themes Rosa Luxemburg analyzed are no different than what we live today under the neoliberal onslaught, the capitalist supremacy, and the catastrophic results of the implementation of the market economy that turned our countries into a mere outlet to consume the surplus of capitalist production.” This is the conclusion of **Houcine Rhili**, after presenting the basic ideas of Rosa Luxemburg on capitalistic accumulation. He evaluated foreign debt as a colonial tool of the imperialistic European powers used as a Trojan horse with the Middle Eastern countries and India. For Rosa, “Imperialism is simply the political expression of the capitalistic accumulation in its competing enterprise over the non-capitalistic regions that were not geographically dominated yet”. Mr. Rhili drew a parallel between the process analyzed by Rosa in the rise of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and what is happening under Neoliberalism now, a century later.

**Dr. Zeineb Ben Said** elaborated Rosa Luxemburg's concept of revolution. She insisted on its permanent evolution, according to her experience, and to the experiences that took place in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The revolution as social class struggle, not restricted to an elitist political party, mass strikes as a revolutionary tool, a more philosophical understanding of the "Proletariat dictatorship", these open and anti-dogmatic understandings led Rosa to eventually criticize the dogmatic Russian Bolshevik revolution and positions. As for Rosa Luxemburg, grassroots democratic means and freedom were essential success factors, defined as follows: "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently".

**Dr. Saleh Mosbah** shed the light on the discovery of Rosa Luxemburg's thoughts by Arab Marxists. His works were largely unknown to the leftist parties and political formations that were driven into Leninism and Stalinism, and Maoism to a lesser extent. In the beginning, the introduction of her work was perceived as a Trotskyist maneuver to criticize the bureaucracy of Stalinist organization. And the political employment of her translated (incomplete in Arabic) ideas did not provide much room for the discovery of her complete works. Her reflection on the question of the organization of the revolutionary forces for example, could not even be considered, due to the harsh repression of leftist movement, which stressed on absolute centralism in its Stalinist form, by the Arab regimes. Nevertheless, there is a comeback of Rosa's works and ideas thanks to the internet. Through the last decade, there was a rediscovery of her ideas on the revolution, mass strikes and economic analysis. But the available texts are limited in volume, choice and, sometimes, quality, hence the importance of the resumption of the translation.

### **About the speakers**

Dr. Zeineb Ben Said is professor of philosophy in the Tunisian university specialized in sociology, epistemology and gender studies. She is founder of the "Perspective 50 – Memory and Horizons" association, which works on documenting the legacy of the Tunisian leftist movement of the 60's and 70's.

Mr. Houcine Rhili is expert in economic development. He recently published two books: "The economic development in Tunisia" (2015) and "The Tunisian economy between the failure of politicians and the dreams of the poor"(2016).

Dr. Saleh Mosbah is professor of philosophy at Tunis University specialized in political philosophy.