Chapter Thirty-Three

‘Our Broadsheet on Morocco’ (26 August 1911)
Rosa Luxemburg

The previous document in this collection, World Politics, World War and Social Democracy!, was published anonymously but written by Karl Kautsky. The title of the article promised a comprehensive examination of the war-threat, which implied an account of the fundamental connections between the capitalist system and imperialistic adventures such as the Moroccan affair. Certainly, this was what Rosa Luxemburg expected. While Luxemburg later claimed that she was unaware that Kautsky authored the brochure,¹ she was clearly alert to its conceptual confusion and resulting political implications. She condemned the article on two grounds: first, it narrowly conceived the threat of war in terms of rivalry between England and Germany, rather than attributing imperialism to the economic imperatives of capitalism as such; and second, by denying a necessary economic causality, it also implied that imperialism resulted from little more than a mistake in judgement on the part of the propertied classes, most of whom would derive no direct economic benefit. In that case, Kautsky’s article suggested that the ‘idiocy’ of imperialism required Social Democracy merely to explain

¹. Kautsky 1911d. See Chapter 32.
to the bourgeoisie, most of whom were already ‘anxiously concerned for peace’, that colonialism was ‘a bad bargain for everyone’. Kautsky’s conclusion, Luxemburg noted, was that a ‘harmony of interests’ existed ‘between the proletariat and “the mass of the propertied classes”’ – a judgement that she considered ‘comical’ in its simplicity and alarming in its implication that war might be averted by enlightening ‘everyone’ with clever ‘antiwar slogans’.2

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‘Our Broadsheet on Morocco’3

It was surely a source of satisfaction to many comrades that our party, after finally deciding to organise a mass-action against the Moroccan affair, also immediately issued a broadsheet on that subject.4 Brochures are less exciting than public assemblies, but they are much more lasting in their effects; they are meant to enlighten the broad popular masses and – for those circles not yet politically active enough to come to our meetings – to acquaint them with our views. As trailblazers opening our way to circles not yet won over, and as a means of consolidating our hold over those who are already sympathetic towards the Social-Democratic world-view, brochures are extraordinarily important weapons for us, and the Party must pay the greatest attention to writing them.

But anyone who sees the broadsheet on the Moroccan affair cannot help but be reminded of the saying: Nothing good is done in a hurry! If the decision to organise mass-actions against warmongering had not first been delayed and then made in such haste, and if the broadsheet had not been drafted overnight, we probably could have done something useful. Unfortunately, in its present state, this broadsheet, having been distributed in a hundred thousand copies, is almost a wasted effort.

The first thing one would expect from a broadsheet elucidating the Moroc-
can affair from a Social-Democratic point of view is surely a description of

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2. Kautsky answered Luxemburg’s criticism in a note in Vorwärts. See Kautsky 1911e.
3. Luxemburg 1911d.
4. Luxemburg 1911e.