

35 YEARS OF THE
**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**

THE STORY OF
AN INSTITUTION



ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

As part of the open days on 5 and 6 September 2021 — certainly difficult to organize during the COVID-19 pandemic — the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung held a graffiti workshop on the contemporary relevance and reception of Rosa Luxemburg. The theme was no accident: the event was part of an organization-wide celebration of the 150th birthday of our namesake.

The participants in the workshop were either school-children who had arrived in Berlin as refugees, or people from Berlin and the surrounding area with an interest in art.

The workshop was run by Berlin graffiti artist Mark Straek. Guided by the workshop facilitators, participants were presented with fencing panels, which had been set up on the terrace of the Berlin headquarters, and invited to let their imaginations run wild.

On the west terrace facing the Ostbahnhof, Mark Straek and MINA designed a 140m-long piece of street art that quoted Rosa Luxemburg's motto "I was, I am, I will be", in what was surely an unusual setting for her. A portion of the artwork can be seen in the photo.

Collage: Heike Schmelter, using photos taken by Krishan Rajapakshe Thewage

35 YEARS OF THE
ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG
THE STORY OF
AN INSTITUTION

IMPRINT

Published by the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung

Person responsible under German press law: Alrun Kaune-Nüßlein

Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A · 10243 Berlin · www.rosalux.de

ISBN Print: 978-3-911374-33-0 · ISBN Online: 978-3-911374-34-7

Editorial deadline: September 2025

Editorial team: Effi Böhlke, Alrun Kaune-Nüßlein, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan

Photo content: All photos copyright RLS, excluding those on pp. 9, 33, 79, and 110–111 which are copyright Jean Molitor; photos pp. 17, 36, 46, 60, 80, and 86 — copyright held by private individuals; p. 123 copyright Co Wolff

German copy editing: TEXT-ARBEIT Berlin

English translation: Andrea Garcés, Eve Richens, and Rowan Coupland
for Gegensatz Translation Collective

Layout/Production: MediaService GmbH Druck und Kommunikation

Printed on Circlesilk Premium White, 100% Recycled

This publication is part of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung's public relations work.

It is distributed free of charge and may not be used for electoral campaigning purposes.

CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Some Words on this Book	7
1 The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Through the Years: An Essay	9
1.1 Introduction: On The Relativity of Age	10
1.2 Birth of a Foundation	11
1.3 Naming the Foundation	13
1.4 Formative Years: the 1990s and 2000s	16
1.5 Rapid Growth and Expansion: The 2010s	20
1.6 A New Home for the Foundation	24
1.7 Stagnation, Crises, and Conflicts Since the Start of the 2020s	27
1.8 The Future of the RLS, or “I Was, I Am, and I Will Be”	31
2 The History of the RLS from an Inside Perspective	33
Opening Remarks	34
2.1 Paths to the Foundation	34
2.1.1 The Founding Generation	34
2.1.2 The Subsequent Generation	37
2.2 Engagement and Distance: The Party-Affiliated Foundation and Its Affiliated Party	44
2.3 Defining the Different Stages in the Foundation’s Development	50
2.4 Head Office, Regional Offices, and Regional Branches	55
2.5 The Relationship Between the International Offices and the Berlin Head Office	61
2.6 Political Educators Versus Social Analysts	66
2.7 Old Versus Young, East Versus West, Man Versus Woman	70
2.8 Visions of the Future: Between Utopia and Realism	73
3 A Brief History of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung	79
3.1 A Volunteer-Run Association (1991–1999)	81
3.2 Structuring the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung as a PDS-Affiliated Political Foundation (1999–2007)	87
3.3 The Evolution of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung as a Die-Linke-Affiliated Political Foundation (2007–2019)	95
3.4 The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Since 2020: An Age of Pandemic and War	107
4 Timeline: History of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung	123
5 Appendix	139
5.1 Members of the Executive Board, the Board of Trustees, and Founding Members	140
5.2 People Interviewed	141
Editorial Team and Authors	146
List of Abbreviations	146

FOREWORD

Thirty-five years of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung: a good reason for us to celebrate! That a left-wing educational institution should continue to survive and thrive over such a long period of time should not be taken for granted — from its inception all the way up to the present day, it has required a high level of commitment from all those involved.

Thirty-five years of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is also a moment for us to take stock of what we have achieved, where we have come from, how we got here, and where we want to go next. In other words, we want to combine a look back at the history and founding of our foundation and the national and international network that it has built up over the last 35 years, with a look ahead at what might be in store for our foundation, as well as what we would like to see happen.

This book is dedicated to this combination of past, present, and future. Over the last 35 years, the historical conditions in which the RLS operates and the resulting societal problems we focus on have changed significantly. In this shifting climate, we have continually reevaluated our work and honed our methodological and technical approaches with the aim of reaching new target audiences.

Despite these changes, we remain true to our mission. As a left-wing think tank, we combine analysis of current social situations with the development of left-wing alternatives, always aiming to communicate these alternatives in our educational work, introduce new ways of thinking into political discourse, and enact change in our own way. For 35 years, our work has centred on social analysis, proposing left-wing alternatives to contemporary issues, political education, and network building.

At the same time, the existence and growth of the RLS is closely tied to the existence and growth of our affiliated political party, Die Linke and its forerunners. The highs and lows that it has experienced, its successes, failures, and crises — reflected in the federal election results — all affect the scope of our ability to act. Against the backdrop of the party's crisis at the beginning of the 2020s, it initially looked as if our foundation, if not necessarily in a fight for survival, would nonetheless be facing difficult times ahead. However, following the federal elections in February of 2025, we can now say that:

Going forward, the RLS will continue to have a presence as a left-wing think tank, and its ideas are going to shift the country's political discourse, and thus the political agenda!



For the readers of this book, which aims to weave together the history of our foundation with the stories of the people who work here, we hope this makes for an enlightening read and that it will provide insights into our work as one of Germany's party-affiliated foundations.

Heinz Bierbaum

Heinz Bierbaum
Chair of the Executive Board

Daniela Trochowski

Daniela Trochowski
Executive Director

Berlin, June 2025

SOME WORDS ON THIS BOOK

At the beginning of the 2020s, colleagues at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (RLS) had the idea of publishing a book to mark our 35-year anniversary, tracing the history of the foundation as an institution over the years and through changing times. This publication is intended to give people with an interest in politics (who have previously had little to do with party-affiliated foundations) an insight into the workings of these institutions. The aim was to create a handy compendium that provides straightforward information about the unique German system of political foundations and our exciting institutional structure — one that exists only in Germany.

Like many other things, this volume was preceded by a book published on the occasion of the RLS's 25th anniversary, *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm* (I Live Most Joyously amid a Storm), edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, and whose title originates with Rosa Luxemburg herself.¹

Ten years have passed since that publication, and in the intervening years the political climate has changed profoundly, and the foundation with it. This calls for a new analysis and marks an opportunity for the RLS to present itself and its work anew.

And since the history of an institution like the RLS is inextricably linked to the stories of the people who have worked there, this volume is based not only on journalistic and archival sources (primarily the foundation's own Archive of Democratic Socialism, ADS), but also relies heavily on interviews with the individuals who have, in their own unique ways, shaped the foundation. The first interview was conducted in the early summer of 2021, the last in the autumn of 2024.

This book attempts to link the “hard facts” with the soft facts, or in other words: presenting the history of the institution, including its committees and structures, should include the perspectives of those whose actions both preserve and transform these structures.

It is up to readers to judge whether this symbiosis of hard and soft facts has been successful. Everyone involved in this volume enjoyed working on it and gained new insights into topics they had thought they were already well-acquainted with — hopefully readers will feel the same way.

¹ Dagmar Enkelmann, and Florian Weis (eds.), *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm (Rosa Luxemburg): 25 Jahre Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung: Gesellschaftsanalyse und politische Bildung*, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015.

1 THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG THROUGH THE YEARS: AN ESSAY

ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG



1.1 INTRODUCTION: ON THE RELATIVITY OF AGE



Gaza cultural centre.
Exchange partner.
Rosa-Luxemburg-
Stiftung, Ramallah
office; door handle
salvaged from the
rubble of Said Al
Mishal Cultural Centre
in Gaza City; installed
in room 2.05.

We all know the phrase “everything is relative”. This is also (especially) true when it comes to age. And so the question arises: Is 35 years a lot or a little? Is 35 years a long or short timespan? Well, perhaps it is a question of scale. When compared with the whole of human history, 35 years is a fraction of a second. When compared with the average human lifespan, it is more than a third.

In the past 35 years, whether globally, in Europe, or in Germany, an extraordinary amount has happened: The Socialist World System broke up and the Soviet Union toppled; after the fall of the Berlin Wall, which heralded the end of the GDR, German reunification took place in 1990; in 1992, the European Union was founded, before the euro was introduced as its collective currency in 2002.

In Europe and elsewhere, wars continued to break out, whether in what was then Yugoslavia, in former Soviet territory, or in the Middle East; after Al-Qaida’s attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001, the then US president George W. Bush declared a “war on terror”, which led to NATO troops being sent to fight in Afghanistan.

In recent years, catastrophic “climate events” that increasingly threaten people in Europe, not least in Germany, have increased in severity and frequency. The number of people fleeing from regions ravaged by wars and the climate crisis who seek safety in Europe has also increased.

The COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold in early 2020, interrupting the day-to-day workings of the entire world for a considerable amount of time and having long-lasting implications for both individuals and entire societies.

These events and many others have shaken the global and European security infrastructure that had developed in the second half of the twentieth century; old structures and well-established rules have been wiped out, and new ones are yet to have taken their place. The objective uncertainty that has resulted is mirrored in the feeling of uncertainty experienced by many people who feel threatened by a wide variety of factors, whether political, economic, cultural, religious, or climatic in nature.

However, this is grist to the mill for right-wing and right-wing populist forces, who have, for some time now, been gaining significant ground and influence across Germany, Europe, and worldwide. This is evidenced by the gains made by the AfD in Germany, the right-wing governments in several European countries, and most recently the re-election of Donald Trump as US president: a right-wing populist *internationale* is forming and rapidly

gaining power and influence. In summation and as this brief overview has demonstrated, the world has been characterized by growing uncertainty and chaos over the past 35 years. However, in an era when the old, well-established order is dying, this does at least create space for the new!

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung celebrates its 35th birthday in 2025. Were it not a leftist organization, but a leftist activist — perhaps like our namesake, of whom we will hear more later — one might say it was in the best years of its life.

1.2 BIRTH OF A FOUNDATION

The RLS was “born” 35 years ago, in 1990. This makes the RLS a child of the so-called transition period, founded in the year after the fall of the Berlin Wall and thus in the year in which the GDR was finally laid to rest. Like all newborns, she was tiny at the time, and like all newborns, she didn’t have a name at first. It would be a decade until she would receive one.²

Her birthplace was Berlin, East Berlin to be exact, and her first address was Littenstraße 11 in Berlin’s Mitte district; in October 1991 she moved to Rigaer Straße 27 in the district of Friedrichshain, which is where she would grow up. There, a small circle of colleagues, mostly financed by job creation schemes,³ worked under Evelin Wittich, who had had a decisive influence on the development of the RLS since its inception.

However, the foundation already had five older relatives, five party-affiliated foundations that already existed in the “old” *Bundesrepublik* (West Germany). The oldest of the five, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) was founded in 1925 and, at the time of the founding of the RLS, already had 65 years under its belt.

After the Second World War, more political foundations were founded in Germany: the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung (HSS), the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung for Freedom (FNS), and in the 1980s, the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung (HBS). These foundations — which in an interesting coincidence are all named after men — made up the system of party-affiliated foundations. The FES was closely associated with the Social Democrats (SPD); the KAS with Christian Democratic Union (CDU); the HSS with the CDU’s sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU); the FNS with the centre-right Free Democratic Party (FDP); and the HBS with



Weighted doorknocker. Exchange partner. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, Beijing Office; originally from the home of the Chinese Marxist Li Da (1890–1966); installed in room 8.06.

2 For the exact date, please see the timeline provided in this book.

3 The ABM job creation scheme: activities subsidized by the Employment Office.

Alliance 90/The Green Party. Their task is to educate the German population in the principles of modern democracy, and each foundation carries out this task in its own specific way, in line with its political orientation.

A highly unusual system, one that has no parallels anywhere else in the world. In other words, it is one of a kind! There was also no such system in the now non-existent GDR.⁴

DIGRESSION: FOUNDATION OR ASSOCIATION?

This is a good moment to take a quick digression and talk about the word “foundation” (*Stiftung*). With the exception of the FNS, party-affiliated foundations are not really foundations in the true sense of the word. According to common understanding, foundations are usually financed by a capital fund — the Rockefeller Foundation in the USA or the Nobel Foundation in Sweden, for example — and manage their budget according to income generated by interest on their assets. However, party-affiliated foundations are associations that receive a comparatively small proportion of their funding from membership fees. Most of their budget comes from the public purse. The amount of funding they receive is calculated based on the average share of votes their affiliated party received over the last four federal elections.

It is the same for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Unfortunately for us, although Karl Marx, one of our forefathers whom we are always glad to invoke, left us *Capital*, we have been left no capital as such. As is well known, Karl Marx himself was poor and often had to rely on financial support from Friedrich Engels, the wealthy but left-leaning son of a factory owner. And likewise, the RLS finances itself primarily from public funds so it is fair to say that the term “foundation” is, to put it in contemporary terms, a bit fake. In practical terms, the RLS is also an association with memberships and structures like the Executive Board, though these structures have undergone numerous changes over the years.

In 1990, our newly launched foundation was added to the more-or-less established group of party-affiliated foundations. However, as is often the case, this “newcomer” was initially viewed with considerable suspicion by its comrades. But why?

For one, it was the first East German foundation to enter the group. Its founders came from East Germany — from a West German perspective, this was a strange and mysterious land. The founders of the new foundation

4 For information on the system of political and party-affiliated foundations, see the article on the website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and other articles listed there: <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202095/politische-stiftungen/>. See also the “about us” pages on the websites of the respective foundations.

came primarily from an academic milieu, hailing either from GDR academic institutions that had either been completely shut down in the early 1990s, or having been forced out because of “evaluation processes” that were taking place at that time. The founders brought perspectives to the table that were rarely, if ever, present on the other side of the Elbe.

On the other hand, and certainly more significantly, the RLS was the first truly left-wing foundation among the party-affiliated foundations, declaring its affiliation to the SED’s successor party, meaning initially the PDS (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus), which had emerged out of the GDR’s ruling party during the period of transition. And so, from the outset, the RLS was a thorn in the side of its fellow foundations, a red rag to a bull.

Nevertheless, over the years, the RLS succeeded in gaining recognition among its comrades, and in time, collegial relationships have been built up within the newly constituted system of political and party-affiliated foundations. At the various foundations there has been an ongoing cooperation, based on trust, between people working at all kinds of levels, whether they be a chair of the board, managing director, or departmental head.

1.3 NAMING THE FOUNDATION

It was not until the year 2000, when the foundation was already ten years old, that it would receive a proper name. It was, however, not completely anonymous, because there had to be some way of referring to the organization, if only for legal purposes. And so it initially bore the title “Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.” (Social Analysis and Political Education Association).

But is that really a name? Especially when compared to the other political foundations? Probably not. So, the founders began a lengthy search for a name, considering a wide range of possibilities, all drawn from the history of the left-wing labour movement. There were a lot of options, but which was the most suitable? The aforementioned Karl Marx, but also Friedrich Engels, Franz Mehring, Ferdinand Lassalle, Clara Zetkin — many names were brought to the table and their respective merits debated.

Finally, in 1999, influenced by public awareness of the names of the PDS-affiliated Brandenburg and Sachsen *Landesstiftungen* (the local state foundations for Brandenburg and Saxony), the foundation settled on Rosa Luxemburg. And with that, our foundation was named the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

Why, of all the names on the table, did the founders opt for this particular one?



A memorial for greater climate protection. Exchange partner: anonymous; door handle from the dental practice at Bad Neuenahr. In the summer of 2021, climate change contributed to an extreme weather event that flooded the practice with water and mud to its first floor; installed in room 7.03.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ROSA LUXEMBURG

Rosa Luxemburg was born into a Jewish family on 5 March 1871 in Zamość, in what is now eastern Poland, near the border of Ukraine, but which was then in Congress Poland, part of the Russian Empire. At just 18 years of age, Luxemburg moved to Zurich where she initially studied botany, zoology, philosophy, and mathematics, before eventually switching to law and economics.

She was already politically active in Switzerland, writing social critiques that expressed her left-wing and internationalist views. From 1898 onwards, she lived in Berlin, where she became involved with the SPD.

The Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and World War I, were particularly formative experiences for Luxemburg. She analysed these events so as to understand their social, political, and economic roots.

Her most famous works include:

- *Social Reform or Revolution?* (Leipzig, 1899)
- *The Accumulation of Capital: A Companion to an Economic Understanding of Imperialism* (Berlin, 1913)
- *The Russian Revolution: A Critical Analysis* (Berlin, 1922)⁵

The latter book contains the famous, oft-quoted passage that expresses Luxemburg's critical stance toward centralism and revolutionary rigorism, which she was even at this early stage already attributing to the Russian revolutionaries:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for members of a party — however numerous they may be — is not freedom. Freedom is always the freedom of those who think differently. Not because of the fanaticism of "justice", but because all that is invigorating, wholesome, and purifying in political liberty hangs upon this being, and its effect fails when "liberty" becomes a privilege.⁶

Luxemburg's consistent commitment to peace, and her opposition to militarization and nationalism, brought her into conflict with both the rulers of the German Reich and the leadership of the German Social Democratic Party. And so one prison term would follow another. As early as 1914, in

5 Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin publishes Rosa Luxemburg's works and letters. See Rosa Luxemburg: *Gesammelte Werke* (Collected Works), 7 volumes, Berlin (first edition: East Berlin 1970–1975, Berlin 2014–2017); idem: *Gesammelte Briefe* (Collected Letters), 6 volumes, Berlin; idem: *Rosa-Luxemburg-Werke Digitale*, 7 volumes, Berlin, digital edition of the writings of Rosa Luxemburg, 2022–. For Luxemburg's biography, see, among others, Michael Brie, *Rosa Luxemburg Neu Entdecken*, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2019; Ernst Piper, *Rosa Luxemburg: Ein Leben*, Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2018.

6 <https://rosaluxemburg.org/en/positions/#2/>



the first year of World War I, Luxemburg founded the Gruppe Internationale (International Group), which then gave rise to the Spartakusbund (Spartacus League) in 1918. At the turn of 1918/1919, in collaboration with Karl Liebknecht and other like-minded comrades, Luxemburg founded the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). However, on 15 January 1919, shortly before her 48th birthday, Luxemburg was brutally murdered, along with Karl Liebknecht, by members of the Guard Cavalry Rifle Division.⁷

Rosa Luxemburg was a woman of Jewish-Polish descent, a principled internationalist, a peace activist with a combative spirit, a democratic socialist, and a nature lover⁸ who valued her independence: we still identify with the values she exemplified today.

In deciding to use the name Rosa Luxemburg, the RLS became the only party-affiliated foundation with a feminine name – something which says a lot about the current political system in Germany and the necessity to continue fighting for emancipation in this country.

1.4 FORMATIVE YEARS: THE 1990s AND 2000s



Center for
Development of
Community Initiative
and Environment,
Vietnam. Exchange
partner: Rosa-
Luxemburg-Stiftung
Southeast Asia, Hanoi
office; installed in
room 7.03.

In the 1990s, there was no easy name by which to refer to the foundation. This was also a period in which it was not receiving any public funding. Like so many under-tens, the RLS initially had to make do with very little pocket money. The struggle for public funding, combined with the struggle for public recognition in the political arena, would shape the new foundation's childhood and youth. In 1992, the foundation filed a lawsuit with the Federal Constitutional Court which demanded financial equality with other party-affiliated foundations. In 1996, the PDS parliamentary group submitted a major interpellation on the financing of parties and party-affiliated foundations to the Bundestag.

After the PDS party entered the Bundestag following the 1998 federal elections, Christa Luft, then a member of the Bundestag's Budget Committee, received the news that 8 million deutsche marks in global subsidies were expected for the following year. Approximately 4 million deutsche marks were to be paid out upon the foundation being formally

⁷ See also the spectacular film *Rosa Luxemburg* by Margarethe von Trotta (1986).

⁸ Luxemburg's love of nature – she initially studied botany and zoology at university – is further evidenced by an impressive herbarium that she continued to compile throughout her life, even during her frequent instances of imprisonment. See Rosa Luxemburg, *Herbarium*, Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2016.



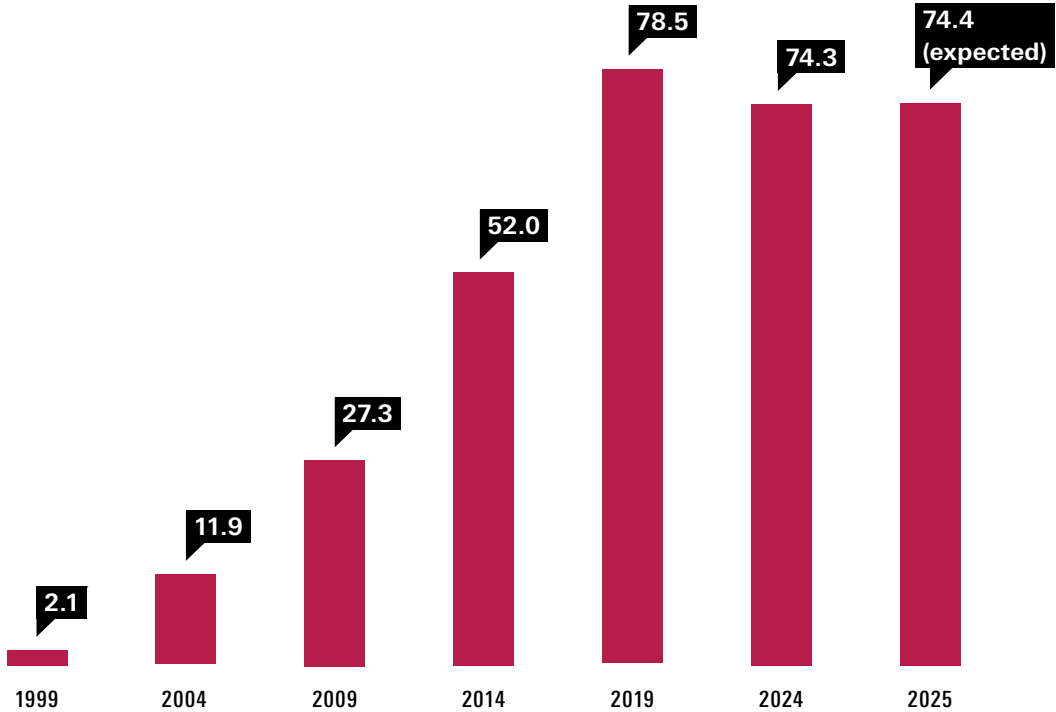
International Women's Day 1999 in the Rigaer Strasse 27 office in the Berlin district of Friedrichshain.

recognized in mid-1999. Nine years after the foundation was founded, it was finally to receive some public funding.

In the 2002 federal elections, the PDS failed to achieve more than five percent of the vote and because of this, the party's sole representatives in the Bundestag were Gesine Löttsch and Petra Pau, elected via direct mandate. Due to the method used to calculate the share that foundations receive from the total available public funds, the election result had a limited impact on the financing of the RLS; it would receive funding for the following legislative period. In the federal elections of early 2005, Die Linkspartei.PDS combined forces with Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit (Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice, WASG); running together they won 8.7 percent of the vote. In the subsequent federal elections, as well as in both state elections, the coalition of Die Linkspartei.PDS and WASG was able to attract a greater share of the votes. As a result, the public funds allocated to the RLS also gradually increased (see Fig. 1).

With this financial support, the RLS experienced a real period of growth, significantly increasing its staff, building its network both at home and abroad, and expanding its activities quantitatively while intensifying them qualitatively.

**FIG. 1: PUBLIC SUBSIDIES FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
BY EUR MILLION (1999–2025)**



In 2010, the now 20-year-old RLS had really found its feet, and thanks to the commitment of its network of staff, activists, and partners, had developed into a respected and influential player in the field of political education.

From the tiny organization that had been founded in 1990, run by volunteers and a small number of in-house staff who were paid for by job creation schemes, the RLS had grown into a “medium-sized organization” that necessitated a new management approach. In 2019, Florian Weis, who until then had been primarily responsible for establishing the organization’s Germany-wide operations, succeeded Evelin Wittich as managing director, a position the latter had held since 1999. In addition to further expanding the RLS head office, the new managing director placed particular emphasis on strengthening the network of volunteers. Until 2012, Weis and Executive Director Heinz Vietze had been shaping the foundation’s activities, before Dagmar Enkelmann, who had then recently left the Bundestag, took over as Chair of the Executive Board in 2013.

DIGRESSION: MAINTAINING A DISTANCE BETWEEN PARTY AND FOUNDATION

As has already been shown at some length, there is a strong connection between the evolution and fate of the foundation and its affiliated party, i.e. the RLS and the PDS (Die Linke since 2007). The foundation can only exist in the long term if the affiliated party maintains a strong and enduring presence in the Bundestag. All party-affiliated foundations are in the same boat. Nevertheless, the party-affiliated foundation and the affiliated party are each independent legal entities with their own goals, tasks, and independent financing. And so, despite close ties to their respective parties, political foundations must adhere to what is called the *Distanzgebot* (principle of distance). The website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education states:

Political foundations base their work on the fundamental values of the political parties with which they are affiliated;⁹ the public see this as legitimate and take it as a given. In 1986, the Federal Constitutional Court¹⁰ confirmed this principle in its ruling on the public financing of political foundations, while at the same time emphasizing the statutory and organizational independence of the foundations. They are not allowed to work directly for the party they are affiliated with. Their educational work must be available to all citizens, and their academic publications and facilities (libraries) must be accessible to all interested parties. The relationship between foundations and political parties is thus characterized by two contrasting positions, that of closeness on the one hand and independence on the other.¹¹

The RLS is also obliged to adhere to these guidelines on maintaining distance between the foundation and its affiliated party. Despite its proximity to the PDS and its successor parties, the RLS has always had to ensure that the shared values of democratic socialism are implemented in their own specific way, namely through analysis and critiques of contemporary social issues and a development of viable alternatives, communicating the results of this work through political education, and network-building at the national and international level. There is to be no direct cooperation with the affiliated party, particularly when it comes to financial matters.

Like other party-affiliated foundations, the RLS is subject to strict scrutiny by its funding bodies, i.e. the relevant ministries: the Bundesministerium des Innern (Federal Ministry of the Interior, BMI) regarding work within

9 See <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202087/parteien-und-parteiensystem/>.

10 See <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202000/bundesverfassungsgericht/>.

11 Section on "Politische Stiftungen und Parteien" at <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202095/politische-stiftung/>.

Germany, the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ), the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office, AA) for operations abroad, and the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, BMBF)¹² for work with scholarships and doctoral fellowships.

1.5 RAPID GROWTH AND EXPANSION: THE 2010s



From Hanoi with Love.
Exchange partner:
Rosa-Luxemburg-
Stiftung Southeast
Asia, Hanoi office;
Door handle from the
former offices of the
RLS Hanoi; installed in
room 7.15.

Die Linke secured what was then its best-ever election result in 2009 when it received 11.9 percent of the vote. The RLS benefitted from this success. In the 2010s, with a growing budget, the RLS was able to rapidly expand its operations both within Germany and abroad, hiring more personnel and, accordingly, rolling out a number of new educational projects. The RLS organized events, produced publications, and allocated funds to partner organizations and external educational institutions such as museums, theatres, and associations.

DIGRESSION: THE HISTORY OF THE RLS: SHAPED BY MANY FACES AND VOICES

A significant increase in staffing was accompanied by a growing diversity among the foundation's employees, creating not just a quantitative increase in personnel, but also a qualitative shift in the composition of the workforce. On the one hand, the personalities active in the foundation are shaped by it — by the *esprit de corps* of a left-wing educational institution. On the other hand, or rather at the same time, their individual perspectives and actions, their "habitus" as Pierre Bourdieu would say, leave a mark on the foundation — and in doing so, help to shape it.¹³

The many volunteers and employees who work for the foundation have their own opinions about its development. They come from very diverse backgrounds, and it is from these backgrounds that the story of the foundation as a whole emerges.¹⁴ The foundation's growth in terms of both staffing and budget, and the expansion of its reach to new countries and

¹² In spring 2025, renamed as the Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt (Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space, BMFTR).

¹³ For more on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, see his works including *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

¹⁴ The very diverse perspectives of RLS staff are discussed in the following chapter, which includes interviews conducted with staff from various branches.

regions, are sources of enrichment — while also creating tension internally that can occasionally create conflict.

Some of these potential sources of conflict are:

- Intergenerational difference: While, as has already been outlined, the foundation was established by an intelligentsia that primarily came from educational institutions in the GDR, over the years increasing numbers of younger people have joined, people who have been influenced by a different set of experiences and perspectives, and who come from more diverse backgrounds. The many students and doctoral candidates who receive scholarships through a multi-stage selection process and who are supported by the RLS each year also help to provide a regular injection of youth into the organization.
- Political educators versus social analysts: Even the founders were not a homogeneous group. They had their differences, partly due to their backgrounds in different GDR institutions such as universities and their departments, the Akademie der Wissenschaften (Academy of Sciences, AdW), party-affiliated institutions such as the Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Academy of Social Sciences, AfG), or the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Institute for Marxism-Leninism, IML). Tensions between more philosophical, sociological-analytical, and more politically oriented approaches were common — tensions which are still being felt today.

The General Assembly is the highest body of the association. One of its primary tasks is to determine the focus of the association's ongoing activities.



- East versus West: The RLS as a left-wing institution is, as with the German public as a whole, also affected by tensions between colleagues from East or West Germany. There remain different perspectives and assessments of events in the past, present, and future which can be traced back to whether one grew up in East or West Germany, differences that persist to this day. These different regional backgrounds often lead to different understandings of events and processes, and sometimes also to misunderstandings between colleagues.
- Men versus women: Although the RLS bears the name of an extremely emancipated and self-confident woman, tensions between the sexes still exist within the organization. Over the years, the number of female colleagues and women with permanent positions on management bodies has increased significantly, and increased attention has been paid to achieving gender balance in voluntary bodies such as the discussion groups and the Academic Advisory Board. Now, women represent a majority across almost all areas of the RLS.
- The head office versus the regional branches (*Landesstiftungen*): There can also be tense relations between the head office in Berlin — i.e. the foundation which operates nationally — and the regional branches operating in the 16 federal states. The regional branches bring their respective perspectives — specific to their region/federal state — to the table and operate as relatively independent organizations. This is a standard phenomenon for organizations whose regional bodies cover large and diverse areas and can also be seen in large corporations. These tensions play out especially in the regional offices of the RLS, as the colleagues who are posted there are employed by the RLS, but at the same time they have to comply with the requests of the regional branches.
- Head office versus international offices: The same applies to the relationship between the Berlin “mother” organization and its foreign subsidiaries, i.e. the international offices. International offices operate relatively autonomously, providing education and building networks in their respective countries or regions and implementing the content priorities set by head office with specific attention to their particular context.
- Employee versus volunteer (also the workers of the RLS versus the association/board): On the one hand, as has been explained, the RLS is a membership-based association (max. 150 voting members) and a board of directors, where the latter has decision-making authority over the fundamental political orientation of the foundation and its management

positions.¹⁵ On the other hand, the RLS is an organization with almost 300 employees in both Germany and abroad (a peak was reached in the early 2020s). And while there are certainly differences of opinion among the workforce, even in this left-wing solidarity-minded organization, the contrast between the organization and the board, i.e. between employees and employers, can be intense, especially when it comes to necessary layoffs. In addition to the Executive Board, voluntary committees at the RLS include the Academic Advisory Board, the discussion groups, and the RLS-affiliated dependent foundations.

- Closeness and distance to Die Linke: This text has already covered the necessity of the RLS maintaining a distance from Die Linke, its affiliated party. However, this distance can be interpreted in various and nuanced ways. Throughout the history of the RLS, the chairs of the Executive Board, the executive directors, and the heads of the various departments have maintained contact to varying degrees with representatives of its affiliated party, and have, to various extents, made use of the grey areas in the rules governing the relationships between foundations and their respective affiliated parties.
- Different political movements: Last but not least, there is a highly diverse range of political views within the Die Linke-affiliated RLS, because there are many different interpretations and expressions of “the left” and what it means to “be left-wing.” In certain circumstances, these differences erupt into conflicts of varying intensity, particularly when there is a lack of consensus over how they are dealt with in the wider society or, as in the case of contemporary crises and conflicts, with people advocating for approaches that are complete polar opposites.

It is these conflicts that have created the inner diversity and richness of the RLS, creating a really vibrant and exciting structure over the years. The RLS is like a large orchestra: the conductor has the task of assigning each player their rightful place and giving them the opportunity to play their part at the appropriate moment, which requires highly attuned leadership skills.

All these sources of tension are woven into the rich tapestry of the RLS, particularly during the foundation’s phases of expansion, when money is flowing in and the entire organization is able to provide space for individual perspectives. In times of stagnation or even necessary downsizing, however, these tensions can come to a head. It was not only in the late 2010s that dark clouds could be seen gathering on the horizon.

¹⁵ See the RLS association statutes: https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/stiftung/RLS_Satzung.pdf.

1.6 A NEW HOME FOR THE FOUNDATION



Gentrification.
Exchange partner: The housing community of Schönhauser Allee 69 in Berlin's Pankow district; Door handle from a block of flats at Schönhauser Alle 69; installed in room 8.13.

Since the 2010s, the RLS had been working on plans for a new headquarters. In the summer of 2014, the Bundestag allocated 20.4 million euros towards the construction of an office and event space for the Die Linke-affiliated education institution. With that, the RLS finally had — like all the other party-affiliated foundations before it — its own publicly funded headquarters.

After a long search, a site was found and purchased close to Berlin's Ostbahnhof (East Station), on the grounds of what had been a parcel and freight station. However, this location was not without controversy, being located not far from Mediaspree, one of Berlin's largest investment projects, where large companies such as Mercedes Benz have been establishing their Berlin offices.

Following a two-phase architectural competition, a general planning team led by architects Kyung-Ae Kim, Max Nalleweg, and César Trujillo Moya was awarded the contract in May 2016. The building permit was finally granted in August 2017, and construction officially began on 30 October 2017 with the traditional "groundbreaking" ceremony. However, as is often the case with large construction projects in Berlin and elsewhere, there were various setbacks which would delay the completion of the building. The eight-storey building was finally finished in the autumn of 2020, and by the end of the year most of the staff from the RLS head office had moved into this modern red-brick building with large windows. Although the RLS was initially to move into Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 (FMP 1, an address which had existed since 1994), due to a local government renaming initiative this was not to last, and instead it found itself on the Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A (SPK 8A). However, the move into the new building took place under strange circumstances, namely in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DIGRESSION: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As it did with all the people and institutions both in Germany and around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the everyday lives and trajectories of both the RLS as an institution and the people who work there. COVID-19 brought operations in the RLS headquarters to an almost complete standstill. With the federal government's announcement of the first lockdown on 22 March 2020, all the events that were planned had to be cancelled. Internally, the RLS founded a COVID-19 task force to break down the Department of Health guidelines and their implications for the foundation, and to assess the situation on a week-by-week basis. Safety measures including social distancing requirements and the observation of hygiene regulations rendered working in the headquarters complicated, and



Moving into the foundation's new headquarters. Not only the office, but also the library and archive had to be packed up, moved, and unpacked. As of 28 October 2020, the official address has been: Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A. Ralf Biebl's sculpture *Rosa Luxemburg* was soon restored and installed at the foundation's headquarters.

only possible within certain limitations. And so, employees were encouraged to work from home as much as possible.

For a short period of time, the foundation was in a state of shock. However, RLS colleagues adapted relatively quickly to the new methods required, both in their internal relationships and at public-facing events. This also provided impetus to the long-planned switch to digital formats, supported by a range of technology that had also been subsidized by funding bodies. We were able to adapt because the event rooms and offices in the RLS headquarters, as well as the team's home offices, were equipped with modern computers, headsets, and cameras, which enabled external access to the foundation's networks and facilitated digital conferencing, mostly via Zoom.

This technological revolution had lasting effects for the RLS and even with the end of the COVID-19 pandemic in early summer 2023, digital and hybrid work formats remained part of the foundation's day-to-day activities — whether for management consultations, board meetings, general assemblies, or public events. There were various reactions to these new developments. Some highlighted the benefits of online participation, as those from both Germany and abroad were able to join remotely and thus actively participate without first having to reckon with some degree of travel. Some people made the criticism that this somewhat diminished the social aspect of work and volunteering, mourning the loss of the conversations one might have before and after events or during breaks, when people also talk about things besides the topic at hand.

The foundation broadcast the video series *Ausnahme und Zustand* (State and Exception) a pandemic-era live weekly talk show that covered contemporary political and social debates.



1.7 STAGNATION, CRISES, AND CONFLICTS SINCE THE START OF THE 2020s

At the beginning of the 2020s, the RLS went through a period of rapid development and transformation. It began with a change in the foundation's leadership. Daniela Trochowski was elected as the new Executive Director at the RLS General Assembly in November 2019. She assumed the post in February 2020, bringing to the role her experience as the former Minister of Finance for the State of Brandenburg. At the RLS General Assembly of November 2022, the foundation elected Heinz Bierbaum as Chair of the Executive Board. Bierbaum brings an international perspective to the role, which he developed most recently as president of the Party of the European Left (EL). These changes marked the end of an era for the RLS, one that had been shaped by Dagmar Enkelmann as Chair of the Executive Board from 2013–2022 and Florian Weis as Executive Director from 2009–2019.



Opening the doors of government.
Exchange partner:
Thuringian State
Chancellery, Erfurt;
installed in room 5.15

As for Die Linke, it was afflicted by rising tensions and increasing conflicts. The public airing of these conflicts in the media negatively impacted the party's image and this was reflected in poor election results on both federal and state levels. The dark clouds on the horizon were growing darker still. After achieving a good result of 11.9 percent in the 2009 federal elections, Die Linke's share of the vote continued to decline, receiving 8.6 percent in 2013. It improved its share to 9.2 percent in 2017. However in 2021 it would only achieve 4.9 percent, and it was only through the election of three Bundestag members via direct mandate that it could form a parliamentary group.¹⁶ Die Linke's stagnant or indeed waning vote share, even accounting for this not having an immediate effect, resulted in a freeze or reduction of the RLS budget.

DIGRESSION: THE FOUNDATION IN THE WIDER CONTEXT

As covered in the previous sections, the RLS does not exist in a vacuum. It is a registered non-profit association with specific objectives, regulations, and structures, resulting in its own internal logic. The RLS also interacts with its immediate and wider social environment, which determines what is possible to achieve (and what not) — environments which the RLS also has an impact on, or seeks to influence. Fundamental changes in the socio-political context result in changes in the content of the work of the RLS and ultimately, even in its structures and size.

16 See <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/368864/umfrage/stimmenanteile-der-linken-bei-den-bundestagswahlen/>.

The founding phase of the RLS was marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the post-reunification period, as well as the conflicts associated with German reunification. However, the success of the RLS, as an organization closely associated with Die Linke and its predecessor parties (SED/PDS, later PDS), was linked to the ups and downs of its affiliated party. Despite the requirement for distance between the party and its affiliated foundation, the presence of the affiliated party in the German Bundestag is a necessary condition for any party-affiliated foundation's existence — its budget and the opportunities the budget creates fundamentally depend on this. And so, despite the independence and unique internal logics of both party and foundation, a kind of parallelism can be observed in the development of the two entities.

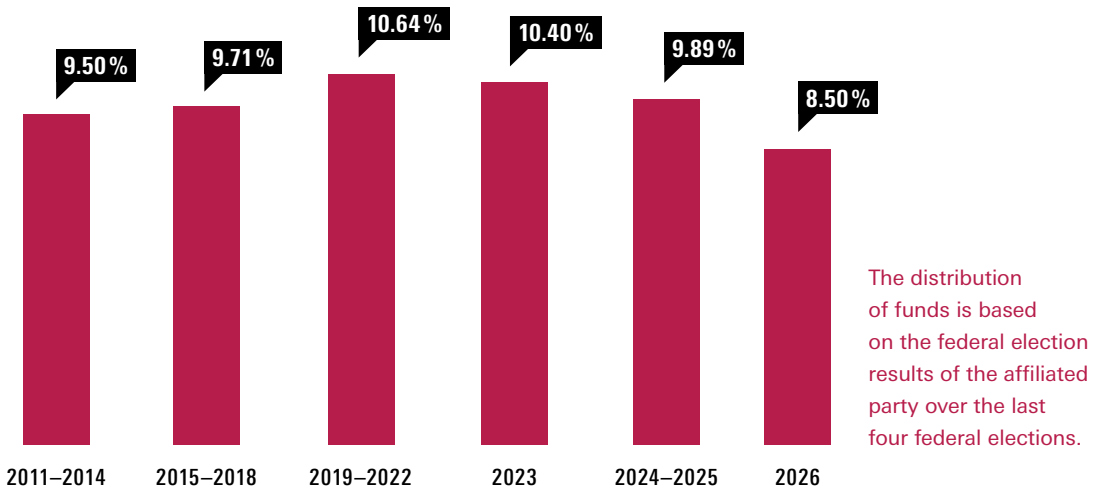
As was already explained, the crisis within Die Linke, its internal divisions, and the public airing of these conflicts in the media — ongoing since the early 2020s — have caused many voters to doubt whether Die Linke remains capable of addressing its problems.

Since the mid-2010s, the wider social context has been marked by increasing, overlapping, and mutually reinforcing crises. National and international crises in the economic and financial sectors have led in some cases to drastic austerity measures affecting both the public sector and social infrastructure, while significantly widening the gap between rich and poor. Even in Germany, signs of ageing or neglected infrastructure, as evidenced by problems at Deutsche Bahn, the collapse or demolition of roads and motorway bridges, and the slow pace of digitization are increasingly becoming apparent.

These crises, which are enmeshed with the climate crisis caused by hyper-industrialization, are generating increasing migration from less secure regions to the supposed safety of “the West”. Since the early 2020s — even in Europe which was formerly believed to be safe — wars have broken out that see no sign of conclusion, for example Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. All this has led to a growing sense of uncertainty, as the old assurances and structures that had promised security are no more, and new ones have not yet taken their place.

One might think that this is “Die Linke's hour”. However, the right is benefitting from “hypercrises” both in Germany and abroad. The AfD and even the parties of the so-called democratic centre are taking steps to the right to accommodate society's overall rightward shift, and thus even further reinforcing the right-wing trajectory.

FIG. 2: SHARE OF ALLOCATED PUBLIC FUNDS (2011–2026)



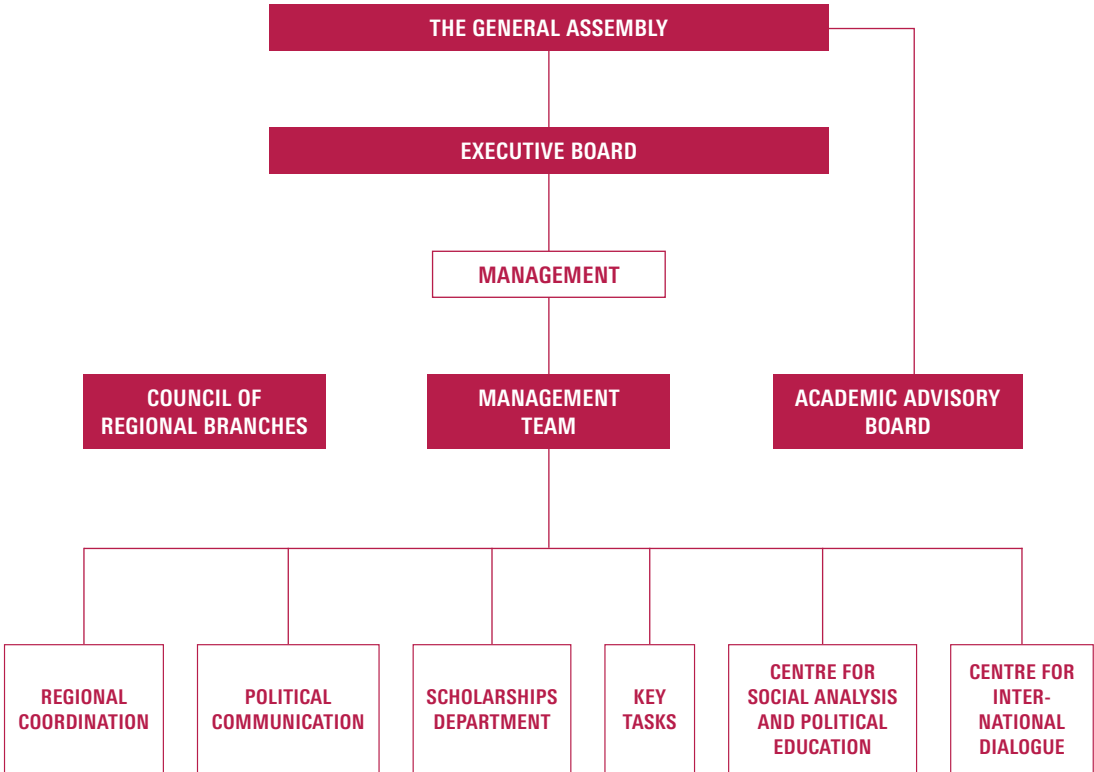
That the pendulum is swinging to the right globally, often in the direction of right-wing populist parties and leaders, is evidenced by the second election of Donald Trump as US president on 5 November 2024. Despite all their differences, right-wing leaders are coalescing behind a global right-wing alliance — to the point that it is no longer hyperbolic to speak of a “right-wing populist international” that, as in the case of the USA, also involves many leaders from the global business community. This overall context shapes the work of the RLS while also defining both its boundaries and possibilities.

Another aspect of these overall conditions affecting the RLS is the Foundation Financing Act (StiftFinG), passed by the Bundestag on 10 November 2023, and which came into force on 1 January 2024. According to this law, the party that a foundation is affiliated with must be represented in the Bundestag for at least three consecutive legislative periods for that foundation to receive public funding. In addition, the foundation’s educational work must promote principles of free democracy. If the party affiliated with the foundation fails to gain representation in the Bundestag on two consecutive occasions, then its public funding will run out.¹⁷

The Foundation Financing Act sets the parameters for the work the foundation will be able to do in future. In addition, the RLS must adapt to constantly changing circumstances and shift its focus in consideration of its target audiences, appropriate formats, and the content it produces.

¹⁷ See <https://dip.bundestag.de/vorgang/gesetz-zur-fianzierung-politischer-stiftungen-aus-dem-bundshaushalt-stiftungsfinanzierungsgesetz/304470>.

FIG. 3: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE 2025



The foundation is currently divided into six areas.



The RLS international offices and the global network that has been built up over the course of decades also makes it vulnerable to crises and wars on the international stage: in response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, in May 2022 the RLS closed one of its oldest international offices, in Moscow. The Kyiv office remained open but with limited operational capacity. Conflict in the Middle East has also had repercussions for the RLS. Following the Hamas attack on Israeli settlements on 7 October 2023 and the regional war with its subsequent numerous flashpoints, the RLS office in Ramallah was forced to temporarily suspend its activity in 2024. The RLS offices in Tel Aviv and Beirut have also been affected by this conflict.

Against this complex and complicated backdrop, the RLS has been working for years to make its educational work more effective and focused, and to raise public awareness of the results of this labour. The relevant term here is “organizational development process” (ODP). In March 2021, the RLS Executive Board agreed to undertake such a process. Going forward, the aim was to focus the foundation’s educational work more strongly on the five priorities set by the Executive Board, which are: the fight against the

right, socio-ecological transformation, social infrastructure and social rights, peace and security policy, and *Zeitdiagnose* (diagnosis of the times).

To avoid overlapping work, educational activities should be coordinated across departments. In addition to this, public outreach work should always be incorporated in such a way that the product is tailored from the outset to reach its target audience, making it necessary to consider format, language, and content. The RLS aims to intervene in public discussions on numerous topics related to society and politics, highlight left-wing solutions to contemporary problems, and thus contribute in its own way to change — if not in the real world, then at least in the world of discourse. The ODP was completed at the end of 2023. The structures shown in the organizational chart have been in place since January 2024 (see Fig. 3).

1.8 THE FUTURE OF THE RLS, OR “I WAS, I AM, AND I WILL BE”

History is an ongoing process. This applies to the RLS too. Both the context it operates within and the organization itself are in a constant state of flux. Even since 2021, during the development of this publication, the RLS has been operating in constantly shifting sands when it comes to the contexts, opportunities, and risks that have a bearing on its existence and future development.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that the RLS’s affiliated party Die Linke was in a deep existential crisis in the early 2020s, putting both party and foundation in jeopardy. Trouble in the “leftist family” escalated in 2023. The end of the year saw the founding of the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), whose founding members had left Die Linke. In January 2024, the BSW switched from being an alliance to a political party.

Although thousands of mostly young people joined Die Linke over this period, many party members also left the party for various reasons, particularly before and after the party conferences in Halle and Berlin in the autumn of 2024. The conflict in the Middle East, which has resulted in repeated outbreaks of violence, was one reason for members leaving the party. And so the party’s public support was crumbling, which was painfully evident in the results of the 2024 state elections in the three East German federal states of Thuringia, Saxony, and Brandenburg.

The 2025 federal elections were a cause for concern. Following the collapse of the so-called traffic light coalition on 6 November 2024, early elections were held on 23 February 2025, in which the right was expected to gain a significant number of votes. Until the end of 2024, or even January 2025,



Seminar room,
Magdeburg.
Exchange partner:
Rosa-Luxemburg-
Stiftung Saxony-
Anhalt; door handle
from the entrance to
the seminar room in
the regional branch’s
HQ in Magdeburg;
installed in room 6.06.

there was no way of knowing how Die Linke would do in the 2025 federal election.

Die Linke ultimately secured 8.8 percent of the vote. And as the RLS Executive Director Daniela Trochowski said shortly after the federal election results were announced, this result ensures the foundation's continued existence for the next two legislative periods.

Nonetheless, the foundation would have to tighten its belt a little, but would not necessarily have to resort to downsizing. Despite the electoral success, layoffs were made because of the rules governing foundation financing and the calculation of allotted public funding based on the average vote shares of the last four federal elections. Luckily, this reduction in funding and subsequent layoffs were not as extensive as had originally been assumed. Against the backdrop of necessary cost-cutting measures, the foundation entered into a negotiation process regarding operational change in 2024, involving a tense struggle between employers and employees. These negotiations had assumed that 80 full-time positions would need to be cut by 1 January 2026. Following the surprising election victory in February 2025, both sides continued to negotiate measures to keep any job cuts to an absolute minimum.

At the same time, work was underway to create a vision for RLS 2030 which posed the questions: How can, or indeed should, the foundation look in the latter half of the 2020s? What main focus areas should the RLS work on? How can the fruits of our labour be communicated to our audience? The answers consider target groups, appropriate formats, and content. The overarching goal is to help the foundation, as a left-wing think tank, achieve a greater impact and become more influential under increasingly difficult conditions. It is now reasonable to imagine that the RLS will outlive the woman it was named after.

2 THE HISTORY OF THE RLS FROM AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE



OPENING REMARKS



Open Door Policy
Outreach Work,
Erfurt. Exchange
partner: Evangelischer
Kirchenkreis Erfurt;
since 1979 this church
has been open to all
regardless of age,
nationality, worldview,
class, or sex; installed
in room 6.04.

This chapter forms the core of this publication; it is made up of 26 interviews.¹⁸ The structure of the subchapters is based on the questions we asked the interviewees¹⁹ and corresponds to the sections of the introduction.²⁰

In these interviews, our conversation partners shared their often highly personal perspectives on the history of the RLS, a history they themselves have shaped or indeed continue to shape. The history of the foundation presents itself as a multifaceted collection of stories from a wide variety of perspectives, illuminating and enlivening the story of how the RLS grew into the institution it is today.

The interviews — which each lasted an hour — were conducted in a period that spanned three and a half years, from early summer 2021 to autumn 2024. This timeframe is important because it provides context to the answers given: this is a time in which the interviewees were living through the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. Die Linke was finding itself in a prolonged and worsening crisis and at times seemed to be verging on collapse, particularly given the split from the BSW. Although we had not given up hope of such an eventuality, no one could have predicted Die Linke's astonishing rise in popularity shortly before the federal elections of February 2025.

This complicated situation overall, including the global resurgence of the far right, affected the feelings and answers of the interviewees. This should be kept in mind when reading the responses that follow.

2.1 PATHS TO THE FOUNDATION

2.1.1 THE FOUNDING GENERATION

Like the multiple phases in the development of the RLS, there exist many different ways for people to have found their way to working here. The so-called founding generation all came, as was covered in prior chapters, from academic institutions in the GDR. In the transition period of 1989–1990 the

18 Most of the interviews in this book were conducted by Lutz Kirschner, who also transcribed them all. Effi Böhlke, working with Alrun Kaune-Nüßlein, collected and chose the passages that were published.

19 The questions that were asked in these semi-open interviews can be found in the appendix of this book, along with notes on the interviewees.

20 It is, of course, impossible to reproduce complete interviews in a book of this length, so a wealth of ideas has necessarily been left out. The full interviews will be available in the RLS Archive of Democratic Socialism.

structures and institutions of the East German academic landscape were largely dissolved. After German reunification, many institutes, as well as entire colleges and academies were “liquidated”. East German academics asked themselves how research could be continued or reorganized under a West German system. Previously, these founders had worked at institutions including the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU), the Berliner Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Berlin Academy of Social Sciences), the Universität Halle-Wittenberg, and the Hochschule für Ökonomie Berlin-Karlshorst.

“Of course, we looked into the structures that existed in Germany and saw that political-party-affiliated foundations played a major role. Relatively quickly — so by the end of 1989, beginning of 1990 — it was clear to us that we needed to start a foundation. However, there were differing ideas around what exactly it should be”, explained **Evelin Wittich**,²¹ who was among those who built the RLS from the ground up and was its long-time executive director.

And so, the Stiftung für Gesellschaftsanalyse (Foundation for Social Analysis) was founded by Rolf Reißig and other academics prior to the end of the GDR and registered at the local court for the Mitte district of Berlin.

The “Podium Progressiv”, a new educational institution of the SED-PDS, was established almost at the same time as the 1990 dissolution of the SED college and all the other party-affiliated institutions. “Alexandra Wagner was the leader of Podium Progressiv and I was her deputy”, Wittich explained. “At the same time, I was considering lending my support to the new Stiftung für Gesellschaftsanalyse”.

After German reunification on 3 October 1990, the old GDR-founded institution was no longer legally recognized. The foundation needed to be founded all over again. The founding meeting was convened on 16 November 1990, and Evelin Wittich took part in her capacity as a representative of the educational institution: “I still remember, it was at the Academy for Social Sciences, in the faculty consultation room. A lawyer was there. We agreed on the statutes and what we wanted to achieve with this foundation. And as I said, from our point of view, it was always about political education.” Her proposal that the association be named the “Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.” (Social Analysis and Political Education Association) was accepted. In the beginning, there was no chairperson or executive director, but instead a three-headed executive committee.



Asyl-Verein Wiesenburg (Asylum Association Wiesenburg), Berlin Wedding. Exchange partner: Wiesenburg e. V., opened in 1896 as the Berliner Asyl-Verein für Obdachlose (Berlin Homeless Shelter Association); installed in room 4.13.

21 The interview with Evelin Wittich was conducted on 14 June 2021. At that time, Wittich was a board member of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Saxony-Anhalt.



From the 1999/2000
Annual Report:
Five years of the
Gesellschaftsanalyse
und Politische
Bildung e. V.
Dieter Klein is holding
the microphone.

Dieter Klein²² represents a key figure among the core RLS founding generation. He had been assistant head of the Social Sciences department at HU Berlin for many years and, in the early 1990s, in the newly founded Institut für Interdisziplinäre Zivilisationsforschung (Institute for Interdisciplinary Civilization Research), “attempted to evaluate the experience of the decline of the GDR in a quite frantic way and to continue advancing the project of a modern socialism [under the leadership of Michael Brie], which had been pursued since the mid-1980s, and to apply this to present circumstances”. This project of reform contributed substantially to Dieter Klein’s speech on strategy and programme at the SED-PDS’s extraordinary party conference.²³ Klein agreed to get involved in establishing a left-wing foundation after receiving a call from Wittich. “And for me, the task at hand was to bring what we had developed and defended at the HU to the foundation”, Dieter Klein recalls.

Christa Luft, is deservedly recognized — alongside Evelin Wittich and Dieter Klein — as a key contributor to the founding of the RLS. From 1989–1990, Luft was deputy chair of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Economics in the final GDR government under Hans Modrow. She herself came from the now defunct Hochschule für Ökonomie, where she had been its last rector.

22 This interview with Dieter Klein was conducted on 16 May 2021, when Klein was a senior fellow at the IfG.

23 See Lothar Hornbogen, Detlef Nakath, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (eds.), extraordinary party conference of the SED/PDS. Minutes for the advisory sessions on 8–9 and 16–17 December 1989 in Berlin, Berlin: SED/PDS, 1999, pp. 225–39.

“These events and experiences provided a taste of what was still to come for economists and social scientists in the East. We knew that fundamental changes were needed in teaching and research, and we also had our own thoughts on the matter. The *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* attracted attention and encouraged people to see that something was forming there, a nucleus, a cell, a space for academic exchange, critical discussions of the past, difficult conversations, sometimes with colleagues from a formerly socialist European country, but also for understanding what, despite the failure of the social experiment in the East, is worth preserving for future socialist systems”, explained Christa Luft,²⁴ who was an avowedly enthusiastic participant in the project. On behalf of the association, she gave lectures at public events, participated in discussions, and wrote numerous articles.

In 1994, Christa Luft took on a very practical aspect of the foundation’s work. The PDS chapter for the Berlin districts of Friedrichshain and Lichtenberg approached her with the request to run for a direct mandate seat in the German Bundestag. She did so and, with 44.4 percent of the vote, won one of the PDS’s four direct mandate seats, thus securing the party’s entry to the Bundestag as a parliamentary group. Luft became the spokesperson for budgetary policy and, as a member of the Budget Committee, her responsibilities included the budget of the Ministry of the Interior, which was in charge of financing for political foundations: “That was how I first came into close contact with the foundation issue. I was persistent in seeking funding and was committed but didn’t have any knowledge of the history of foundation financing. The committee members from the other parliamentary groups were annoyed because those of us from the PDS were always bringing it up”, she explained. The reason given for funding being rejected was that it would only be available if the affiliated party represented a stable political current and had been elected to the Bundestag with a full parliamentary group — the latter of which only having transpired following the 1998 federal elections, where the PDS gained over five percent of the vote.

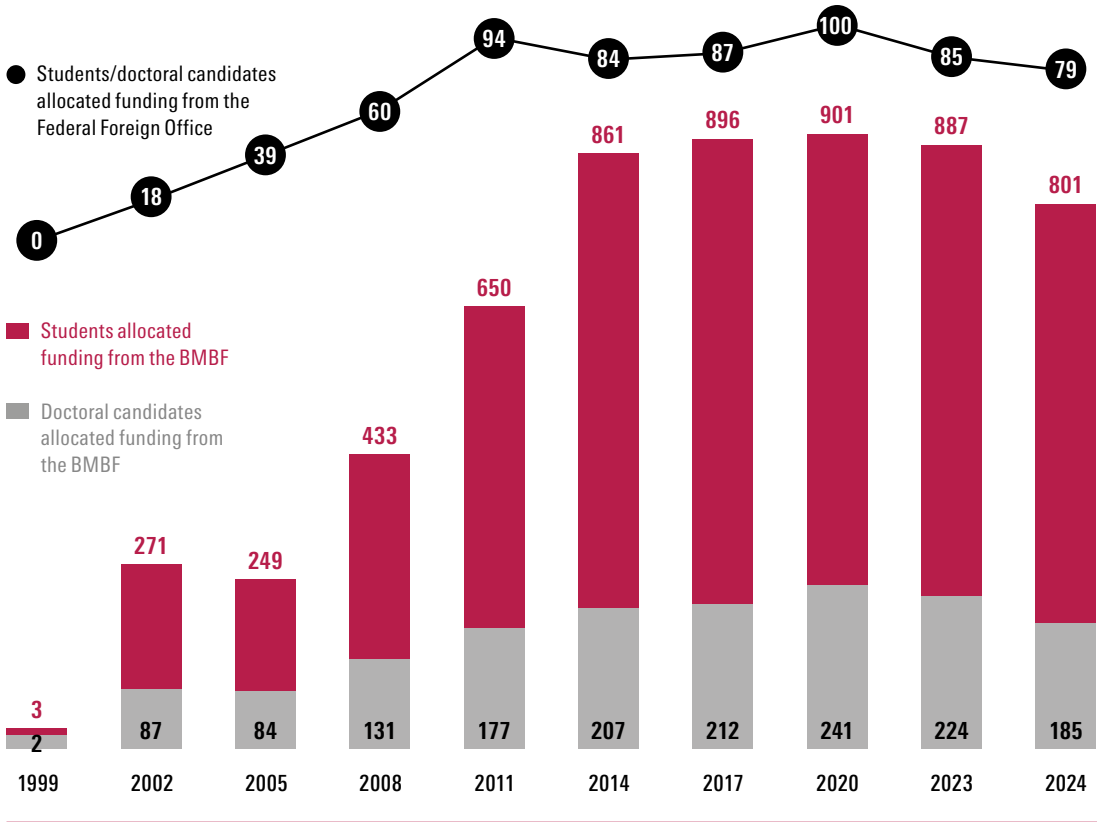
In August 1999, the foundation received its first-ever notification that it would be receiving funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The amount was over 4 million deutsche marks in global subsidies from the federal budget, effective immediately in that fiscal year, running until December 1999.

2.1.2 THE SUBSEQUENT GENERATION

All the activists that had recently founded the RLS in 1990 and filled it with life came from educational bodies from the GDR and wanted to continue working on or rebuild critical political social analysis and left-wing political education after German reunification. As a result, the next group of people who joined

24 The interview with Christa Luft was conducted on 27 June 2022. She is a member of the RLS.

FIG. 4: SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS (1999–2024)



the RLS came from different academic and political backgrounds. They had different life experiences, different motives, and could bring a fresh perspective to the work of the RLS. Since 2007, there had been strong growth in staffing numbers because of the increase in public funding allocated to the RLS after the 2005 federal election results. In the meantime, as the party-affiliated foundation of Die Linke, the RLS had been making a name for itself in the left scene. The RLS held countless events, some of which were organized by the legally autonomous Rosa-Luxemburg-Vereinen (Rosa Luxemburg Associations) across 16 federal states, it published texts, and in 1999 awarded its first five scholarships. Some long-time employees at the RLS found their way to the foundation via one of these scholarships for students and doctoral candidates.

Cathleen Bürgelt was one member of the first cohort to have received an RLS scholarship.²⁵ When asked about her first contact with the RLS she said:

²⁵ This interview with Cathleen Bürgelt was conducted on 10 June 2024. At that time, she was a research assistant for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brandenburg.

“I was raised in Senftenberg, a small town in the south of Brandenburg. In 1990, through various initiatives such as *Mobil ohne Auto* (car-free mobility) and a campaign against the establishment of a McDonald’s restaurant, I came into contact with people from the PDS who were active in the former Interessengemeinschaft 3. Weg (Third Way Interest Group). Small-town life means that the circle of like-minded activists is relatively limited, and so it was through this community built on shared interests that I came across the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brandenburg events taking place in Senftenberg from around 1995 on. The courses on philosophy organized by the RLS Brandenburg played a particularly strong role in this for Bürgelt.

When the foundation launched its first round of funding for students in 1999, Bürgelt was successful in her application. At that time, she had been studying modern history, philosophy, and pedagogy in Dresden, but she became increasingly involved in the foundation’s work. “A re-examining of Nazi history in the region was the topic of the Senftenberg Holocaust Colloquium, to which I also contributed. Shortly before completing my studies, I became a research assistant under Gerd-Rüdiger Hoffmann in Senftenberg. Hoffmann had been directly elected to the state parliament in 2004. Since the PDS then had a very strong parliamentary group in Brandenburg — with 29 representatives — the Brandenburg branch of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung also had more funds at its disposal.” In February 2005, a regional office of the RLS Brandenburg was established in Senftenberg, which Bürgelt managed on a voluntary basis.

Florian Weis,²⁶ who would go on to become a long-term Executive Director of the RLS, joined in the 1990s. He came to the RLS via the PDS, which he had joined in Hamburg in 1991: “So, to be a historian, to be researching the labour movement, to leave the Greens, and to join the PDS was, in the early 1990s, not really a winning strategy — the fact that things turned out differently is quite instructive.” Describing the motivations behind his choice, he said: “Solidarity in the face of the treatment of the GDR, opposition to the dismantling of the GDR, hope for a democratic socialist party, which the Greens clearly no longer wanted to be, and harbouring a few illusions, too, of course.”

It was then that Florian Weis met editor Annelies Laschitzka at a book presentation for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Edition series in the Blauer Salon at Franz-Mehring-Platz in Berlin. He met André Brie through some Hamburg connections a little while later and was invited to join a PDS policy commission meeting: “I was semi-involved in that project; I also contributed to one or two papers ... Those were my contacts, André Brie, Evelin Wittich, and Dieter Schlönvoigt, who were, so to speak, the key figures.”

²⁶ This interview with Florian Weis was conducted on 14 February 2022, when he was an academic advisor at the IfG.

The Bundestag elections of 1998 brought the PDS into the Bundestag as a parliamentary group. It was relatively clear that 1999 would see public funding being allocated to the Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. "The allocation of the funds in March 1999 was probably Finance Minister Lafontaine's last official act before he resigned, which is a bit ironic when you look at how things turned out", remembers Weis. In August and September of 1999 he finally had a job interview with the three heads of the Executive Board and was invited to join the foundation.

The current head of the Scholarship Department **Jane Angerjäv**²⁷ herself came to the RLS via a scholarship, which she had applied for on two occasions: "The first time, I had a very good conversation with a faculty advisor, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten. It was a very personal conversation, and I felt very comfortable. For me, as someone who was still very new to Germany, it was a very important experience where I felt appreciated and recognized. And that's why I was very disappointed when my application was rejected."

At that time, the PDS only held two seats in the Bundestag and the number of scholarships available had fallen dramatically. According to Angerjäv, her second interview went "okay, but not that well", but she nevertheless was awarded a scholarship to begin on 1 October 2003. This scholarship was followed by receiving doctoral funding. After making two subsequent applications to work at the RLS, she was offered a position as a programme coordinator on 1 September 2009. Her conclusion: "In Germany you have to ask a few times to get something. That's how it was for me: I had to knock twice each time."

Sabine Nuss²⁸ thought she was finished with political science when she graduated from the Otto Suhr Institute of the Freie Universität (FU) Berlin but "after several months of wage labour at the Volkshochschule and in journalism" realized that she wanted to continue in academia. The problem was how to finance this. A friend suggested that Nuss apply to the RLS for a doctoral scholarship: "I applied with a research proposal, as is usual. One day, a law professor called me and said that the foundation's selection committee found my proposal very interesting, but that there were issues with my biography. They asked if I could explain why I, a graduate of the Axel Springer Journalism School and someone who had worked for the *Bild* newspaper, was now applying to the RLS", she recounts.

"I didn't really understand the problem at the time, but I explained my career path in great detail. Somehow, he found my explanation both plausible

27 This interview with Jane Angerjäv was conducted on 9 January 2023. At that time, she was head of the Scholarship Department.

28 This interview with Sabine Nuss was conducted on 21 February 2023. At that time, she was co-managing director of Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin.

and appealing, and passed my proposal on to the selection committee. I managed to convince him that I was a good candidate and despite working at a tabloid like *Bild*, got my scholarship.” Sabine Nuss received RLS doctoral funding from 2001–2004. Although her doctoral thesis was not finished within the allotted funding period, additional financial support from the RLS came in the form of a freelancer contract, allowing for the project to finally be completed. In 2007, she began working as a policy advisor for sustainability in what was then the Political Education department.

“When someone asks me about how I came to work at the RLS, I have to say it was pretty straightforward. In early 2007, I had my political science diploma in hand, was working in Petra Pau’s office in the Bundestag, and was looking for new opportunities in the world of work. The RLS, whose work I had become aware of when doing research for my thesis, had a couple of open job postings at the time”, recounts **Axel Krumrey**.²⁹

He applied for the position of managerial assistant. He describes the location of the interview in the former *Neues Deutschland* (ND) building at Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 as follows: “It was my first real job interview. I came dressed in a suit and tie and had the feeling that I had somewhat stumbled into a GDR relic, or what I remembered of the GDR. This former *Neues Deutschland* building, the grey walls and the long corridors, the green doors, the smell of prefabricated concrete, it all reminded me very strongly of past times.”

In any case, he got the job, and began working for the RLS on 1 July 2007. In the following years, the scope of his responsibilities expanded gradually from prepping and following up on service consultations and formulating RLS internal catalogues, to supervising visitor and discussion groups, and working on the editorial team of *RosaLux*, the RLS in-house magazine. In the end, his job developed from being an assistant to working in the management office on multiple substantive projects. “Stefan Heym, for example — initially staging a reading from his texts in collaboration with Luc Jochimsen, and later coordinating all the educational projects related to the writer, often in close collaboration with the Die Linke parliamentary group. In particular, the coordination and cooperation with the parliamentary group fell under my jurisdiction during this time.” Over time, Krumrey’s responsibilities became quite extensive and relatively diverse.

Barbara Fried³⁰ described her motivation for applying to the foundation in 2011 as “a longing for something approaching a ‘more engaged intellectual practice’”. At the same time, she felt she was out of the loop with German

29 This interview with Axel Krumrey was conducted on 22 November 2022. At that point, he was head of construction and Managing Director of the developer Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A mbH & Co. KG.

30 The interview with Barbara Fried was conducted on 24 May 2023. She was at that time deputy director of the IfG.



The RLS headquarters were for many years located in an office building at Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 in Friedrichshain, Berlin.

political debates because of a three-year stint in the USA. “I was missing elements of left-wing discussions that I had previously always kept up with. Reconnecting with that was the main reason I applied to the RLS”, she explained. There had been two positions advertised; she applied for the one related to climate change but ended up taking on the other position centred on the reproduction economy: “I hadn’t worked in research for a long time but I had some theoretical grounding. It interested me and fitted well with my living situation at the time”. In August 2011 she began in her new role and has continued to build on the theme of the reproduction economy in the years since.

For all of our interviewees, the prospect of working at the RLS was, for many different reasons, an appealing proposition. “For me, it was totally attractive that the RLS would enable me to continue developing my political views, research, and thematic work that I had begun researching at University”, explained Sabine Nuss. She wrote her doctoral thesis on property ownership and supervised a major research project on privatization in Europe. “I found this subject incredibly exciting. And it was great to work for the RLS anyway, because you got paid for working in political science. It’s a real luxury to be able to work at the intersection of education and research when you don’t want to pursue a career in academia. And, as I enjoy storytelling and communication, it was a perfect fit.” She goes on: “When you told people that you worked at the RLS, there was always a positive response, people would say ‘oh, amazing!’ I always felt it was a privilege to work at the foundation.”

Cathleen Bürgelt listed three factors that made working at the RLS attractive for her: “The financial, the ideological, and getting to know like-minded people.” The scholarship she received was a great support to her studies — despite having received the maximum level of state student aid, she previously still needed to work a student job. “The money that the scholarship provided for books was a real luxury for me”, she said. Another aspect was the opportunity to network with like-minded people. She referenced, for example, exciting exchanges at regional meetings. At those meetings she made contacts that she still maintains to this day. Bürgelt cites intellectual support and the educational and training opportunities offered by the RLS as the third factor. She studied at the Technische Universität (TU) Dresden which was a technical college rather than being more classically oriented towards the humanities. Bürgelt explains: “the educational events that the RLS offered were naturally a great expansion [to my previous education]. That’s because, in the 1990s, anything to do with Marxism was de facto irrelevant — at least that was the case in Dresden. That could have been different at other universities though”.

“As a scholarship recipient, I quickly came to identify with the foundation. It was the place where my dedication was recognized and appreciated, and where I wasn’t always seen as just a foreigner, as had been the case at university. Where I was able to contribute and where I found a bit of a political home. I think it’s important, going forward, to feel welcome, to feel wanted somehow — that was really important for me as a non-native speaker”, explains Jane Angerjäv, who had a background in unions and who had attended many RLS events. In this respect, her political education was significantly influenced by the RLS. She emphasized the importance of her many foreign work placements: “my RLS work took me to Istanbul for example, and I’ve also reported on Estonian unions. These were great experiences: you’re not a famous political scientist but nonetheless, people ask for your opinion and your expertise, and you get recognition.”

Jane Angerjäv studied at the HU Berlin. At the HU, there was a two-year programme especially for legal scholars from other EU states. There were only two students for this master’s in German and European Law and Legal Practice, which included both theoretical and practical aspects. “I took internships with the ver.di trade union and with the European Trade Union Confederation. As the recipient of an RLS scholarship, I also had the opportunity to study abroad and was able to work on various topics with the other scholarship recipients, especially during my doctoral studies. About Estonia, about trade unions ... we worked on a lot of jurisprudential topics.”

Sabine Nuss developed a “huge sensitivity to injustice” early on: “There’s a politicization, both in terms of your head and your gut — so on an intellectual level and also on an emotional level. The emotional level was present from a very young age ... My first political engagement was a petition when I was in about fifth grade, which was against the killing of baby seals in the

arctic.” An awareness of being left-wing or active in left-wing politics only developed during Nuss’s studies, after her experiences at the Axel Springer Journalism School. “The fact that I had no left-wing socialization whatsoever was certainly one reason why I was unfamiliar with the RLS. I didn’t come out of the left scene, and I wasn’t familiar with in-fighting on the left”, she said. It was all totally foreign to her. It was only during her studies that she first came to understand the meaning of the left scene, or what it meant to be left-wing.

“The foundation’s goals appealed to me”, says **Lisa Albrecht**.³¹ In 2009, she took up a student job working in the RLS human resources department. “I grew up in a left-wing family, so in any case it was clear to me that there was no other foundation that I would be politically or thematically interested in. Although I didn’t quite grasp the substance of RLS work at first. The influx of a new younger generation of RLS staff was interesting and important to me. When I got here, I was in my mid-20s and the people that were working there gave the impression of being older — older than they actually were, as I later realized.”

2.2 ENGAGEMENT AND DISTANCE: THE PARTY-AFFILIATED FOUNDATION AND ITS AFFILIATED PARTY

The RLS is one of Germany’s political foundations. It is affiliated with the political party Die Linke (formerly the PDS). At the same time, it is also required to maintain a distance from its affiliated party. There is however some amount of leeway regarding this legally mandated distance, and the various heads of the RLS have handled and interpreted this in different ways.

With regard to the founding phase, Dieter Klein emphasizes that, in his view, the political and academic substance of the RLS was, in a sense, “transferred over” from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Civilization Research, which was founded at the HU during the period of German unification:

I believe it was a very unlucky and at the same time very lucky thing that Michael Brie — head of the “theory of modern socialism” project — was an early addition to the RLS leadership. He was unable to remain at the HU on a permanent basis and was subsequently let go. And, like the rest of us who came from there, he essentially brought with him a theoretical concept that could be infused into the foundation.

³¹ This interview with Lisa Albrecht was conducted on 8 November 2022. At that time she was an advisor to the Executive Board.

It was important to Dieter Klein that the years of work that had gone into this project at the university were not lost, and instead were transferred via Michael Brie — first to the Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. and finally to the RLS. However, it was not merely the theoretical substance that was brought over. The association was closely linked to the emerging PDS but, when it came to the development of the party, maintained a critical stance. “Basically, this fits in with the requirement that political foundations must generally adhere to: be close to a party or a political stream, but not identical to it — at least, not to the party, but perhaps to the political stream. And we brought this approach with us to the foundation. We were deeply committed to the movement of democratic socialism, while maintaining a critical view of the PDS’s growing pains and other shortcomings. And that was incredibly important when the foundation was starting up.”

Michael Brie has long helped to shape the history of the foundation, including as a member of the Executive Board, head of the Scholarship Department, head of the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (ZID), and, last but not least, as director of the Institute for Social Analysis (IfG) and, after his retirement, chair of the Academic Advisory Board. He was continuously involved in the political platform of the affiliated party. Back in 1989–1990, he and Dieter Klein had provided political programme support for the SED/PDS transition, and then for the PDS. They sat on programme committees and collaborated on relevant materials. Even then, Michael Brie recalls, it was clear that their long-term goal was to become a publicly funded foundation affiliated with a political party and to stake out certain substantive principles. The thinking of the party leadership, then led by Gregor Gysi, was that Brie and Dieter Klein should work both in the association and on the Executive Board: “We represented the concept of modern socialism, i.e. the kind of socialism that draws on libertarian, emancipatory impulses and takes seriously the gains made by modern, complex capitalist societies”, Brie explained.

Brie considers the relationship between foundations and their affiliated parties as sometimes quite problematic, as the foundation receives money based on the success of its affiliated party. “Regardless of how the foundation is doing, it receives money irrespective of performance. Foundations are also not subject to the state, nor state oversight, except to make sure that funds are spent appropriately. But why? The General Assembly occurs once a year, and the Executive Board, acting on this basis, cannot really assess the situation. So, we have the problem of an organization that spends money almost exclusively according to its own internal standards.”

When Florian Weis was the Executive Director of the RLS, he was careful to maintain the appropriate distance between foundation and party. In addition to political education and research, Weis emphasized the foundation’s public outreach and intensive work towards network building as key connecting points. He always considered the political relevance of the RLS as



Tracing Nelson Mandela’s Footsteps, South Africa. Exchange partner: Liliesleaf Farm; Door handle from Rivonia, Johannesburg, once a safe house for Nelson Mandela from which he helped to coordinate the anti-Apartheid underground resistance movement; installed in room 8.07.



The foundation is given its name at the General Assembly in June 1999. From left to right: Michael Brie, Jochen Weichold, and Evelin Wittich.

“something specific that differs from day-to-day politics and party politics: it is neither formal nor non-formal education, it is education in relation to politics. It is research, but research with a political connection.”

In Weis’s view, especially with project funding and working with the regional branches, it was all about getting to know people, structures, and trends and to try to connect them without trying to dominate them, and to get involved in existing networks. The enormous wealth of contacts demonstrates that the foundation is able to connect scenes, groups, and professions that would otherwise often not come into contact with each other. For him, this was the appeal, it was a challenge that was as difficult as it was rewarding. It was also a chance to preserve and strengthen a wider left-wing milieu including magazines, publishers, intellectual circles, and innovators who simply wanted to try something new. For many years, this has been the great strength of funding projects. “Yes, to strengthen a diverse left, to support and broaden it. And supporting people is, in my opinion, a completely underestimated aspect. It is inherently more appreciated in the Scholarship Department, but I think in general, the foundation can support a great many individuals.”

Dagmar Enkelmann,³² Chair of the Executive Board from 2012 to 2022, sees the education and networking work that the RLS undertakes, particularly around climate policy, as always contributing to a stronger affiliated party. Enkelmann also emphasizes the foundation's special role as political advisor and guide, able to compensate for existing deficits. "I tried to advance that approach, including the monitoring of government projects. Specifically, I tried to formulate questions and develop something akin to guidelines or a to-do list". Thanks to her leadership, a handbook was developed to help guide individuals considering taking on government roles. There had been attempts to adapt this project for those in Greece, and also in Thuringia and Berlin — she would have liked for it to have been pursued more vigorously.

"We notice time and again that when it comes to specifics, there are questions we need to address, such as the question of the relationship between the parliamentary group, the executive branch, and the party itself. How do they relate to each other? In my opinion these aren't just practical questions, they're also strategic, tactical, and theoretical questions", Enkelmann explains. In her opinion, developing policy advice for the affiliated party has been neglected for far too long. Enkelmann refers to the founding of the working group *Zukunft der Partei Die Linke* (The Future of Die Linke) in the early 2020s, which formulated ten challenges for a united campaign. "It should have been done much sooner. I actually think it would have been better to do it prior to the [2021] federal election. Because, of course, as we have repeatedly established, the party's decline began as early as 2010–2011, so actually much sooner."

The reports from election night and the post-election analyses by long-time RLS employee Horst Kahrs repeatedly brought up points requiring further examination, for example changing party structures in response to changing demographics. In Enkelmann's view, this is where the foundation's political consulting should have come in. At the same time, "that assumes there is a person who requests this", she adds as a caveat.

The "Diagnosis of the Times" working group was formed in 2021, to advance RLS analysis of social conditions and bring together the work that had been done on this topic across various departments. The intention is that the group discuss which studies and which form of political education are needed. This is something we began at a board level, discussing strategy very intensively in light of Die Linke's overall development, the key term being "organizational development process [ODP]", Enkelmann explains.

³² This interview with Dagmar Enkelmann was conducted on 16 May 2022. At that point, she was Chair of the Executive Board of the RLS.

In February 2020, **Daniela Trochowski**³³ took over as executive director.³⁴ She understands the RLS as being part of a wider leftist family. “For me, It has always been important that the foundation plays its role within the trinity of the leftist family (party, parliamentary groups, and foundation), and above all works on issues that are part of the left’s DNA. For me, these core issues are anti-fascism, anti-racism, social justice, internationalism, and, of course, peace policy.” Even so, it is equally important to her that the RLS also fulfils functions that are specific to it, including political consulting and political education — not just for the party, but also for society as a whole, especially on issues that others are not bringing into the public discourse. It is about rendering left-wing issues comprehensible and opening topics up for discussion. She sees this as the foundation’s role — particularly the role of its executive director. “Before taking on the role, I had no idea how this task should be organized, because I had no insight into the internal processes of the RLS”, she recalls today.

Trochowski has been a member of the RLS since 2017 and already had some links with it prior to joining. She frequently made use of the foundation’s publications: “As part of the leftist family, the RLS is an institution that has the ability to do long-term work and reach beyond the day-to-day. I wasn’t able to do that for a long time, which is why it was always so enriching to look at the publications on various topics.”

She values the opportunities for international exchange that the RLS provides. During her time as the Minister of Finance for the State of Brandenburg, for example, the Europe department of the RLS established contact with the Ministry of Finance in the Syriza government of Greece. “We travelled to Greece with the RLS to exchange ideas and learn about the situation there. The exchange goes both ways and I have also welcomed government delegations from China and Vietnam to the Ministry of Finance, for example, where I gave presentations on various topics and explained how work is carried out in a left-wing ministry of finance”, she reflects. The delegations showed a great interest in issues such as the fight against public-sector corruption.

Daniela Trochowski has had various left-wing jobs since 1996: for the PDS and in their Bundestag parliamentary group; as part of the economic administration of the “red-red” [SPD and Die Linke] Berlin Senate; for Die Linke’s parliamentary group from 2005; and a state secretary for Brandenburg from 2009. From 2016 to 2020, she was a member of Die Linke’s executive committee, which is where she developed a sense of it being a party on the national level: “I have strong ties to the left. I am familiar

33 This interview with Dagmar Enkelmann was conducted on 16 May 2022. At that point, she was chair of the RLS Executive Board.

34 This interview with Daniela Trochowski was conducted on 17 September 2023. At that time, she was the Executive Director of the RLS.

with the issues and know how debates are conducted on the left. And from my ten years as a state secretary, I learnt how to manage an institution with 5,000 members of staff. This experience gave me an understanding of how an organization of this size functions, an understanding of how to manage an organization. That is beneficial for me today”, Trochowski explains.

Heinz Bierbaum³⁵ was elected Chair of the Executive Board by the General Assembly in November 2022. To this role, he brings his substantial political experience, which includes being the long-standing president of the Party of the European Left. One of his primary objectives is to reorient the foundation to being more of a left-wing think tank and to create greater synergy between the RLS’s domestic and foreign work. “My expectation of a political foundation such as the RLS is that it acts as a left-wing think tank. In other words, it combines academic work with politics, provides a platform for political discussion, and focuses on social analysis and how its findings can be applied to political work. That’s what interested me, and that’s where I’ve dedicated my energies.” He has been a member of the Executive Board since 2020. During this period, the Board developed the five key areas of focus for the work of the RLS, which continue to guide the foundation’s activities today.

Bierbaum assumed the role as Chair of the RLS in what was an objectively difficult time. In 2021, Die Linke narrowly failed to achieve the five percent minimum vote threshold; it was only thanks to three direct mandate seats that it was able to form a parliamentary group in the Bundestag. Party infighting resulted in falling poll ratings and ultimately to a split in the parliamentary group and the founding of the BSW. At the same time, the new Foundation Financing Act introduced regulations governing the Bundestag’s funding of political foundations. It was foreseeable that when the law came into force on 23 December 2023, it would lead to a dip in RLS funding going forward.

It was already clear that Die Linke’s excellent election result in 2009 would not be taken into account from 2026 onwards. “We knew then that we would have to manage with fewer resources, but at the same time become more effective. I believe that is the message that needs to be conveyed at present. Personally, however, I see this objectively difficult situation as an opportunity to hone the foundation’s profile. There is a strong desire that our findings and our resources from our work internationally should flow back into the foundation’s work at home, where we should make more use of them. I still consider this to be one of our primary tasks” expresses Bierbaum, who goes on to say: “In addition, we are currently experiencing a period of significant change and profound social upheavals, which naturally also present us with considerable challenges.”

³⁵ This interview with Heinz Bierbaum was conducted on 28 September 2023. Since 2022, Bierbaum has been Chair of the Executive Board of the RLS.

2.3 DEFINING THE DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE FOUNDATION'S DEVELOPMENT



The RLS's evolution as a party-affiliated foundation is closely tied to the evolution of its affiliated party. At the same time, the RLS is an independent institution, with its own rhythms and influenced by other factors. The interviewees all have different criteria by which they divide up the different phases in the foundation's history.

Roma Organization
Poland. Exchange
partner: Rosa-
Luxemburg-Stiftung
Warsaw, Central
Eastern Europe Office;
installed in room
5.05/5.16.

One of the first important decisions was to choose a name. **Jörn Schüttrumpf**,³⁶ a historian and long-term head of the Fokusstelle Rosa Luxemburg (Rosa Luxemburg research team), remembers the once-vibrant debate: "It was totally not clear from the beginning that we would settle on the name Rosa Luxemburg. We had some reservations as there had been an association in Leipzig since 1991 called the Rosa-Luxemburg-Verein. But Michael Brie made a strong case for choosing the name." In retrospect, it was the right choice: "Luxemburg had nothing to do with real socialism. Additionally, she was Jewish, a woman, a foreigner, and also an intellectual. She represented, so to speak, a whole bouquet of qualities or characteristics that made her the perfect candidate, and still of great resonance today."

Even abroad, people are familiar with the name, even if they are not exactly sure who Rosa Luxemburg was. "They know that she was murdered and that she must have been a good person in some way. When you go abroad and make appearances under the "Rosa Luxemburg" banner, there's always an initial positive association with the name", finds Schüttrumpf.

Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan has helmed various departments of the RLS and was for many years the deputy executive director. As a qualified historian he would divide RLS history into the following phases: "It definitely starts with the early founder years, perhaps until 1998 or with the influx of public funds in 1999. Then there was the period in which the association and the Executive Board were established, the various departments were formed, and there were some new recruits, up until the first wave of hiring and expansion was complete, so until around 2002. From 2002, at the latest 2003, once everything was more concrete, the first meetings of the RLS network took place. These various stages of development are primarily associated with Evelin Wittich. And then there came Heinz Vietze and Florian Weis."

Dieter Klein highlights both the closeness and distance from Die Linke as a particular factor in the evolution of the foundation: "In any case, I see

³⁶ This interview with Jörn Schüttrumpf was conducted on 28 September 2023, while he was head of the Rosa Luxemburg research team at the RLS Historical Centre for Democratic Socialism.

that in terms of strategic influence, there have been markedly different relationships with Die Linke at different times. I don't mean friendly/unfriendly or anything like that but rather regarding strategically relevant issues." As an example, he cites the speech on programme and strategy he gave at the extraordinary party conference, which was highly influential. Later on, there were many periods of more substantial cross-pollination, as well as times where one organization had no influence on the other. "There were definitely differences, so there really were periods when we had direct access to the Die Linke leadership. Not in the sense of being dependent, but we were listened to. And people who played a role in the foundation were involved in discussions at party conferences", he remembers.

In Klein's view, individuals with their own ideas have recently been finding their way back into Die Linke's leadership structures. He is not sure whether the RLS will have a strategically relevant influence on the party's policy development in this situation, adding: "When looking back over the stages of the RLS's development, I believe it is also relevant to ask what role it played in Die Linke's policy development at each stage ... With more detailed, more substantial work on RLS history, it might be possible to find documentation proving where we have contributed something, something relevant, and when we have been less effective."

In 2024, Ines Schwerdtner and Jan van Aken, who had both previously been working for the RLS, were elected co-chairs of Die Linke, a pivotal event in the foundation's history with a significance that cannot yet be fully assessed.

Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan points to the phase of significant financial and hiring growth and major activity under the leadership of Florian Weis. In his view, this moment also carried with it the risk of the RLS's growth becoming uncontrollable: "The increase in staffing probably should have been implemented in a more rigorous manner. We didn't need a new hire for every new topic." He does however cite the foreign posting of staff dedicated to a particular topic as a positive example. Although this scheme got off to a good start in 2015, it also caused organizational problems for the international offices. Insufficient thought was given to the long-term effects of expanding the staffing at the Berlin headquarters. He takes a critical view of the new building on the Straße der Pariser Kommune: "We are struggling with this building now as it requires a huge amount of logistical effort. For years, many colleagues have been preoccupied with this building and in the meantime, have not created much substantial work in terms of other content."

Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan describes the post-2020 period as a "crisis phase" beginning with the outbreak of COVID-19. He explains: "There was COVID-19, the uncertainty surrounding the completion of the building, then the crisis in Die Linke, the global crisis – everything was in crisis mode. Then came the uncertainty caused by the organizational development process and the potential threat to jobs. I mean, adjustments had to be made in the

2020s; things couldn't be done the same way they had been 15 years ago, and I stand by that."

Rainer Rilling³⁷ has worked at the RLS since 1999 and was instrumental in establishing what later became the Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Institute for Social Sciences, IfG). He is not sure "how one can now go on creating one social formation after another." He distinguishes between the implementation phase of the RLS, which was completed relatively quickly, and the formalizing of the foundation as an institution from 2002–2003 onwards. He cites the Social Forum process as an example: "So people travelled to Porto Alegre, held these fantastic, incredible events in Brazil, Florence, and Malmö, and created this phenomenon of Social Forums. It was there on 27 January 2003 that Arundhati Roy concluded her speech in front of an estimated 20,000 people in the packed Gigantinho sports stadium with the words: "Remember this: we are many, they are few. They need us more than we need them." And then here was this little foundation, which was already, in such matters, quite a mighty institution. This moment served to bring many people to the organization who would continue to work with the RLS for years to come. This international context, practical internationalism, and the corresponding organizational development were important milestones for the stabilization and positioning of the RLS in the years that followed.

Added to this was Die Linke's interest in the RLS: "The party sometimes believed that it could do anything it wanted with the foundation. It then quickly became apparent that this was not the case, that the foundation could not do whatever they wanted and it could not run election campaigns, etc. However, the party was still proud to have its own foundation." Many people are becoming increasingly aware that having a foundation is a wonderful thing.

Reflecting on the RLS's development through the lens of the Scholarship Department, Jane Angerjäv says: "We have grown considerably, not just the Scholarship Department, but also in other areas. Many new colleagues have been hired, bringing their expertise with them." At the same time, the number of scholarships provided has grown significantly. If 200 to 300 people receive funding, it is possible to have some kind of overview of what they all do. When you get to 1,000 people, this is no longer possible.

Angerjäv joined the RLS in 2009, a time in which Die Linke had great electoral success, achieving 11.9 percent of the vote. She emphasizes the prevailing spirit of optimism then, which stood in stark contrast to the situation in 2002–2003, when Gesine Löttsch and Petra Pau had been the

³⁷ This interview with Rainer Rilling was conducted on 21 September 2022, when he was a senior fellow at the IfG.

only members of the PDS in the Bundestag. She describes the situation in 2009 as follows: “We had an amazing election result, and then the foundation grew, certain departments merged, new topics were being addressed, and important areas of work were being strengthened. Many brand-new international offices were opened, and lots of people were hired. I can still remember my first day at work. Joanna Gwiazdecka and I received our employment contracts together. Joanna manages the Prague office now” [she previously managed the Warsaw office]. Looking back, however, Angerjäv wonders whether certain aspects of growth could have been managed more effectively over this period.

At the time of this interview with Jane Angerjäv in 2023, the situation at the RLS was quite different: Die Linke was in real crisis. The question of whether the party would stay together and experience a new dawn was an existential one for the future of the foundation. In this situation, the development of the party was inextricably intertwined with that of the RLS.

Meinhard Tietz³⁸ has spent many years working as both the head of accounting and deputy head of the RLS service division: “When I started here, almost all of us worked on one floor, we all knew each other personally, and everything ran very smoothly and unbureaucratically. Then Die Linke achieved a great election result, and we were able to expand our educational work and grow. Of course, our working methods had to be adapted accordingly.” In his opinion, the “good but cumbersome apparatus” had developed into a “bureaucratic administration.” He cites event management as an example. In the past, when you needed a room, you would go to the colleague responsible. “Then they checked, and the matter was settled. Nowadays, you enter everything into the system and check it there. Booking a room in the HQ is hard for outsiders, these days”, says Meinhard Tietz.

According to Jörn Schütrumpf, an important milestone was the founding of the Scholarship Department that created the opportunity for promoting a “new left-wing intelligentsia” in society. He points to the not-insignificant number of scholarship recipients who now hold professorships, something that would have been impossible to imagine 20 years ago. With this doctoral programme for historians, we have created a rather unique institution in Germany. Other than us, there is just the Institut für Soziale Bewegungen (Institute for Social Movements) in Bochum, and all research on labour movements had been destroyed, not only in the East, but also in the West”, says Jörn Schütrumpf. As an example, he cites the FU Berlin’s Zentralinstitut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung (Central Institute for Social Science Research), which closed in 1990. As a second important step forward, he cites the work of the international offices. There is no comparable left-wing

38 This interview with Meinhard Tietz was conducted on 5 November 2024. At that point, he was a board member in three dependent foundations.

structure like the RLS anywhere else in the world. If the RLS ceased to exist it would have a devastating effect on left-wing movements, left-wing communities, and left-wing intellectuals in many corners of the world. The third point is that, without the foundation, the publisher Karl Dietz Verlag would not have survived. From today's perspective, the continued existence of Karl Dietz Verlag is a huge success: "Today, we have the complete MEW [Marx-Engels-Werke, or Works of Marx and Engels], this would have been impossible without the RLS ... And we published the research work on Rosa Luxemburg that had been undertaken by Annelies Laschitza in her later years. These are invaluable works of research that we can continue to work on today." All the English-language editions of Rosa Luxemburg's writings, including five books published in the USA and the UK, would have been significantly poorer works without the prior research undertaken by Laschitza.

Schütrumpf does however make the criticism that the RLS's role is not as impactful as it could be for German discourse. "In the intellectual world in Germany there are a few individuals from the RLS that play a role. However, as far as I can see, the RLS itself is not perceived to be a centre for left-wing thought. However, I could be wrong or my judgement criteria may be off", Schütrumpf admits.

Nadja Charaby³⁹ was head of the RLS Vietnam office (2010–2015) and an advisor to the Special Funding Department with a special focus on climate change. She also noticed that the growth of the RLS took it from being a rather informal working environment to an organization with a division of labour, and that this had been a momentous event: "When I began working for the RLS, I found the atmosphere at the foundation to be highly informal. I came from large German institutions including the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and had also briefly worked for a university. The RLS was different. Every door was open, and you could talk to anyone, the people were incredibly nice — and this is still true today." She noticed that the RLS was rapidly growing and that in some corners of the organization, things were becoming more closed off. "In my time at the office in Hanoi I was very busy consolidating things and standardizing them. That was something that I brought with me. And that was also a phase in the foundation's growth: a lot of new rules were drawn up, many aspects were subject to distinct regulations. In the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (ZID), there was finally a handbook where you could look up things. On the administrative side, one could say that we got better at dispensing funds."

Regarding the ZID, she described a phase in which attempts were made to curb the rather eclectic mix of themes and focus on specific topics. This discussion was conducted across the whole foundation and is still an

39 This interview with Nadja Charaby was conducted on 2 April 2024. At that point, she was the director of the Asia and International Politics unit at the ZID.

ongoing topic. From her point of view, it has had some success. The project was able to identify five or six major topics for RLS work. In the face of dwindling funding, these debates have taken on a new urgency, with time pressure but also emotional pressure “because the opportunity to realize one’s own project — something that many here, myself included, have become accustomed to — is now diminishing”, says Charaby.

Charaby was on parental leave at the time of the 2021 federal election, in which Die Linke received a bad result. When she returned to work after a year, she felt that the foundation was “a mixture of depression and action.” The difference was stark. She describes the COVID-19 pandemic as another turning point: “Before COVID-19, we filled the event rooms with events on climate change without any major problems and without much advertising. Since COVID-19, it’s been difficult to get people to attend in-person events, especially here in the building”, she says, wondering: is it because of the topic, is it because of the location, is it because of the building? It is noticeable that the crisis that affected society as a whole is now being reflected in our daily work, beyond financial constraints or the need to focus on specific topics.

2.4 HEAD OFFICE, REGIONAL OFFICES, AND REGIONAL BRANCHES

Over the years, the RLS has grown into what you might call a mid-size institution, and has divided its operations accordingly — not just in terms of function, but also in terms of region. Over time, a network of state foundations and regional offices has sprung up that are closely linked to the federal foundation but are still independent entities. As is usual, there are tensions and conflicts within these relationships. The relationship between full-time and volunteer staff also plays a role in this tricky situation.

Florian Weis highlights the RLS network of state foundations as one of the greatest achievements in its history: “I truly believe ... that the work of the regional branches, the work in the field, and the support for students and doctoral candidates — and above all, keeping them onboard afterwards — is important for the foundation. Even if it makes me unpopular with the mighty ZID, I believe it’s more important because, despite everything, we are an institution here [in Germany].” It is therefore important to create a climate in which the left is strengthened or at least accepted by society as a force for democracy. The central point is: Where is centrism headed? Is it going the way of the Weimar government? Or will at least some of the population agree with former centre-left chancellor Joseph Wirth, who said in 1922: “The enemy is on the right!” This will be decisive in Germany and in Europe, even though an exchange of experience is enormously important.



Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Vietnam. Exchange partner: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Southeast Asia, Hanoi office; Door handle from the Institute for Scientific Socialism Ho Chi Minh (founded 1964); installed in room 5.04/7.14.

According to Florian Weis, despite all the conflicts that undoubtedly existed, East-West cooperation has been more successful in the RLS than in Die Linke, or even in society at large. He recalls the first meeting of the regional associations in “the West” after the 2002 election defeat in Bremen. The message from the East German regional branches was: we are in a better position than you, in some ways better than the federal foundation, and we are now stepping up for your benefit. I found it remarkable. You can also consider the inverse situation, when individual foundations later argued that they should receive funding on the basis of the size of their state, you could say: yes, but somewhere there must also be a compensatory bonus for our East German colleagues.”

“In the beginning, we decided that we would be completely different from other foundations, and we would never ever become bureaucratic”, says Jörn Schüttrumpf. After our first audit, the work began to expand our structure, particularly in the area of finance. At that time, the budget was five million deutsche marks. “Back then, two accountants were hired. Today the Administration Department is a huge apparatus. We wanted to keep it all very small, but we quickly learned that you can’t skimp on that side of things.” Some structural elements were also determined by the sources of funding, for example, international work being funded through relevant ministries.

“We wanted to run it in a completely democratic way. We appointed three executive directors, but that proved to be completely impractical, so after a year we reverted to having a single executive director, which we had actually never planned on doing again”, Schüttrumpf explains of this development. Every decision in favour of one thing was always a decision against five other things. “But I think that the series of decisions we made back then lasted for at least 15 years. In the meantime, the RLS has become such a vast and complex entity that I hardly know anyone here anymore.”

Meinhard Meuche-Mäker,⁴⁰ the long-time head of the Hamburg Office, emphasizes that the historical and contemporary conflicts between the head office in Berlin and the regional offices are not least because of fights over the distribution of available funds. He describes the head office: “There are so many people working there that for me, from a regional office, it’s completely overwhelming. People everywhere, going in every direction, and I’ve got no idea what they’re doing.” He sees this as part of a long-term trend. In certain areas, such as tech, admin, or IT, it is clear what is going on. In the Scholarship Department, it is relatively obvious what colleagues are doing. “However, in some areas ... in areas like international offices or institutes, these are fields where I have to say that the principle is not transparent.” He

40 This interview with Meinhard Meuche-Mäker was conducted on 19 May 2022. At that time, he was director of the Hamburg regional office.

FIG. 5: THE RLS NETWORK ACROSS GERMANY



does however admit that there are individual international offices that he has an easy working relationship with: for example, he would speak directly with the head of the New York office when organizing a digital event to assess the US presidential elections. If an educational trip to Athens needs to be planned, this is done directly with the management of the local office there.

He sees the positive effect of collaboration when it comes to support in areas such as IT or administration. “The fact that this is not just a regional branch but also a regional office, that we are integrated, and that the head office provides technical support and funding, is something that really stands out.” In these moments, it is clear that, while colleagues in regional offices are located elsewhere, they remain part of the whole. He does not always get this impression from colleagues working on content: “They probably see us in some kind of way, but more as people who are somehow still around. It is rare for colleagues working on content to approach the regional offices or us in Hamburg on their own initiative and say, ‘I have a big project, shall we do something together?’ So if anything, they approach us in the spirit of helping us with our work, that has happened again and again, and then we just have to sit it out.”

Murat Çakır⁴¹ worked in the press and media team in the RLS PR department in Berlin from 2006 to 2009, and since 2009 he has headed the RLS regional office in Hessen. He sees his role as a mediator between different polarities: party and foundation, central and regional, employee and volunteer. He considers the development of the foundation as a whole to be somewhat contradictory and asymmetrical: “I want to start with a critique, although my criticism should also be seen as self-criticism, because I myself am also an employee of the RLS. I think that the overly rapid and asymmetrical development of certain parts of the foundation has led to inequalities in the work, including in terms of content. It was to be expected that certain segments would grow too quickly, for example the Centre for International Dialogue, where it was clear that this would grow in line with the many international offices, or the expansion of the Scholarship Department. That was only natural, but in other areas, I think people were too focused on Berlin.”

This is typical in large organizations that have to arrange activities and coordinate across a central and decentralized structure. It did not go so well in the beginning. In the meantime, the Germany-wide work was gaining a certain degree of support in the foundation. Nevertheless, he sees an imbalance between the work on a local level and the Berlin head office. While in-house services would support event organization at head office, regional office managers were left to fend for themselves: “Back

⁴¹ This interview with Murat Çakır was conducted on 28 July 2022. At that time, he was director of the Hessen regional office.

then, we did everything ourselves, from advertising to renting the rooms; we communicated with the speakers and organized everything: developing the concept together with various partner organizations, then handling the implementation, and the documentation. Everything that is now done by the various departments in Berlin, we had to do by ourselves”, he recalls. However, the breadth of tasks involved in his job was also what attracted him to working at the RLS.

He sees different stages of development, particularly in the transition from the initial period of voluntary work to a dual voluntary and full-time approach. He points out that the RLS would not exist in its current form today were it not for the volunteer work that began back in 1990. This voluntary work should be singled out for special recognition. When the RLS became an official party-affiliated foundation in 1999, funds from the federal government began to flow in. He knows the stories from back then. His colleagues explained that, back then, even those who were paid employees (according to collective agreements) ended up doing a lot of work on a voluntary basis.

“Michael Herms, my colleague from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, always said: ‘I have 1,000 hours of overtime, but I don’t note them down.’ That was true for many of us back then and is still true for me”, Murat Çakır explains. He has not accrued 1,000 hours of overtime because he claims time off in lieu, but: “I always write down: ‘I worked from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.’, and then put a full stop. But ultimately, I work on Saturdays and Sundays, and I work in the evenings. As do many colleagues, not only at the federal-state level, but also in some cases in Berlin. And then there is voluntary work at the local level, both state and municipal. That is diversity, that is the cornerstone that underpins all of the work done by the RLS. Without voluntary work on the ground, the RLS would not have come as far as it has.”

Gregor Kritidis,⁴² a former employee of the RLS in Saxony-Anhalt, highlights the support provided by the head office and emphasizes that it is not just about money. “We’re talking about the maintenance and servicing of our computers, we’re talking about what to do when we have an IT problem here. We could hire a local company, but the people from the foundation are our people, and I can trust them.” Kritidis refers to the support he receives for his work, emphasizing that his exchanges with his colleagues in Berlin are very different: “There are people who respond with great eagerness when you say: do you have this or that, can you do such-and-such? And then they get right down to it. And then there are others with whom it’s more difficult. However, it’s like this in every large institution, some people are easier to work with than others, it’s normal.”

42 This interview with Gregor Kritidis was conducted on 12 April 2023. At that time, he was the chairman of the board of the RLS Saxony-Anhalt.



From the 1999/2000
Annual Report: A presentation in Erfurt of
387,469 signed sheets
for the popular petition
“Mehr Demokratie
in Thüringen”
(More Democracy for
Thuringia) on
15 December 2000.

Erhard Korn,⁴³ who was for many years head of the regional branch in Baden-Württemberg, emphasized that he had very good personal relationships with certain individuals: “It was always like this, that someone from the Berlin leadership came to our general assemblies, joined in with our discussions and gave us the feeling that we weren’t just an appendage.” At first, he found the federal office a bit inscrutable. He even compared the structure to an “order of monks.” At the first General Assembly he attended, he noticed that the foundation’s basic principle was co-optation. “This meant that the board accepted new members, but these members bore no responsibility to the wider regional associations. I was very pleased that the regional branches became institutional members. I thought that was a very important step toward taking the regional branches — i.e. the grassroots membership structure — seriously in the first place”, Korn said. He acknowledges that there is a strong focus on Berlin. The capital is simply its own biotope with its own rules. You can see this all across federal politics as well as in the federal foundation.

On his main criticism of the work of the head office, he says: “I have noticed that there are disputes and discussions going on there that sometimes struck me as very self-referential. People associated with the foundation publish articles about the foundation on topics that interest them and may also be of interest to many others, but which are not directly related to the foundation’s key areas of focus.” However, he noted that since Die Linke’s

⁴³ This interview with Erhard Korn was conducted on 31 August 2022. At that time, he was the chairman of the board of the RLS Baden-Württemberg.

existential crisis, “the RLS has been much more concerned with strategically underpinning what our party should actually be doing.” Referencing the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, he cites the need to support future leadership as a key task for political foundations, one that the RLS is increasingly taking on.

Erhard Korn would like to see a greater focus on specific areas, for example by offering programmes of events that would tour the federal states, featuring a strong lineup of speakers and platforming important topics. Exhibitions already offer such opportunities, and so this aspect should be reinforced. He adds: “At first, I had the impression that the individual people in the foundation were a bit like monads, living their own lives. But that is not enough: not to help form left-wing strategy, not for building specific left-wing alliances. And sometimes, there is too little substantive support given to the regional branches.”

2.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICES AND THE BERLIN HEAD OFFICE

Over the course of the last 35 years, the RLS has diversified and expanded — both nationally and internationally. That is why our focus will turn now to the RLS international offices, which you will find on virtually every continent.

Working in human resources, first as a manager and then as head of the department, **Annegret Rohwedder**⁴⁴ clearly remembers the foundation’s period of extreme growth. She joined the RLS in 2008, when the workforce consisted of less than 100 employees. In 2023, at the time of this interview, there were around 300. This was a tremendous challenge. She cites the example of the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (ZID), the largest RLS department. When she started, the ZID had roughly five units, each with three or four members of staff: “The units grew, pursuing topics that were interesting in each respective region. Then Wilfried Telkämper joined [as head of the ZID] and the department grew from being around 20 employees to having 40 people in Germany, 30 people abroad, and 20–24 offices worldwide”, she recalls. Certain standards, content planning, and priorities had to be introduced across the entire division. On average, each international office employs around ten local staff members.



To German-Kazakh friendship! Exchange partner: Kazakh-German University in Almaty, Kazakhstan; installed in room 4.18.

⁴⁴ This interview was conducted with Annegret Rohwedder on 6 February 2023, while she was head of Human Resources for the RLS.

A process was initiated to develop guidelines, set content priorities, and improve networking between the offices. It established performance criteria for the departments responsible for managing the offices in specific regions. This process was to set the standard for how many staff members would be needed to implement projects. “As a result, the ZID ultimately became a department that operated more effectively and less governed by chance than it had in the beginning. At the start, everything was still very much driven by the enthusiasm generated by us having the means to actually do something. And we did what people thought was right. Before, we depended much more on individuals to set priorities. Now, we place a strong emphasis on planning and organizational aspects”, she says, reflecting on the current process. A similar development later took place in the work carried out at the federal level.

FIG. 6: THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICES



Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, head of the RLS Johannesburg office from 2007 to 2010, recalls his arrival in South Africa: "I met with a colleague from the Ebert Foundation. He was a real tough old boy who, during the Apartheid era, had transported suitcases full of money from Lesotho to South Africa for people associated with the Ebert Foundation, which is really commendable. But he only considered me worthy when I gave him my book *Das Ende der SED* (The End of the SED), which led him to decide: Okay, he's not just some East German nostalgic who glosses over everything. By the end of my three-and-a-half years in Johannesburg, I was the longest-serving office director, because the others had come and gone, so I was basically the 'doyen' and was allowed to speak first when we had dealings with the embassy — and that was accepted."



This is an expression of the respect enjoyed by the RLS, especially abroad. “In some countries, our partner organizations and relevant local figures consider us to be truly exceptional because we have facilitated and established a great deal in their countries over the years. This applies in particular to large project partners, but also to some extent to government institutions”, Stephan adds. He considers local responses to the RLS to be very positive. In South Africa, Brazil, Vietnam, Eastern and Southern European countries, and the European Parliament, people greatly appreciate the fact that the RLS primarily supports NGOs and promotes specific projects. The extent to which the foundation’s work is appreciated in different countries naturally depends on their ideological orientation. The fact that the PiS government in Poland was not happy about RLS support for queer initiatives is another matter. In Stephan’s opinion, the RLS is a kind of model student in its international work, especially in terms of its finances, as it adheres very strictly to the relevant regulations.

From 2010 to 2015, Nadja Charaby worked as head of the RLS Vietnam office in Hanoi. She reports that this was a period in which a lot of work was being done on Rosa Luxemburg and her reception in Vietnam — building on the excellent work on the subject that had already been started there. Charaby also felt it was very important to expand Germany’s ideas about Vietnam: “How has Vietnam developed, what are the aspirations of its very young population, and how has Vietnam managed its reform process? In the 1980s, Vietnam also decided to open up its economy.” The Vietnam office has addressed all these questions, including how international exchange can generate added value for all sides.

Her time as office director coincided with the start of the RLS’s collaboration with the Laotian National Assembly. In Cambodia, partnerships were established to organize precarious workers, meaning those without employment contracts. Myanmar joined these efforts in 2012. Even in times of severe oppression, there have always been and continue to be socialists and people who identify with the socialist movement. One of the Hanoi office’s projects involved engaging in dialogue with these people. In Vietnam, work focusing on gender equality and the rights of ethnic minorities is ongoing, as well as on issues of economic development and the environment, particularly in view of the increasing impact of climate change in the region.

Charaby was fortunate not to have to build the office from the ground up. However, the funding increase facilitated the hiring of more employees, most of whom are still there. It has not been easy for her to manage a team in an international context. But she had the benefit of knowing the region well, having already lived in Vietnam for several years, and having had experience of managing a team. Nevertheless, she sometimes felt a bit isolated. “There was the possibility of exchanging ideas with colleagues at the RLS, but at that time we didn’t have Zoom yet, Skype was still very new, and the internet

connection was often patchy.” It was a good thing that the Berlin unit was there to assist her.

She built up her own network locally. The office directors of various political foundations exchanged information on a regular basis, as the issues they would encounter locally are often similar, for example when it came to administrative challenges. In Vietnam, everything is so tightly regulated that, politically speaking, it is virtually impossible to commit a faux pas. Everything has to be approved. “We wouldn’t have been able to organize an event in which security agencies would come along and demand something. I actually think it was good that we always had to implement things in collaboration with local organizations, so that no real problems could arise and we could be sure that we were meeting local needs and interests on both sides”, says Charaby.

After living in Vietnam for a total of seven years, four of which she spent as director of the Vietnam office, Charaby reached a point where she realized that the country’s politics are, in some respects, very restrictive. For example, there people are not allowed to use the term “human rights” and it does not appear in political documents. This is a small thing that might not really affect you in your day-to-day life as a foreigner, but when you work in politics, you notice: the constraints were in certain instances fairly tight. For her, it was time to wrap up her work in Vietnam.

For Dagmar Enkelmann, even as Chair of the Executive Board, her work abroad was just as important to her as her work at home, and she always tried to better incorporate the former into the latter: “It was important to me that we could work on certain topics in a way that bridged different departments. One of the topics that was important to me from the outset was climate justice. I was involved in international processes at a very early stage and regularly participated in climate summits. Working with partner organizations, I have always been impressed by how much potential, how many great people, contacts, and how much knowledge there was.” She always regretted that this potential remained, so to speak, confined to a particular area or group. This also applied to other issues, such as migration and its consequences for German domestic politics after 2015: “We had known for a long time what was happening in the African regions: which livelihoods are threatened, which wars are raging there, which conflicts — and what that means for the people who live there but who cannot go on living there and so who begin the process of migration, first into neighbouring countries and at a certain point, sometimes on to Europe and Germany.” In her view, the foundation was in this area more forward-thinking than German society as a whole, and also more than Die Linke. She wanted to expand the RLS educational and outreach work and have a greater effect on society, the left-wing movement, and Die Linke.

Heinz Bierbaum describes the closer integration of foreign and domestic work, or rather harnessing the potential of foreign work for educational work in Germany, as one of his main focuses. As president of the Party of the European Left and chair of the International Commission of Die Linke, he has been able to focus in on Europe-wide and international work. His extensive experience shapes his perspective on the RLS: “I have always considered the RLS’s international presence a great advantage and a valuable resource. With many offices abroad, the RLS enjoys strong international recognition. We have to make the most of this presence. That is essentially what I have in mind: strengthening this closer integration with our international work.”

2.6 POLITICAL EDUCATORS VERSUS SOCIAL ANALYSTS

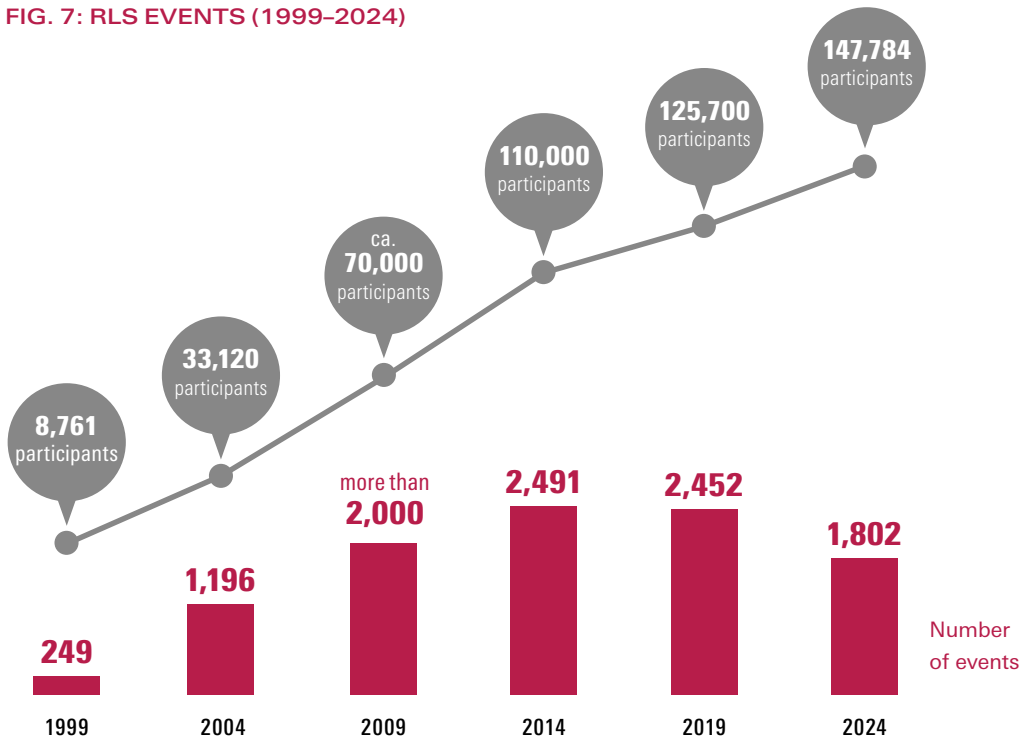


You are welcome!
Exchange partner:
Rosa-Luxemburg-
Stiftung New York
office; installed in
room 3.18.

One fundamental tension that has shaped RLS history from the very beginning is that between political educators on one hand and more theory and humanities oriented social analysts on the other. Throughout the 35-year history of the RLS, the two groups have repeatedly clashed over the foundation’s direction. This competition between political education and analysis ultimately led to the establishment of two separate departments in 2009: the Akademie für Politische Bildung (Academy for Political Education) and the Institut für Gesellschaftsanalyse (Institute for Social Analysis).

This difference was already apparent in the phase leading up to the RLS’s founding. Evelin Wittich was among those who strongly advocated for the idea of a political education programme from the outset. In the early 1990s, she analysed political foundations in the Federal Republic of Germany, in collaboration with her colleague Dieter Schlönvoigt: “It was clear to us that the idea of creating a primarily research-focused institution was not in line with the goals and tasks of political foundations. Political education for the public that is in line with left-wing socialist principles is also of interest to the affiliated party. We didn’t want to neglect education either. We wanted to bring political education to the fore because all these foundations are educational institutions. Even today, some of us still don’t really understand or haven’t really grasped the fact that we receive global funding for socio-political education work.” She recalls that political education in the Federal Republic of Germany had been financed by the political parties until as recently as the 1950s. However, this type of party-backed financing was controversial. For that reason, party-affiliated foundations modelled on the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung were established. These foundations took on the task of political education in line with their respective party’s political orientation.

FIG. 7: RLS EVENTS (1999–2024)



Regarding the question of educational approach, Evelin Wittich responds: “Over this period, many called for the reinstatement of a *Parteiwehrjahr* (party training year). And we responded that we no longer want to have a party training year. But of course, we do also want to impart basic knowledge, and we want to provide emancipatory education; we want to give people the opportunity to acquire knowledge so that they can make their own political decisions and get involved in politics. We want to encourage people to engage in politics and be political people. These were the issues we were dealing with. At the same time, she argues against

this separation of analysis and political education, instead being in favour of bringing them together. It is the only way that the RLS as think tank can actually have an impact on society and vice versa.

Michael Brie emphasizes the necessity of linking social analysis and political education — not least in the form of continuing education for left-wing political actors. In his view, stronger and more systematic support is needed in this area. The interface between foreign and domestic work should also be considered together. “I think we were able to do something that no one else could do. There have been repeated attempts, but I don’t think anyone else has been as successful. And it is often the case that people who take on roles in the party no longer systematically invest in continuing education or research.” As an example, he cites his book *Sozialismus neu entdecken* (Rediscovering Socialism) that was published in 2022. As part of this project, he examined the contradictions that a new socialism would have to face in practice. “So, I think that a genuinely joint programme of continuing education — not just for people who are active in the party but also for those involved in social movements, left-wing trade unions, etc. — could definitely be an important contributing factor to the continued evolution of the RLS.” He is aware that, for example, much more attention would need to be paid to the problems facing these people. This would certainly also contribute to a change in thinking and working practices for those at the RLS itself. In his view, it would be beneficial for the RLS if this field of genuine political education were approached and addressed more systematically as a communal task, in the sense of systematic continuing education.

Meinhard Tietz considers it of great importance that the foundation have a broad base of activities. It has to carry out some academic work. As the theoretical centre of the left, it should be about research in specific areas, and studies and publications. “However, all these academic activities must also benefit people, have an impact on the outside world, and to me our output seems to be insufficient in this regard. We’ve been living through very uncertain times for over two years now. In the outside world, you can really sense that people are feeling unsettled. They have questions, they need a place to talk, where they can exchange ideas”, says Tietz. Such a space would reach a lot of people, make the foundation more visible, and raise its profile. Because, for people, reality is just formed of one’s lived experience. The regional branches are one step ahead in this regard and should get even more support. In his view, RLS staff and volunteers should work together more closely to address issues affecting the population and, when it comes to public events, put themselves out there as being available to talk with attendees.

Lutz Brangsch,⁴⁵ who held various senior roles at the RLS from 1999 to 2023, advocates combining the teaching of political management skills with knowledge of the history of the labour movement, i.e. combining form and content. In his opinion, content and form should not be separated from

45 The interview with Lutz Brangsch was conducted on 31 March 2022, while he was an academic advisor at the IfG.

one another. Looking back, he says: "Firstly, we succeeded in establishing a systematic educational programme that was actually geared toward developing leftists with a firm intellectual grounding. The participants were equipped with a relatively broad knowledge base about how to make policy and what kind of policy to make, but too much emphasis was placed on the 'how.'" Not only were there policy management courses, but also, for example, an "Attacademie" organized in collaboration with Attac, and the Municipal Academy. In his view, this was a theme that needed to be developed much more strongly, as young left-wingers come from an academic field that only selectively imparted a standard curriculum. "We are not going to train working-class cadres; in any case, it is relatively unlikely that they will combine their personal experiences with what they have read of August Bebel or Ferdinand Lassalle, as the itinerant teachers of early social democracy did. For this, you need to have a certain group of people who may earn their living elsewhere, but who are capable of providing left-wing political education for the modern world", says Brangsch. This requires systematic educational programmes so that people do not end up with only half the picture: "You know a little bit about Gramsci, you know a little bit about Marx, you know a little bit about this, that, and the other. But for most leftists, there's a gap when it comes to understanding how they all relate to one another."

All debates on the left have become discussions of fragments, no longer based on a comprehensive understanding of left-wing ideas, which should also include cultural knowledge. Left-wing graduates are masters at using rhetoric to take down their opponents, but their arguments lack substance: "You can see that in the paths taken by various graduates of political management courses, for example. As I said, I believe this systematic approach is one area where they are generally lacking." Those taking part in political education courses must be taught not only political forms, but also specific content, such as basic knowledge about Rosa Luxemburg and the history of the labour movement. "Political management education needs to encompass both. So, it's not just about the how, but you have to bring in cultural knowledge, academic knowledge, historical knowledge, and you have to create this unity somehow. It won't happen spontaneously or by chance", he concludes.

2.7 OLD VERSUS YOUNG, EAST VERSUS WEST, MAN VERSUS WOMAN



Niyamgiri Hills, India.
Exchange partner:
Living Farms; The
Niyamgiri Hills are the
home of the Dongria
Kondh, an Adivasi
community in the
Rayagada district of
Odisha; installed in
room 3.14/8.04.

In an organization as large as the RLS, one which since 2010 has seen rapid growth over a short period of time, tensions of various kinds are inevitable. Some have already been covered. In addition, the interview excerpts to come will show that there are further tensions arising from generational difference (“old versus young”), regional background (“East versus West”) and gender issues (“woman versus man”). Depending on who you ask, you may get different assessments and perceptions of how intense these differences have been and how they have developed over time.

In addition to the differences he mentioned between political educators and social theorists, Lutz Brangsch identified further points of tension at the RLS: “There was a conflict between those who were more concerned with content and those who were involved in administration. This distinction was already misunderstood by some who saw it as a value judgement. But there is also a second dimension: internal conflict, where a person may on the one hand be engaged in the political side of things, while also being involved in administration. In other words, they have an opinion on the matter but they also have to carry out an administrative process. This is also the case with those who consider themselves intellectuals, academics, or artists, who naturally also always want to enforce certain administrative procedures in accordance with their own ideas.” The conflicts that arose from these differences concerned, on the one hand, the question of whether certain expenses were appropriate and, on the other hand, how important it was to fill out forms correctly, or whether insisting on the “correct” signature could sabotage important substantive projects. According to Brangsch, this problem has not been solved because neither side has made much effort to address it. On the contrary, the increase in the number of employees has raised institutional hurdles and because of colleagues functioning as intermediaries, widened the gap between the two poles of the workforce.

In addition, we do not get to see one another anymore. In the first phase of the RLS, workers saw each other all the time and were usually in constant contact with one another. “Today you have different departments, even different floors, which has grown the distance between team members. As far as I can tell, social distancing has increased due to the larger size of the workforce, so people no longer encounter each other. Interaction is already limited to an anonymous administrative process and there are many intermediate stages that allow the conflict to run its course, which serves as a further dampener on human interaction. I believe much of this remains unresolved.”

While Brangsch highlights the differences between academic and administrative staff, Lisa Albrecht discusses the increase in differences based on age and geography (meaning: East/West) among employees, which she observed in her early days of working for the RLS in the late 2000s: “It was a pretty exciting time because I came onboard during a steady increase in the number of work assignments, fields of work, and new hires — who needed guidance, of course. Albrecht’s role included processing job applications: “and as I looked through the CVs, I noticed that the kind of people who were interested in the RLS had changed over the years. The applicants were getting younger and younger, and increasingly the CVs came from people who had grown up not only in East Germany but also in West Germany ... The composition of the foundation was changing, which interested me. Another expanding area of work was foreign employees because back then more and more international offices were being opened. At that time, the RLS had also joined the political foundation collective bargaining agreement. This changed how we worked with the other political foundations. There was a lot of change on many different fronts”, Albrecht explains.

Albrecht did not notice any differences between East and West at first, “but later on, yes.” There were already a few West Germans working at the RLS when she started working there. But she was not really aware of their presence. More West Germans joined the workforce. She thought it was good and proper that the RLS had become a Germany-wide project. “But of course it also changed the makeup of the foundation and, I believe, influenced its orientation as well.”

When Annegret Rohwedder considers the increase in staffing at the RLS, she sees changes in the relationship to the affiliated party (in terms of closeness or distance), between East and West, and in issues of gender. She joined the foundation at a time when “a vague left-wing stance was enough to get a foot in the door”, especially in the ZID, the department which saw the most growth. This is when those who are now between 30 and 45 years old were hired. “I have the impression that this has given rise to a culture that was and is different from that of the early years. What I consider problematic is that, with this changed generational composition among our employees, we sometimes have a greater distance to our affiliated party. One example of this was the feminist strike on 8 March 2019, when I first noticed the difference between employees from the East and West.” This developed into the *Feministische Mittagstisch* (Feminist Lunch Meet-Up). From her perspective, there is still a divide between this younger generation on the one hand and older East German women on the other: “What had previously been hidden or seemed surprising suddenly resurfaced. So there was a cultural shift that continues to have an impact today. There is no rift, but there is a clear boundary within the RLS.” Rohwedder notes that, at the RLS, the East-West conflict combines with a conflict over gender issues.



Berlin, 8 March 2019:
**Solidarity with global
 feminist struggles.**

“The East-West question runs through the RLS and at the same time manifests itself in generational questions”, says Barbara Fried, recalling 8 March 2019 and the idea of supporting global feminist struggles such as an action in the RLS. At the time, we weren’t in a position to strike against our employer in the strict sense of the word, but there was a desire to participate, when so many others were striking at their workplaces. It was also about solidarity. That’s when the idea of a kind of self-organized politically active lunch break came up: going through the building, gathering people, holding a mini-demonstration, and taking a photo with everyone outside”, recalls Fried. However, the “gathering” was not well received by all employees, with some feeling that the campaign was intrusive. Differences in political socialization became apparent. After the action, she had to spend a long time “picking up the pieces” and had endless follow-up discussions about that day. “This sparked some pretty interesting discussions. The younger women in particular couldn’t understand why there had been so many misgivings. But they took these misgivings seriously and addressed them, which led to various open discussions, some of them on a larger scale, particularly regarding East-West experience”, remembers Fried.

Since 2023, a new and intense East-West debate has been playing out in the opinion pages of the German media, as well as in the wider society. “This often very heated discourse points to unresolved problems that affect society

as a whole and also the RLS. From November 2024 to January 2025, *Berliner Zeitung* published ten full-page opinion pieces by social scientists, historians, and journalists, including some from France”, says Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan. These think pieces were a response to a contemporary history symposium held by the RLS, which had discussed topics including the extent to which the history of the GDR should be viewed through the lens of dictatorship.

Hana Pfennig⁴⁶ looks back on the years between 2011 and 2015 as a period in which three particular lines of difference shaped the internal culture of the foundation: East/West, old/young, and party/movement. She remembers that in the early years of the RLS, she would discuss these topics more frequently with her colleagues. The differences between colleagues with East German and West German backgrounds were far more pronounced than today. I often thought about how differently people would perceive certain issues. The difference in understanding of the strategic direction of the RLS was also striking, particularly between long-time members and those who, like me, were new to the organization.”

These differences are much less pronounced today, and Pfennig does not think that they currently have a significant impact on the RLS. This is because the foundation has become much larger and more diverse overall. The constellation that caused these differences no longer exists in this form today.

2.8 VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: BETWEEN UTOPIA AND REALISM

In the face of the success of the RLS, as well as the ongoing tensions, contradictions, and conflicts within it, our interviewees shared a common hope and desire: a future for the foundation as a left-wing educational institution. In response to the final question of the interview, “What is your vision for the RLS for the coming decade?”, the answers ranged from hope to apprehension. An important factor in this response was the deepening crisis of Die Linke at the time we conducted the interviews. With Die Linke having the unexpected success of entering the Bundestag following the 2025 election, the situation has now changed: the RLS is back on solid ground. Back then, this was unforeseeable.

Heinz Bierbaum envisions a future in which the RLS has established itself as a left-wing political think tank and holds a highly respected position in social



Rear courtyard in Plagwitz, Leipzig. Exchange partner: Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie e.V. Founded in 2012, the association defines itself as a political education collective. Installed in room 4.14.

⁴⁶ The interview with Hana Pfennig was conducted on 2 December 2022, while she was an advisor to the ZID leadership.

discourse. “This means analysing social upheaval and drawing conclusions regarding the ramifications for the political situation and the work of the left in general. And using these conclusions to set priorities, both in terms of policy and content”. He firmly believes that the RLS is pursuing the correct approach with the broad range of thematic focal points defined by the Executive Board. He regards the social-ecological transformation as a key issue in the current context, to which the RLS could make a significant contribution through its work in social analysis and diagnosis of the times, thereby enhancing the foundation’s profile. A second key issue for Bierbaum is peace and geopolitics. He points to the major political changes of our era, which he considers to be primarily about global hegemony. “Here, we must take a stance as a foundation and offer a platform for discussion — one that involves our international offices, which represent an important resource for this work”. Naturally, there is a continued need to address the vital issues of social justice, trade unions, the welfare state, and the “society of the many”.

Evelin Wittich stressed that, when it comes to political education, the RLS should focus on crucial strategic questions: “The foundation does have an educational mandate, but this mandate must be linked to social debates. We focus even more on pursuing our original goal: encouraging people to engage with politics, and to actively get involved.” She mentioned that she often encounters individuals at events who say, “I’m very interested in all of this and would like to become active in politics, but I don’t want to have to study social sciences first. I don’t want to just listen to academic lectures, I want to participate in discussions that are content-driven and academically rigorous, but which I can also understand and contribute to.” In Wittich’s view, this aspiration to be comprehensible and to reach a broader segment of society should be the guiding principle behind political education. For her, this represents the foundation’s true mission, and she is seeing very positive examples of this, for example in local politics. Although she has not been directly involved with the work of the RLS for some time (but remains very active in the RLS Saxony-Anhalt), and does not think that she can judge all the goings-on at the foundation, she believes the RLS will need this kind of approach in the future.

Lisa Albrecht wants the RLS to play an important role within the prevailing political currents and to undertake work that benefits others: “It is not about us personally, it is not about self-preservation and keeping ourselves busy — we must focus on society, on people”. To achieve this, the foundation’s work must also be constantly questioned and open to scrutiny. After all, society and people are constantly changing. “That is why I do not have a clear picture of how the foundation will look in seven or ten years; that is impossible to know right now”.

For Nadja Charaby, it is important that the RLS continues to exist and that its valuable work is preserved, for which she is willing to give a lot, both professionally and personally. She wants the RLS to be a consistently critical

voice that speaks out about the true state of things. “That means providing analysis, broadening horizons by looking at what happens in the world beyond Germany and Europe, and maintaining contact and collaborating with left-wing organizations. And also taking what we do internationally and reworking it so that it is more visible and more useful here in Germany. I hope we can continue to support young people through scholarships, ideas, or in any which way. That remains essential — both here and abroad.” She hopes that in the future the RLS will become less of an institution and go back to being more of a political project. Due to its substantial growth and the process of administrative professionalization, the foundation often functions more as an administrative apparatus. Charaby would like to see the political project of the RLS become a larger part of its everyday work. She believes that bringing all the departments back under the same roof [the international department, which initially remained at Franz Mehring Platz 1, moved to the new premises in 2024] has brought people closer and makes cross-departmental work easier: “I have had positive experiences in this regard and would like to see more of this in the future. The foundation does have a culture of discussion, and internal debates are growing, especially in connection with the organizational restructuring (the process, which began in 2025, of adjusting structure and personnel in line with the new financial conditions). I hope that everyone will move closer together and become more tightly integrated.”

When asked about his vision for the RLS, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan responded that this “verged on being an underhanded question for a historian”, as history has shown that the prognoses of historians are almost always wrong. He did however admit that he cannot conceive of a future devoid of left-wing politics. He went on to highlight the unique — and in his view, indispensable — intertwining of academic research and political education in the foundation’s work: “Education plays an even more important role than academic work. There are other institutions centred around academia, but in the Federal Republic of Germany, for understandable reasons, political education was never intended to be the sole preserve of the Federal Agency for Civic Education. That is why I think that a scholarly education remains as necessary as ever”. Nonetheless, he can imagine that the form in which it takes place will undergo revolutionary change. “The traditional methods of political education that we have learnt will eventually be replaced by something else. We are not going to stop organizing events, but I doubt that the whole apparatus will remain the same. Surely there are other ways of doing things.”

“My vision for the foundation is one in which we realize its core mission, one in which we bring left-wing issues to the public, start debates, change people’s mindsets in our society, leading to new and different developments, and motivate people to become politically active by creating the right conditions for them to do so”, said Daniela Trochowski. In other words, “we focus, we work together, we strengthen our communication strategies



With a diverse programme of political and cultural events, the RLS showcased its work at its new headquarters on 5 September 2021. Since then, the RLS open day has been held annually on the first weekend of March. The original idea evolved into the *de:lux* festival. These photographs from different years capture the atmosphere and the programme of the festival.



regardless of the field — be it political education or analysis — and we collaborate with as many left-wing people as possible on these same issues.” Trochowski views the RLS as an active force in left-wing politics that lays the foundations for transforming society. She advocates for the party and the parliamentary group to again place greater importance on this important role.

Cathleen Bürgelt’s principal desire is for people to realize that we must all stand united and work together. She highlighted the many young people who have joined the RLS Brandenburg in recent years, saying this gives her hope. “At least at the federal state level, we need a push to again be more forward-looking, even if it initially comes from a place of desperation. That also involves analysing what has happened, including where things have not gone as we had expected. Engaging critically with the past is just as much part of the work as developing a social utopia.” For her, this applies equally to the work of political education and to the party; strengthening Die Linke requires a brighter tomorrow, yet recently there have been scant discussions about what the future holds. Her hope and desire for the RLS is that people come to us despite the generally poor state of things. She believes we must organize events that people are eager to attend, such as the traditional Potsdam summer reception, “where there is not only food and drink to make the conversation more pleasant, but also an educational programme that brings people together around a theme”.

Rainer Rilling highlighted what he believes makes the foundation so special and worth preserving: “It is a special kind of foundation. It is not an educational foundation, nor is it an academic foundation — it is a foundation for change! The purpose of the institution is to change the world.” Referring to the recent federal election and the campaign appearances of the SPD’s candidate for chancellor, whose campaign for change seemed in reality to have been defined by minimalism and a reluctance to express any real views, he concluded: “We live in a country where non-change and a certain complacency are widespread. Even if there are a few exceptions.”

Dieter Klein has a clear vision for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. In his vision, “we do such a good job in certain key areas that trade unions, climate activists, care workers, and others are eager for us to join their movements as contributors, advisors, or partners. There would be great demand for what we have to offer because it would be well established that we have expertise.” He adds: “Both the leadership of Die Linke and the RLS would find ways to engage in ongoing dialogue on how we on the left can get society moving, on how Die Linke can shift from the defensive to the offensive — and we would have something to offer, something meaningful to offer.” Universities — not only in Germany — would view the RLS as an equal. Its expertise would be seen as an advantage, as it satisfies a need for left-wing conceptions of society that universities have been wholly or partially lacking. It would become commonplace for certain media outlets

to invite people from the foundation to share their views. He pointed out that the RLS is the largest left-wing think tank in Europe and the EU. “And to expand our international presence, even more so than we have already — that is also part of my vision. It would be wonderful if people also enjoyed what we write. If the nitty-gritty of our day-to-day work did not prevent us from producing enjoyable, linguistically accessible content, and if people were pleased to read something written by us”, concluded Dieter Klein. Left-wing content would then be something to savour, rather than making for grim reading. Perhaps this could even strengthen our connection to artists. For Klein, the foundation undoubtedly has much to offer in this regard; it is not as if it has nothing to contribute. However, “if this were a widespread aspiration, one that was also a topic of discussion within the foundation, then even more could be achieved.”

3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG- STIFTUNG



On 16 November 1990, a group of mostly social scientists with East German backgrounds gathered in Berlin at the former faculty room of the Academy of Social Sciences in what is now Taubenstraße. Their goal was to establish a political foundation that would operate on an equal footing with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, both of which were of West German origin. Six months earlier, while still under GDR law, an association had been registered with the Berlin-Mitte district court under the name Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. (Social Analysis and Political Education), registration number 906.⁴⁷ The aim was to create a research institution aligned with the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). However, by the time the General Assembly had met for the first time on 20 October 1990 — after German reunification — circumstances had changed considerably.

The new aim was for the association to serve as the basis for a political foundation, with the hope that it could be state-funded from around mid-1992. However, this required a comprehensive change to the statutes: the identity and mission of the association had to be redefined, and its activities expanded to include political education, facilitating meetings and dialogue between people of differing political views, and making contributions to historical engagement. On 20 October, the members present voted to approve this course of action, but the amendment to the statutes failed because the necessary quorum of two thirds of the members was not reached.

A second meeting on 16 November paved the way for reform. It approved the necessary amendments to the statutes, expanded the membership, and instructed the newly formed Executive Board to apply to the PDS for recognition of the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. as a political foundation affiliated with the party. The General Assembly elected Hans Dehnert, Dr. Detlef Hansel, Prof. Karl-Heinz Thieme, Dr. Jochen Weichold, and Dr. Evelin Wittich as the members of the first Executive Board. The board formed a three-member Executive Committee comprising Hans Dehnert, Karl-Heinz Thieme, and Evelin Wittich. Both the composition of the board and that of its executive committee changed during the 1990s. Lutz Brangsch, Michael Brie, Ilseget Fink, Oswald Kasper, Dieter Klein, Marion Kunze, Christa Luft, and Birgit Schliewenz were among the members of the Executive Board at different points during those years.

47 For the previous history of the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V., see Jochen Weichold, "Gleiche Augenhöhe war das Ziel: Die Anfänge der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung reichen bis in die Umbruchszeit in der DDR im Herbst 1989 zurück", *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weiss, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, pp. 34–41.

3.1 A VOLUNTEER-RUN ASSOCIATION (1991–1999)⁴⁸

On 24 April 1991, the association *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* was registered in Berlin-Charlottenburg under the number NZ 10802. In August of that year, the association opened the doors of its first dedicated offices at Littenstraße 106–107 in the district of Mitte. By October, it had relocated to a larger space suitable for hosting events at Rigaer Straße 27 in the district of Friedrichshain. In August 1994, following the landlord's termination of the lease, the association moved into an office building at Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 in Friedrichshain, which was also home to the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*.

In March 1994, the association created its first departments. A series of different initiatives and previous projects gave rise to the Project Group for Social Research, the Institute for Political Education, and the Coordination Office for Foreign Projects. During the 1990s, the association concentrated on foundational policy issues related to socialist politics and parties. Of particular note is the book *Zur Programmatik der Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus: Ein Kommentar* (On the Policy and Strategy of the Party of Democratic Socialism: A Commentary, 1997), as well as the conferences and workshops held regularly, and the analyses and reports published in the journals *UTOPIE konkret* and *UTOPIE kreativ*.

At the fourth party conference of the PDS in Magdeburg on 28 January 1996, the association *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* was officially recognized as a PDS-aligned political foundation. On 25 June 1999, an extraordinary General Assembly appointed a Board of Trustees as the foundation's advisory body and decided on a new name: *Bundestiftung Rosa Luxemburg* (Federal Foundation Rosa Luxemburg). However, the Federal Ministry of the Interior did not recognize the new name, citing formal reasons. Following the approval of long-term funding for the PDS-affiliated educational institution by the Bundestag, a General Assembly on 14 January 2000 finally changed the name to *Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung-Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.*

Upon its founding in 1990, the association *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* had 30 members. By early 1999, when the era of being



Immortalization.
Exchange partner: RLS
Rhineland-Palatinate.
Door handle from
Haus Mainusch, a
squatted building
in Mainz used as a
cultural centre, under
threat of imminent
closure. Installed in
room 6.19.

⁴⁸ This and the following chapters are largely based on the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung's annual and business reports.

volunteer-run was coming to an end, it had grown to 50 members.⁴⁹ During an extraordinary General Assembly on 26 February 1999, the association adopted a development plan for the RLS in the context of budgetary funding. It identified political education, international work, research funding, student grants, and the Bertolt Brecht cultural project as the main pillars of its activities. In terms of content, the work was to focus on three key areas: options for democratic-socialist reform; forces for democratic and social change within the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany; and the history of social emancipation movements, as well as historical research into socialism and communism.⁵⁰

POLITICAL EDUCATION WORK

According to the official history of the RLS as recorded in its first annual report, the foundation began its political education work on 31 August 1991. The first event was a seminar on the history of the Weimar Republic titled *Demokratie ohne Chance?* (Democracy Without a Chance?) with political scientist Prof. Ossip K. Flechtheim, which ran until 2 September 1991. A representative from the Federal Agency for Civic Education attended as an observer.

Over the following decade, the association established itself as the sole educational institution from East Germany within the ecosystem of German political foundations. During the 1990s, the association's work was carried out exclusively by volunteers and people employed through various job-creation schemes (*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen*, ABM). A total of 1,154 events were organized in this way between August 1991 and June 1999. The work of volunteers and discussion groups led to the development of different fields of expertise. These included the theory and history of political parties, the sustainability debate regarding research and technology policy, economic and agrarian policy, and pedagogy.

From 3 to 8 October 1991, the association had its public unveiling at the conference *Hinterm Horizont geht's weiter: Linke politische Bildung – Selbstverständnis und Angebote* (There's More Beyond the Horizon: Left-Wing Political Education – Mission and Programme), held at the Haus am

49 See minutes of the General Assembly of the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 26 February 1999, including additional documents from the General Assembly, Archiv Demokratischer Sozialismus (ADS), Alt-Sign. 2003-XIII-8; documents from the press conference of the Executive Committee of the Executive Board of the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 2 March 1999 (press kit), ADS, Weichold collection, Alt-Sign. 2014-012-30.

50 See "Concept for developing the PDS-affiliated political foundation in the context of receiving general funds from the federal budget". Resolution of the General Assembly of Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 26 February 1999, ADS, Weichold collection, Alt-Sign. 2014-012-30; press release at the press conference from the Executive Committee of the Executive Board of the foundation Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 2 March 1999 (press kit), ADS, Weichold collection, Alt-Sign. 2014-012-30.



Köllnischen Park in Berlin. Under this defiant title, borrowed from the lyrics of a song by Udo Lindenberg, more than 450 participants debated the past and future of the German left across three panels and six workshops.⁵¹

In January 1992, the RLS launched the series *Meine Biographie in dieser Zeit* (My Biography in this Period) with writer Hermann Kant. Throughout the 1990s, we organized around 40 evening events with contemporary witnesses, including economic historian Jürgen Kuczynski, Christa Luft, minister of economics in the Modrow government (1989–1990), GDR cycling legend Gustav Adolf “Täve” Schur, journalist and writer Gisela Karau, and Gerhard Schürer, former head of the GDR State Planning Commission. In *Deutsche Biographien im Widerstreit* (German Biographies in Conflict), Hans Modrow, the GDR prime minister from 1989 to 1990, talked with Wolfgang Leonhard, an expert on Eastern Europe and the author of the 1955 bestseller *Die Revolution entläßt ihre Kinder* (published in English in 1957 under the title *Child of the Revolution*).⁵²

Autumn 1990:
Creating new structures. Representatives from across the RLS meet with representatives of the Jusos (Young Socialists) in Mainz.

51 See “On the statutory activities of the association”, annex to the minutes of the General Assembly of Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 27 March 1992 at Rigaer Straße 27, ADS, Weichold collection, Alt-Sign. 2003-XIII-8.

52 See the archival collection on the history of the foundation, ADS, Weichold collection, Alt-Sign. 2011-027-02.

In the mid-1990s, the association held a series of conferences, including the symposium *Menschen ohne Hoffnung — Flucht aus Osteuropa* (People Without Hope — Fleeing Eastern Europe) in June 1993, and the conference *New Thinking or Old Power Politics?* that was organized in cooperation with the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow in June 1994.

The programme also included panels, forums, and book presentations. In December 1996, for example, Egon Bahr, Dieter Klein, Daniela Dahn, Lothar Bisky, and Gregor Gysi discussed the relationship between the SPD and the PDS at an event titled *Wende nach der Wende* (Change After Reunification). In March 1997, at an event in Berlin, the association welcomed its 20,000th participant.

EARLY INTERNATIONAL WORK

In February 1995, the association *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* received NGO accreditation from the United Nations. In the following months, the association procured medical equipment for Palestine before distributing it on the ground as part of its first batch of international projects in the Middle East. In February 1996, it built a facility for mothers and children in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the *Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken* and the medical organization *Union of Health Work Committees (UHWC)*.

REGIONAL BRANCHES (LANDESSTIFTUNGEN)

At that time, the only way to achieve the association's goal of creating a nationwide educational programme was through a network of educational associations based in individual federal states. In 1991, in Saxony and Brandenburg, academics and individuals with an interest in politics established the first political foundations aligned with the PDS — under the name *Rosa Luxemburg*. Both foundations immediately began receiving funding from their respective state budgets. By 1992, this network of regional foundations also included the *Forum für Politische und Interkulturelle Bildung Rostock* (Forum for Political and Intercultural Education Rostock) and the *Helle Panke — Verein zur Förderung von Politik, Bildung und Kultur in Berlin* (Helle Panke — Association for the Promotion of Politics, Education, and Culture in Berlin). In 1993, the circle expanded to include the *Thüringer Forum für Bildung und Wissenschaft* (Thuringian Forum for Education and Science), based in Jena, and *ELSA — Verein zur Förderung von Kultur, Wissenschaft und politischer Bildung in Sachsen-Anhalt* (ELSA — Association for Political Education in Saxony-Anhalt). The first West-German associations were established in 1994. The first advisory meeting between the regional branches and the association *Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.* took place on 2 November 1993. Such meetings continued to be organized in the years that followed.

Ihrer Stiftung wird nach wie vor staatliche finanzielle Unterstützung verwehrt. Warum?

Mit der Begründung, daß es doch sehr fraglich sei, ob es sich bei der PDS um eine dauerhafte, ins Gewicht fallende politische Grundströmung handelt.

Was heißt das?

Eine verbindliche Definition dafür gibt es nicht. Die FDP hat daher kürzlich einen Gesetzesentwurf zur Stiftungsfinanzierung eingebracht. Sie schlägt vor, die Dauerhaftigkeit politischer Grundströmungen danach zu messen, ob es einer Partei gelungen ist, innerhalb von vier Wahlperioden mindestens zweimal in den Bundestag zu kommen. Das würde auf uns zutreffen.

Es scheint, daß die abgegebene Begründung nur kassieren soll, was man eigentlich bezweckt.

Die bundesweite Arbeit einer PDS-nahen Stiftung soll verhindert werden. Das bestätigt uns auch die Verweigerung der Förderung unserer Arbeit durch die Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Zwar hat

Bis heute hat die 1990 ins Leben gerufene PDS-nahe Stiftung „Gesellschaftsanalyse und politische Bildung e.V.“ noch keinen Pfennig Stiftungsgeld bekommen, das ihr rechtens jedoch ebenso zusteht wie den Stiftungen der CDU, CSU, SPD und Bündnis 90/DIE GRÜNEN. Im August wird Christa Luft für die PDS erneut einen Antrag dazu im Bundestag vorbringen. KARLEN VESPER sprach mit EVELIN WITTICH, geschäftsführendes Vorstandsmitglied der Stiftung, über die Probleme, die Aufgaben und die Arbeit der Stiftung.

1991 ein von ihr ausgesandter Beobachter unsere Veranstaltungen als „didaktisch einwandfrei“ beurteilt, aber dann brach der Kontakt abrupt ab, ganz offenkundig auf Anwendung des damaligen Innenministers Schäuble.

Finanziert die Bundeszentrale auch parteinahe Stiftungen?

Hat sie zumindest. Und da eben just zu dem Zeitpunkt, da wir bei ihr finanzielle Unterstützung beantragten, die Entscheidung erfolgte, daß sie keine Projekte parteinaher Stiftungen mehr finanziere, ist die dahintersteckende Absicht evident.

Nun ist es ja verständlich, daß ein konservativ registrierter Staat keine Stiftung unter-

stützen will, die sich erklärtermaßen der Verbreitung linker Ideen widmet.

Das mag sein, es ist aber nicht rechtens und verstößt gegen die Grundsätze eines Rechtsstaates. Es gibt ein demokratisches Potential in dieser Gesellschaft, das sich linkem Gedankengut verpflichtet fühlt und in dieser Hinsicht eben auch nach Bildung und gedanklichen Austausch verlangt.

Den anderen parteinahen Stiftungen wird ihr Potential in der Gesellschaft eingestanden. Nur uns nicht. Wir haben daher beim Bundesverfassungsgericht geklagt. Auch gegen die Bundeszentrale haben wir geklagt. Wir wissen, daß sie indirekt sehr wohl anderen

Interview with Evelin Wittich for the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, 18 July 1995.

The circumstances in which these associations were carrying out the work of political education varied considerably. While those in Saxony and Brandenburg received funding from the state parliaments almost from the start, other associations had to rely primarily on individual projects, donations, and voluntary work for their activities. The PDS-affiliated foundations in Saxony, Brandenburg, and Berlin primarily focused on the history of communism, the GDR, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), and relations between former East and West Germany. The RLS Saxony published the 20-volume series *Geschichte des Kommunismus und Linksozialismus* (History of Communism and Left-Wing Socialism), while Helle Panke, the local branch for the State of Berlin, began publishing its series *hefte zur ddr-geschichte* (booklets on GDR history), of which more than 155 issues have been released to date.⁵³

53 In 1994, the Eastern European Research Section of the Society for Cultural Sociology, headed by Ernstgert Kalbe (1931–2015), was assigned to the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Leipzig. See Erhard Crome, “Ostdeutsche Osteuropaforschungen”, *Das Blättchen*, March 2024, p. 44.



A full house for the press conference to announce the allocation of public funds to the RLS for the educational work.

FINANCES

From the outset, the association's Executive Board took various steps to attain the same status as other political foundations and to secure federal funding. In June 1991 and again in April 1992, it applied to the Federal Agency for Civic Education to be formally recognized as a provider of political education for adults — though its application proved unsuccessful. In 1993, it filed a lawsuit with the administrative court in Cologne, which was dismissed in November 1996.

When the PDS filed a constitutional complaint in September 1992 — citing unfair treatment due to the funding application for its party-affiliated foundation being rejected — this was also unsuccessful. In November 1992, the association lodged a complaint with the Federal Constitutional Court seeking financial equality with other political foundations.⁵⁴ However, the court rejected both this complaint and also a November 1993 motion for a temporary injunction.

⁵⁴ See Dieter Schlönvoigt, "Kein Geld für die PDS-nahe Bundesstiftung aus dem Bundeshaushalt. Grund: Bedeutungslosigkeit der PDS", *PDS press office*, Berlin, 3 December 1993, p. 12.

The association received PDS support in the Bundestag. After calling for support for the association in May 1996, PDS members of parliament submitted a major interpellation on the financing of parties and party-affiliated foundations in October 1996. In March 1997, they held a hearing on the topic of political education in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Following the federal elections on 27 September 1998, the PDS entered the Bundestag as a parliamentary group (*Fraktion*) after securing 5.1 percent of the second vote [in Germany's first vote/second vote system, where the first vote elects a candidate to the local constituency, while the second is a party list vote, electing members of a party to the Bundestag according to proportional representation]. This achievement granted it the constitutional right to establish a political foundation. On 3 December 1998, Christa Luft, a member of the Bundestag budget committee, notified the association in writing that it was to receive 8 million deutsche marks in budget subsidies. In early 1999, the PDS and the association withdrew their lawsuits — concerning financial discrimination in political education — from the highest federal courts. On 29 April 1999, the Bundestag printed paper 14/624 informed all the members about financial resources being allocated to the political foundation affiliated with the PDS.

3.2 STRUCTURING THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG AS A PDS-AFFILIATED POLITICAL FOUNDATION (1999–2007)

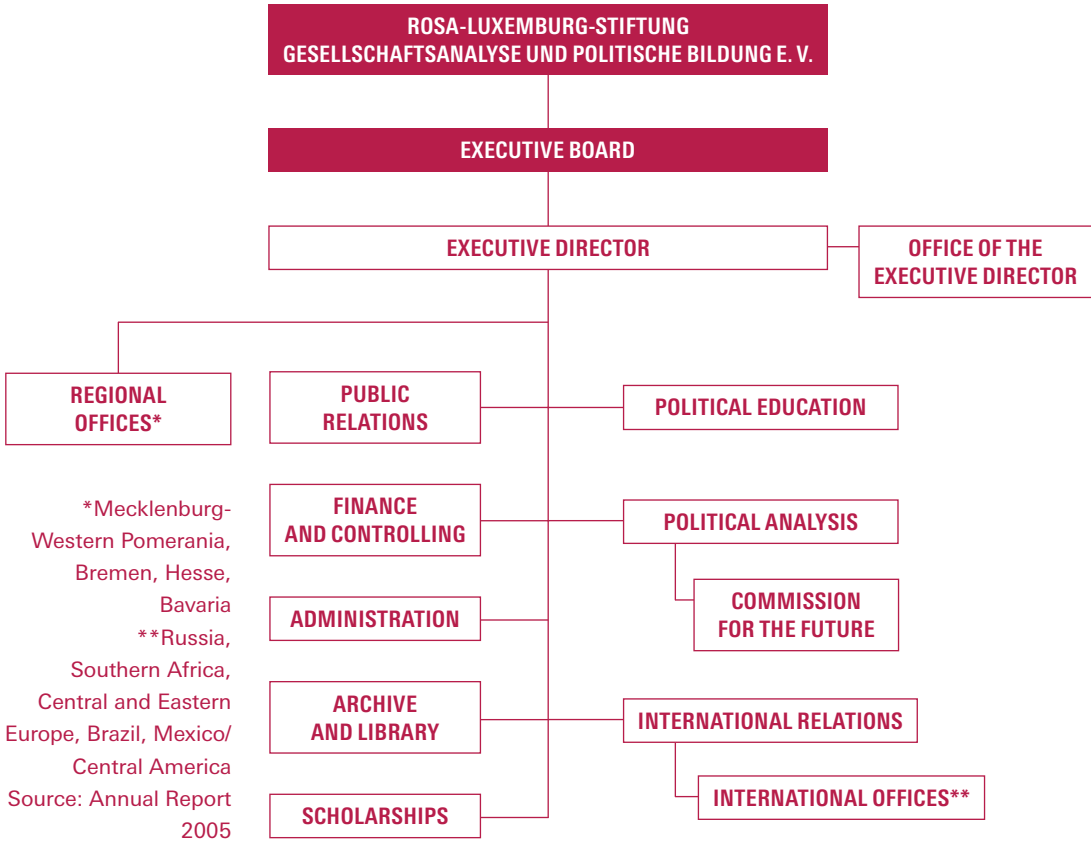
In autumn 1999, alongside the Political Education, Archive and Library, and Administration and Finance departments, the RLS created the Research and Information department, which oversaw academic work, political consultancy, scholarship programmes, and public relations. However, such a broad department soon proved difficult to organize, making structural change necessary. In the summer of 2002, the foundation was divided into the departments of Political Education, Political Analysis, International Relations, Scholarships, Archive and Library, Public Relations, Administration, and Finances/Controlling. At that time it had 50 employees.

As the history of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung shows, political analysis (and later social analysis) has not been conducted exclusively by its namesake department. Equally, political education events have not only been organized by the Political Education department; many have been put on by the Political Analysis and International Relations departments (and later by the Institute for Social Analysis and the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation, or ZID). In this text, all the activities related to political



Casa Bertolt Brecht, Montevideo, Uruguay. Exchange partner: Casa Bertolt Brecht, a non-profit organization that works with marginalized youths who are in trouble with the law. Installed in room 6.07.

FIG. 8: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2005



education will be analysed in the section on “Political Education Work”. Similarly, the section titled “Social Analysis and Policy Advice” includes all the work related to these two areas.⁵⁵

In contrast to the volunteer-run period, an Executive Committee comprising three members of equal standing proved ineffective under the new conditions, which required more hands-on management. Therefore, in autumn 2003, the General Assembly appointed Evelin Wittich as the first sole executive member of the Executive Board. On 13 November 2004, the General Assembly created the role of Chair of the Executive Board and elected Reinhard Mocek to this position. He was succeeded by Heinz Vietze, who was appointed on 18 November 2006 by the General Assembly.

⁵⁵ Due to the abundance of projects and events that have been organized since, it is not possible to list them all. Therefore, the following sections highlight individual projects. More detailed information can be found in the annual reports, the reports to the General Assembly, and the publications available on the RLS website.

In 2001, the association at the core of the foundation had 51 members; by autumn 2007, this number had increased to 71.⁵⁶ In late 2007, the Executive Board of the RLS was made up of 11 members: Heinz Vietze, Claudia Gohde, Thomas Händel, Evelin Wittich, Alex Demirović, Stefanie Ehmsen, Thomas Flierl, Dieter Klein, Gesine Löttsch, Sabine Reiner, and Bosiljka Schedlich.

In 2003, the RLS signed up to the Joint Declaration of party-aligned foundations, initiated in 1998 by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, in which the signatories articulated their core values and declared their political orientation. In the Declaration, the foundations stated that their work in socio-political and democratic education, as well as in the dissemination of information and policy advice at home and abroad, was “based on the principles of the free democratic order and bound by the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, and mutual tolerance”.⁵⁷

POLITICAL EDUCATION WORK

Political education work at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is guided by the Beutelsbach Consensus, which includes the “prohibition of indoctrination”.⁵⁸ The RLS sees itself as part of an emancipatory process that rejects any form of lecturing. Instead, it aims to create spaces for mutual exchange where teachers and participants work together as equals.

Between 1999 and 2000, the RLS and its regional offices organized 1,371 events with a total of 41,000 participants across all federal states (with Berlin being the most active). In October 1999, it offered for the first time a series of seminars on Karl Marx’s *Capital*, which led to the development of reading courses in 2006.⁵⁹ In early 2000, with RLS support, the digital network linksnet.de was launched and soon attracted more than 5,000 users. In June of the same year, with only two months of preparation, the first website of the RLS went live. The political issues of the day — for example migration and refugees — and the questions they posed were at the centre of the foundation’s political education work from 1999 to 2007. The focus was also on historical topics with particular contemporary relevance, such as the history of the SED/PDS and the liberation from Nazism.

56 See the attendance list and the minutes of the General Assembly on 1 December 2007, p. 2.

57 See Gemeinsame Erklärung zur staatlichen Finanzierung der Politischen Stiftungen, Cadenabbia 1998, https://www.hss.de/fileadmin/migration/downloads/gemeinsame_erklaerung.pdf, p. 1.

58 According to the “prohibition of indoctrination”, teachers must not impose their personal beliefs on their pupils, but should enable them to form their own opinions.

59 The first Marx Autumn School took place in October 2008.

During this period, the RLS was also very active in publishing. In 2002 alone, it published more than 50 books and pamphlets and helped in the publication of 21 more.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY ADVICE

Already in 1999–2000, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung began to make a name for itself as a centre for left-wing analysis and expertise in Germany through its academic conferences and workshops on topics such as the party system, the development of the PDS, and sustainability. Soon it was turning out research projects at pace, examining the policies of the PDS as well as fundamental questions of socialist politics and strategy.

By the second half of 1999, the RLS had launched its first major research project. Conducted by the Future Commission, the project focused on aspects of justice both theoretical and involving political practice, including an international comparative perspective. The RLS assisted the PDS during the first half of the 2000s in its involvement in the governing coalitions of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Berlin by providing academic support and relevant publications. After the PDS failed to clear the five percent threshold to enter the Bundestag in September 2002, the foundation contributed by providing analysis of the defeat.

In 2006, Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin published the handbook *Deutsche Zeitgeschichte* (German Contemporary History), after six years of work by RLS researchers and external historians. The handbook covers the comparative social history of East and West Germany, as well as the history of reunified Germany.

The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung began publishing the works of Marx and Engels in 2006. The so-called *Blue Volumes*, published by Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin, are to this day the most frequently cited study edition of the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.



In the latter half of the 2000s, the Social Analysis department focused on sustainability. Its aim was to help develop alternatives to the prevailing policies of the time.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

In November 2000, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung established its Department of International Relations. That year, the foundation also received funding from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Foreign Office (AA) for the first time, to the tune of 573,000 deutsche marks. In 2003, the RLS opened its first international office in Johannesburg, followed by offices in Moscow, Warsaw, and São Paulo. In 2007, it opened its Mexico City office.

At the time, the main goal of the RLS's international work was to work with partner organizations abroad to foster social and democratic development and to promote socio-political education and communication. The RLS participated in projects that aimed to provide people with access to essential social goods such as democratic participation, peace, non-violence, gainful employment, education, health, social security, and a liveable environment.

The foundation's international activities during this period were highly diverse. In the 2000s, the international office in South Africa worked on projects with its partners related to the history of labour and trade union movements, alternatives to neoliberal economic and social models, and the insights and challenges related to shaping processes of transformation. In Central America, the focus was on methods of local civic participation that could sustainably improve living conditions for people. In East-Central Europe, the RLS participated in a series of conferences from 2006 to 2007 on the experiences of the 2004 intake of EU member states.

SCHOLARSHIP DEPARTMENT

In November 1999, the newly established Scholarship Department awarded its first five scholarships. By 2007, it had already handed out 525 scholarships. This was broken down into 360 students and 111 doctoral candidates receiving funding from the Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), while 48 students and six doctoral candidates from 28 countries received funding from the Foreign Office (AA). When candidates were equally qualified, priority was given to women, socially disadvantaged individuals, and people with disabilities. Around 100 academic trustees were recruited to assist the scholarship recipients. In addition to the scholarships, the department offered a comprehensive support programme, which also aimed to enhance international exchange. To this end, the department

supported study placements abroad, research, internships, residential educational programmes, and international workshops.

ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY

In 1999, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung established the Archive of Democratic Socialism (ADS), which aimed to collect, catalogue, conserve, and make sources related to the development of the PDS accessible, particularly for research purposes. In the late summer of 1999, the PDS parliamentary group in the Bundestag provided the ADS with the archives of the PDS from the tenth legislature of the GDR parliament — the Volkskammer of 1990 — as well as archives from the group of PDS members of the Bundestag from 1990 to 1994. By the end of 2001, the archive had expanded to approximately 90 linear metres.

In the 2002 federal election, the PDS received only four percent of the party list vote, meaning that Gesine Löttsch and Petra Pau, who had won direct mandates, were its sole representatives in the Bundestag. After the election, the ADS took over the files from all 36 parliamentary offices, amounting to more than 200 linear metres of archives. However, the funding provided by the Bundestag administration for cataloguing the files from the PDS parliamentary group and its members was withdrawn in 2004, leaving the ADS only partially operational. It was not until the second half of 2006, following the success of Die Linkspartei.PDS (The Left Party. PDS, a rebranding of the PDS) in the 2005 election, that the Bundestag administration reinstated funding, enabling the archival work to resume on a larger scale.

In the 1990s, the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. established a library by acquiring books and entire private collections as part of a job-creation scheme. The new library contained academic publications and literature and soon exceeded its storage capacity. As a result, the Archive and Library department decided to convert the library into a dedicated socialism library and to donate unrelated holdings to interested parties linked to the PDS and the RLS.

The library also began collecting writings by and about Rosa Luxemburg, along with documents and publications on the history of the PDS. In addition, it gathered texts related to the foundation's thematic focal points.

THE RLS NETWORK ACROSS GERMANY

At the turn of the millennium, while all East German states and Berlin had functioning *Landesstiftungen*, some of which were financed with public funds, the development of regional branches in West German states was still

in its early stages. Through acts of great solidarity, the East German regional branches supported and enabled the development of their West German counterparts, becoming vital pillars for the network's work in West Germany at least until the mid-2000s. However, after making a promising start in 2000 and 2001,⁶⁰ this process faced a significant setback when the PDS failed to enter the Bundestag in 2002.

Although there were regional foundations and educational associations in every West German state by the end of 2000, they were all reliant on volunteer work. The financial situation of the national network improved significantly after the success of Die Linkspartei.PDS in the 2005 federal election,⁶¹ which allowed the RLS to gradually open regional offices in West German states. In Autumn 2007, nine states — Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Hamburg, Bremen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hesse, Baden-Württemberg, Saarland, and Bavaria — had permanent offices. In Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and Saxony, RLS offices were provided by the respective *Landesstiftungen*.

The state foundations and regional offices developed a diverse event programme. Both 2006 and 2007 saw over 40,000 people attending the 1,300 to 1,500 events organized in each of those years. In addition to the RLS network, thematic discussion groups became increasingly important.

RLS SUBSIDIARIES

Over the years, subsidiary foundations have been set up under the umbrella of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. These legally dependent foundations are represented by the RLS in all legal matters.

Attorney Dr. Andreas Henselmann, son of architect Hermann Henselmann (1905–1995), established the non-profit Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung (HHS) in 2005 and placed it under the umbrella of the RLS.⁶² The purpose of the HHS is to support political education, art, culture, science, and research in the field of progressive architecture — viewed in terms of the “social city”. In 2006, the HHS was joined by the Harald-Breuer-Stiftung, the Erik-Neutsch-Stiftung, and the Michael-Schumann-Stiftung. The Harald-Breuer-Stiftung aims to promote political education, science, and research,

60 In 2001, the RLS network organized around 170 projects in West German states (compared to just over 100 in the previous year), mainly in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Bremen. Overall, the RLS was active in around 50 West German cities.

61 See Lutz Kirschner and Andreas Thomsen, “Präsent im ganzen Land — Bildungsarbeit abseits der ‘Zentrale’”, *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, pp. 124–26. See in particular p. 126.

62 See Katrin Lompscher, “Architektur und Städtebau kontrovers — Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung”, *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, pp. 136–137.

Erik Neutsch's estate includes his library of 6,123 volumes, excluding those written by Neutsch himself. This library — nestled within the Great Blankenburg Castle — was opened to the public by the RLS in 2019.



as well as international understanding and cooperation. The Erik-Neutsch-Stiftung, founded by the author Erik Neutsch (1931–2013), supports literary and artistic works that foster free thought and solidarity in a humanist, democratic, and internationalist spirit. The Michael-Schumann-Stiftung, which was eventually merged into the Clara-Zetkin-Stiftung in 2018, was dedicated to promoting political education, science and research, art and culture, and international understanding and cooperation. It was named after Prof. Michael Schumann (1946–2000), a philosopher, member of the Executive Board of the PDS, and state parliamentarian whose name is forever associated with his speech at the extraordinary congress of the SED/PDS party on 16 December 1989, where he declared: “We are irrevocably breaking with Stalinism as a system”. In 2007, the Michael-Schumann-Stiftung acquired all the shares of the publisher Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin GmbH, founded in 1946.⁶³

FUNDED PROJECTS

Since its inception, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung has regarded the funding of independent associations, initiatives, and individuals in their left-wing political education work, as well as the funding of academic projects related to political education, not only as an important task but as a duty. This stance has lent it a unique profile within the political foundation ecosystem. Due to

⁶³ See Meinhard Tietz, “Erweiterter Aktionsradius — die Treuhandstiftungen”, *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, p. 134.

its limited financial resources, the RLS policy has always been to take a dual approach to funding. In 1999 and 2000, for instance, a significant portion of the available funding had to be concentrated on a dozen or so projects to reach an effective minimum; however, it was also involved in small-scale funding for a relatively broad range of educational and academic projects (especially seminars, workshops, conferences, and publications). By the end of 2000, the RLS had received funding applications from over 700 external projects, but only around 170 could be financed from the funding pot of more than 1 million deutsche marks.

FINANCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

In August 1999, the foundation received its first notification of funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI). That year, the RLS received more than 4 million deutsche marks in general subsidies from the federal budget. From 2000 to 2007, the annual federal funding of the RLS increased from 9.5 million deutsche marks (around 4.9 million euros) to 17 million euros. The foundation benefitted from the fact that Die Linkspartei.PDS received 8.7 percent of the party list vote in the early federal election on 18 September 2005 after opening its electoral lists to members of the Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG).

In 1999, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung received 2.29 percent of the total BMI funds made available to all political foundations. This share increased to 4.47 percent in 2000, remained at 4.42 percent from 2001 to 2003, and declined to 4.0 percent from 2004 to 2006. In 2007, it reached the 5.0 percent mark.⁶⁴ This provided the financial basis for the RLS to be employing 87 people in Germany by the end of 2007 — compared to 37 in 1999 — with nine employees in the international offices.

3.3 THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG AS A DIE-LINKE-AFFILIATED POLITICAL FOUNDATION (2007–2019)

The formation of Die Linke through the merger of Die Linkspartei.PDS and WASG on 16 July 2007 transformed the German political landscape and had significant impacts on the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and its activities.

⁶⁴ See the report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the General Assembly of the RLS in 2023, Berlin, 24 October 2023, p. 41.



To zakk! Exchange partner: Kulturzentrum zakk gGmbH, a centre for action, culture, and communication founded in Düsseldorf in 1977. Installed in room 6.05.

Chairs of the
Board of Trustees/
Academic Advisory
Board:

Birgit Sauer

(since 2023)

Michael Brie

(2019–2023)

Alex Demirović

(2016–2019)

Irene Dölling

(2011–2015)

Albert Scharenberg

(2008–2011)

Christa Luft

(2002–2008)

Peter Porsch

(2000–2002)

Michael Schumann

(1999–2000)

Following the establishment of the new party, the RLS General Assembly welcomed new members coming from WASG and elected some of them to the Executive Board.⁶⁵ With increased funding, the foundation was able to hire new employees, most of whom had grown up in West Germany.

The Academic Advisory Board was created in 2008 to support the foundation's work both academically and strategically. In the same year, the General Assembly elected Dr. Florian Weis to succeed Dr. Evelin Wittich as executive director. Further personnel changes took place in 2012 and 2019. Heinz Vietze, who had served as Chair of the Executive Board for many years, did not stand for re-election in 2012. On 1 December 2012, the General Assembly elected Dr. Dagmar Enkelmann as his successor. On 30 November 2019, the General Assembly elected Daniela Trochowski as the new executive director.

In 2009, the RLS *Trägerverein* (the core association, i.e. Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung – Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V.) had 102 members, including 11 whose membership was dormant. Ten years later, in November 2019, it had 132 full members, including 12 RLS employees with dormant memberships at that time, and not including ten honorary members. Its membership was not limited to people; there were also 16 institutional members, namely the RLS regional branches (*Landesstiftungen*). In accordance with the statutes, the Executive Board consisted of 14 members.

POLITICAL EDUCATION WORK

In January 2008, the RLS Municipal Academy began its work, offering numerous seminars each year, mainly in the West German states. Another new body was the Cultural Forum. Following a suggestion from the Executive Board of 10 October 2008, the General Assembly decided to elevate the existing Political Education department to the status of an Academy of Political Education.⁶⁶

As part of its political education work, the Academy for Political Education was committed to disseminating democratic and socialist ideals — that is, left-wing ideals — to improve people's understanding of society and bring about social change.

One of its initial focal points was trade unions, which were the subject of a series of well-attended conferences in cities such as Stuttgart, Hanover, and Frankfurt am Main. In retrospect, a second focus was the search for

⁶⁵ See the minutes of the RLS General Assembly on 6 December 2008, Berlin, pp. 4–5.

⁶⁶ See the resolution of the RLS General Assembly on 6 December 2008, Berlin, p. 1

left-wing responses to the crisis-stricken developments in contemporary capitalism. History was also an important theme, often discussed in relation to historical dates and anniversaries. For example, in 2014, the foundation organized a series of events on the topic *1914–1939–1989: Wendepunkte europäischer Geschichte* (1914–1939–1989: Turning Points in European History). A fourth focus was on theory debates, including the *Luxemburg Lectures* and related publications. On 12 May 2009, as part of the first *Luxemburg Lecture*, political scientist Chantal Mouffe spoke about her work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*, co-authored with Ernesto Laclau, in the ballroom of Berlin's state parliament building. In May 2018, a conference held in Berlin to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Marx's birth welcomed around 1,300 participants and featured over 80 workshops and panels exploring Marx's political and theoretical contributions across various fields. A fifth focus was to provide networking opportunities for those on the left. In April 2013, for example, *#cross_solidarity* saw some 150 activists from all over the world gathered in Wuppertal to discuss the possibilities of cooperation beyond borders, as well as organizational and campaigning skills. The major international conference *Europe – What's Left? Strategies After the Coup*, which took place in Berlin from 3 to 5 June 2016, offered a networking platform for people active in European left-wing politics.



Two-hundred events to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth. The highlight was the *Marx200* conference on politics, theory, and socialism, an immediate sellout which took place in Berlin from 2–6 May 2018.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY ADVICE

In 2008, on the suggestion of the Executive Board, the General Assembly decided to grant the existing Policy Analysis department the status of Institute for Critical Social Analysis (IfG).⁶⁷ The institute was intended to take on the role of think tank for Die Linke, aimed at monitoring key, sometimes ambivalent social trends and developing concepts based on sound analysis.

In the second half of the 2000s, research at the IfG concentrated on four questions. First, it explored whether it was possible to build social majorities to challenge neoliberalism and shift towards a social, democratic, and peace-oriented politics. Second, it examined how to forge an alliance of social forces and political parties that such a change of direction would require. Third, it analysed the development of Die Linke in terms of its policies, structure, and personnel. Finally, it looked into how the SPD and the Greens were evolving.

In 2008 and 2009, the IfG's analyses focused on the financial crisis and its impacts, as well as on the particular form of capitalism driven by the financial markets, whose structures had become particularly evident during the crisis. The crisis, the political responses to it, and the changes within Die Linke during this period became key subjects of the institute's research, publications, and events. The institute explored which outlooks, varieties of capitalism, and opportunities for emancipatory transformation were foreseeable or conceivable, and whether there might be a return to greater measures to mitigate the social harms caused by capitalist development — or instead we might see a shift towards more authoritarian regimes. During the 2010s, in the context of the financial crisis whose social impacts were widespread, the IfG conducted transformation research through a socialist lens, also focusing on the agents of change. From 2015 onwards, attention shifted to migration, the rise of the global right, and the potential for a left-wing counter-movement. By the end of the decade, these questions culminated in the theoretical concept of a "connective class politics".

To bolster its collaboration with academic institutions, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung launched a fellowship programme at the IfG in March 2012.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

On 6 December 2008, the General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, following the Executive Board recommendation of 10 October 2008, decided to change the name of its International Relations department to the Centre

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

for International Dialogue and Cooperation (ZID).⁶⁸ The Executive Board and the General Assembly tasked the ZID with consolidating the foundation's international activities under one roof.⁶⁹ This involved working closely with other RLS regional offices across Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America to foster socio-political analysis, critiques of capitalism and globalization, and debates on democratic socialism and on finding avenues to peace.

On 14 November 2012, Gregor Gysi and Heinz Vietze opened the RLS office in New York. The ceremony, attended by over 250 guests, was held in the library of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen of the City of New York.

Additional international offices followed: Beijing and Ramallah (Palestine) in 2008, Tel Aviv and Hanoi in 2009, Belgrade, New Delhi, Quito, and Dakar in 2010, Dar es Salaam in 2012, Buenos Aires in 2015, Madrid and Beirut in 2017, Prague and Almaty in 2018, and Manila, Geneva, and London in 2019. By the end of the decade, the RLS had a total of 26 international offices.

In October 2009, the Brussels office and the IfG organized the conference *Beyond the World Crisis* in partnership with the World Forum for Alternatives (Louvain, Belgium) and the Transnational Institute (Amsterdam). The conference aimed to identify the causes of the crisis and to develop strategies to overcome it.

In early June 2010, the regional office in Quito held a two-day seminar on *Democracy, Participation, and Socialism*. As many as 300 people attended the hotly-debated talks between government delegates from Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, left-wing intellectuals, and representatives of social movements, which took place in the auditorium of Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar.

The RLS office in Warsaw has a longstanding and successful partnership with the association Dzieci Holocaustu (Children of the Holocaust). Together, they have organized conferences on the history of the Holocaust, its causes, and the deeply personal impacts it has had. One of the fruits of this collaboration was the poignant touring exhibition *My Jewish Parents, My Polish Parents*, which continues to be shown across many European countries as well as at various venues in Germany.

The Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian and Israeli Studies (Haifa), the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities, the Israeli Disarmament Movement, and the RLS came together to organize the international conference *Towards a Middle East Free of Weapons of Mass*

68 See *ibid.* Due to space limitations, we can only present a snapshot of the full range of ZID activities.

69 See the Executive Board's "Thesen zur strategischen Entwicklung der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung bis 2015", p. 11.

Destruction in Haifa on 5–6 December 2013. The highly sensitive topic attracted extraordinary levels of media attention.

In March 2014, politicians and academics from Germany, France, Greece, and Slovenia, as well as other stakeholders from Iceland, Argentina, Canada, and Uruguay, met at the *Left in Government: What, Why, and How* conference in Athens to exchange, analyse, and debate their experiences with left-wing government policy.

Fifty representatives from academic institutions, politics, government agencies, and NGOs from the People's Republic of China, several EU countries, and Taiwan engaged in lively discussions at the *6th Sino–European Forum on Socio-Ecological and Legal Issues*, which took place in Suzhou in October 2016 under the title *Food Security – Sustainable Agriculture*.

In October 2017, the RLS invited around 100 left-wing activists from Europe and the US to gather in Madrid for the European Summer School *Organizing for a Left-Wing Hegemony*. The European Summer School was a new format created by the RLS to promote international education and networking.

From 27 to 29 October 2017, the RLS office in Belgrade held a conference centred around organizing, titled *For Labour Rights! Over 70* participants made the most of the opportunity to partake in the international exchange of experiences and ideas at the conference.

In 2018, as part of its efforts to strengthen ties among agricultural unions, the ZID supported the South African NGO Women on Farms in developing strategies, together with sugarcane workers' unions from different countries in southern Africa, to combat sugar corporations that had been systematically undermining labour rights.

The RLS office in Moscow, in collaboration with Russian partners, organized the *Marx. Marxismus. Marxisten* (Marx, Marxism, Marxists) conference in June 2018 in St. Petersburg. The more than 70 participants from Russia, Bulgaria, Japan, Moldova, Mexico, Australia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Germany mainly focused on questions related to the historical positioning of Marxism and Marx's reception in Russia.

Faced with the rise of the far right and growing authoritarianism worldwide, the ZID organized a symposium titled *Globalisierung des Autoritarismus: Aspekte der Krise der Demokratie* (The Globalization of Authoritarianism: Aspects of the Crisis of Democracy) in Berlin on 28–29 August 2019.

Between 2008 and 2019, the international offices aimed to foster dialogue through conferences, seminars, and other international events, in order to find common solutions to the urgent issues of our time. In addition, the RLS enabled many of its global partners to participate in international civil society

meetings such as the World Social Forum and the UN Climate Conferences. Its international offices published several studies and analyses, providing information on political developments, forging international connections, and offering new perspectives.

SCHOLARSHIP DEPARTMENT

Between 2008 and 2019, the number of students receiving funding increased from 433 to 906, while the number of doctoral candidates increased from 131 to 227. In 2008, the Scholarship Department supported approximately 60 students with funding from the Foreign Office; by 2019, this figure had risen to 86. The number of academic trustees was 181 at that time. The Scholarship Department targeted its support towards young people who had been particularly affected by structural inequalities in education. To do so, it launched a special programme called *Lux like Studium* in 2010. In 2019, just under 50 percent of RLS scholarship holders were either from immigrant families or were themselves first-generation immigrants, and over 60 percent came from non-academic families. Additionally, more than half of the scholarship recipients were women.

During this period, the Scholarship Department also offered its scholarship recipients a comprehensive support programme for further education and self-directed learning, including workshops to expand their skills in academia, politics and praxis, coaching, working groups, regional meetings, conferences, residential educational programmes, and study trips. Most of the events were organized or co-designed by the scholarship recipients themselves; this was also true of the residential educational programmes and study trips.

The first RLS doctoral programme on *Democracy and Capitalism* was launched in October 2008 at the University of Siegen. Eight young researchers completed their doctorates on topics such as German environmental policy, critiques of contemporary political economy, natural gas policy in Bolivia, feminist utopias, anti-globalization movements, and the waning attractiveness of communism as a political model. The second doctoral programme, *Left-Wing Political History Beyond Social Democracy and Party Communism*, began in June 2015 at Ruhr University Bochum. It aimed to explore the diversity of left-wing currents, movements, and organizations as comprehensively as possible.

Another highlight of the Scholarship Department in 2019 was the launch of the *Global Academic Dialogue Programme on Authoritarian Capitalism, Reactionary Populism & Emancipatory Counterstrategies: Global Perspectives from the South*. The programme funded 12 postdoctoral positions at research institutions in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Mozambique, South Africa, Thailand, India, Turkey, and the Philippines. In response to the

severe repression against members of Turkey's Academics for Peace, the Scholarship Department began awarding scholarships to persecuted Turkish academics in October 2016, providing them with spaces where they could openly discuss the political situation in Turkey.

ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY

Between 2007 and 2011, the foundation's archival holdings swelled from 528 to 1,012 linear metres. In the years that followed, the ADS acquired additional archival material. ADS staff worked on securing and cataloguing the archives, creating 12 new *Findbücher* (archival catalogues) by the end of 2019. These included a three-volume reference catalogue for the documents of the PDS parliamentary group during the 14th legislative period of the German Bundestag (1998–2002), one documenting the party executive's archives from the Gysi era (1990–1993), another on the Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG) (2004–2007), and the correspondence of Bundestag member Gregor Gysi (1990–2002).

The library continued to expand its holdings, especially the collections *Die Linke mit ihren Quellorganisationen* (Die Linke and its Precursor Organizations) and *Rosa Luxemburg*. The archive processed research requests from RLS employees, Die Linke's Executive Board and its parliamentary group, academics, students, and other interested parties. Additionally, it prepared publications for political education events and compiled bibliographies and other forms of documentation.

In 2016, the archive, the library, Rosa Luxemburg Research (a centre dedicated to the life and work of the foundation's namesake as well as to publishing related texts), and the historical research staff merged into the Historical Centre (HZ). This independent department offered both educational opportunities and services.

THE RLS NETWORK ACROSS GERMANY

In 2008, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung opened offices in Hamburg, Mainz, Kiel, and Hanover. By 2015, it had 13 regional offices with a workforce of 17 employees. In Berlin, Brandenburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, and Thuringia, there were also offices run by the respective *Landesstiftungen*. Some of them, including the RLS Saxony and the Kurt-Eisner-Verein in Bavaria, also had smaller satellite offices to maintain a local presence. To this end, they also collaborated with local volunteer initiatives such as the Rosa Luxemburg Clubs.⁷⁰ In October 2010, the Executive Board decided to bring together

⁷⁰ See Kirschner and Thomsen, "Präsent im ganzen Land", p. 124.



the regional coordinators and staff from the regional offices under the new Regional Coordination department, effective January 2011.

In 2014, the regional branches organized over 2,200 educational events, attracting more than 104,000 participants.⁷¹ In 2019, around 2,200 events took place with a total of 106,600 participants. Although the numbers fluctuated a bit, the number of events and attendees remained more or less steady between 2008 and 2019.⁷² In early 2018, five regional conferences commemorated the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth — in Jena, Cologne, Stuttgart, Frankfurt am Main, and Leipzig. Meanwhile, over 300 events took place nationwide between October 2018 and April 2019 to pay tribute to Rosa Luxemburg on the 100th anniversary of her death.

Of the events held in 2019, 550 focused on political history, including more than 100 on the history of the GDR, the hopes and realities of 1989–1990, and the issues surrounding German reunification. Around 330 events were dedicated to international politics, 290 to social alternatives, and 250

The RLS-curated touring exhibition *Schicksal Treuhand – Treuhand-Schicksale* (Destiny Treuhand – Treuhand Destinies) was first shown in 2019. Since then, it has been displayed in around 40 venues across 11 German states. Pictured here is the opening of the exhibition in Braunschweig on 17 February 2020 with Christa Luft, an economist and former minister of economic affairs in the Modrow government.

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷² 2008: over 1,900 events with around 34,000 participants; 2009: over 2,000 events with approx. 70,000 participants; 2010: over 2,100 events with around 75,000 participants; 2011: around 2,200 events with 80,000 participants; 2012: nearly 2,300 events with around 95,000 participants; 2013: nearly 2,200 events with around 100,000 participants; 2014: approx. 2,500 events with around 110,000 participants; 2015: almost 2,200 events with around 100,000 participants; 2016: over 2,050 events with more than 105,000 participants; 2017: nearly 2,000 events with around 87,000 participants; 2018: around 2,100 events with 91,500 participants.

to questions related to the state and democracy. The study of racism and neo-Nazism was another key topic during this period, with approximately 200 events. Additionally, 190 events concentrated on feminism, gender relations, and feminist class politics, while 120 addressed culture and media.

RLS SUBSIDIARIES

In 2007, art historian Gertrud Heider (1928–2007), who had dedicated decades to promoting and studying the work of Max Lingner (1888–1959), bequeathed her estate to the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Her final wish was to establish a dependent foundation managed by the RLS. The Max-Lingner-Stiftung was founded in April 2008 to preserve, process, and disseminate the work of the painter and graphic artist Max Lingner.⁷³

Throughout this period, the Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung held the Hermann Henselmann Colloquium once a year. In addition to this all-day event, it organized workshops, salons, and other discussion forums. The foundation also published regularly on contemporary topics — for example, in supplements to the daily newspaper *Neues Deutschland* (nd) — covering issues such as affordable housing for the common good, high-rise planning for Alexanderplatz, and the future of Berlin’s city centre.

In 2011, to mark the 80th birthday of Erik Neutsch, his namesake foundation organized a competition aimed primarily at young authors who have “a knack for writing” (Neutsch). Three winners were selected in 2012. In partnership with the RLS, the Neutsch-Stiftung also organized events related to the author’s works. Following Erik Neutsch’s death, the foundation held a commemorative event in his honour on 30 October 2013. Under the title *Die unauslöschliche Spur* (The Indelible Trace), his friend and fellow writer Eberhard Panitz reflected on Neutsch’s life and achievements. In the mid-2010s, the RLS acquired Neutsch’s literary estate and began sorting through it.⁷⁴

In 2010, the Harald-Breuer-Stiftung supported a project by the Berlin Development Policy Council to install a memorial plaque on the May-Ayim-Ufer, addressing and highlighting colonialism and racism in the cityscape. In the same vein, the foundation inaugurated the exhibition *Kolonialgeschichte am Ufer: Von Gröben zu May Ayim* (Colonial History from the Riverbank: From Gröben to May Ayim). In the late 2010s, the Harald-Breuer-Stiftung and the non-profit organization Solidaritätsdienst-International e. V. (SODI) embarked on an environmental education project in Mozambique.

73 See Angelika Weißbach, “Kunstpflge und Debatte im Atelierhaus-Max-Lingner-Stiftung”, *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, pp. 135–36; “Stiftung”, *Max-Lingner-Stiftung*, available at <https://www.max-lingner-stiftung.de/stiftung>.

74 See Tietz, “Erweiterter Aktionsradius”, p. 134.

In early December 2013, the Michael-Schumann-Stiftung, in collaboration with the RLS Brandenburg, the Die Linke faction in Brandenburg's state parliament, and the publishing house WeltTrends, organized the conference *Die Linke und die Nation* (Die Linke and the Nation) in Potsdam.

In November 2018, the Michael-Schumann-Stiftung merged with the Wolfgang-Abendroth-Stiftungsgesellschaft, which had its roots in WASG, to establish the Clara-Zetkin-Stiftung – Gedächtnis demokratischer Sozialistinnen und Sozialisten (dedicated to the memory of democratic socialists). Like its predecessors, the Clara-Zetkin-Stiftung is active in the field of political education and focuses on the German and European history of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as well as on the biographies of key figures in the workers' and trade union movement.

On 1 January 2018, Hans Modrow, prime minister of the GDR from 1989 to 1990, founded the Irina-und-Hans-Modrow-Stiftung, an organization dedicated to promoting the remembrance and commemoration of everyday life, work, art, media, culture, and church politics in the GDR.

FUNDED PROJECTS

During this period, project funding continued to play an important role in the cooperation between the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, its partners, and other providers of political education, just as it had between 1999 and 2007. The funding paved the way for projects that complemented the foundation's political education programme by broadening topics, geographical reach, and target audiences. As far as its budget would allow, the RLS supported events, publications, and research projects, thereby contributing to the existence and operational capacity of a diverse range of groups and individuals involved in political education within the stream of democratic socialism.

Over the years that followed, the amount of project funding available would fluctuate, but nevertheless remained at a similar level overall.⁷⁵ In 2019, the RLS approved 153 out of 460 applications and allocated 335,000 euros in funding.

⁷⁵ In 2010, the RLS funded 118 projects with a total of 261,600 euros (2011: 750 applications, 189 approved projects funded with 413,500 euros; 2012: 800 applications, 143 approved projects funded with 365,500 euros; 2013: 900 applications, 157 approved projects funded with 356,900 euros; 2014: 900 applications, 143 approved projects funded with 393,200 euros; 2015: 950 applications, 159 approved projects funded with 473,400 euros; 2016: 800 applications, 116 approved projects funded with 381,300 euros; 2017: 517 applications, 134 approved projects funded with 297,340 euros; 2018: 510 applications, 137 approved projects funded with 290,500 euros).

FINANCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

In the federal election on 27 September 2009, Die Linke achieved its best election result to date with 11.9 percent of the vote. As a result, the RLS was recognized as an equal partner by the other political foundations. Following complex financial debates among the foundations, the RLS was fully integrated into the funding scheme of the political foundations in autumn 2010.⁷⁶ This enabled the awarding of more scholarships, the expansion of the foundation's work across Germany, and the exploration of new thematic fields such as migration and trade unions, alongside more projects on international politics.

From 2008 to 2010, funding for the RLS increased from 22 million to 30 million euros, while from 2011 to 2019 it rose from 42 million to 79 million euros.⁷⁷ The RLS received 5.5 percent of the total funds allocated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior to be shared among the German political foundations in 2008, and 7.0 percent in both 2009 and 2010. In 2011, the RLS achieved parity with the other political foundations. Its share of the funding was 9.5 percent from 2011 to 2014, 9.71 percent from 2015 to 2018, and 10.64 percent in 2019.⁷⁸

Thanks to this funding, the RLS had 275 employees in 2019, excluding local staff working at its international offices and personnel employed by the regional foundations (*Landesstiftungen*). Of these, 38 were posted to work in international offices and 23 in the regional offices. Women made up more than half of the workforce.

The Bundestag approved construction funding for the RLS for the first time on 5 June 2014, following the federal election on 22 September 2013, in which Die Linke received 8.6 percent of the party list vote and became the strongest opposition group in the Bundestag. Overall, the RLS was allocated 26.7 million euros for its new building at Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A in Berlin.⁷⁹

76 In his memoirs, Klaus Meier, head of the Administration and Finance department for many years, highlighted the constructive, objective, and fair-minded culture of discussion among the financial officers of the political foundations, particularly among the representatives of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, and the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung. See Klaus Meier, *Bruchstücke und tektonische Verschiebungen: Leseproben eines ostdeutschen Sozialwissenschaftlers aus fünf Jahrzehnten*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2024, pp. 216, 227.

77 2019 includes construction funds amounting to 8 million euros.

78 See the report on the work of the Executive Board, the executive director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2023. Berlin, 24 October 2023, p. 41.

79 See e-mail from Axel Krumrey to Jochen Weichold from 1 February 2024.

3.4 THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG SINCE 2020: AN AGE OF PANDEMIC AND WAR

The coronavirus pandemic and the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East — compounded by climate change, the financial crisis, and other dramatic developments — plunged the world into a “polycrisis” (Adam Tooze) that also brought about profound change at the RLS. The lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic forced the RLS to develop more digital educational formats rather than analogue ones. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in violation of international law, and the Israel-Palestine war, which broke out in October 2023 after Hamas’s attack on Israel, severely curtailed the foundation’s ability to work abroad. Crises and war had to be managed as the “new normal”.

On top of this, the crisis within Die Linke following the disastrous results in the 2021 federal election reached a nadir when the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) split off in 2023. The Executive Board and the Executive Director of the RLS acknowledged that the foundation was facing an existential crisis: “At a time when all forces for peace, social justice, and socio-ecological transformation should be joining forces and fighting back together, Die Linke is failing on almost all fronts.”⁸⁰

Since 2020, work at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung has focused on five areas:⁸¹

- Diagnosis of the times, left-wing strategies, and socialist perspectives
- Climate justice and social-ecological transformation
- Development of work on social issues, trade unionism and social struggles, social rights/a new welfare state
- Fight against the right and for a “society of the many”
- Peace policy and geopolitical challenges

Following intense debate at its two-day retreat between 12 and 13 March 2021, the Executive Board of the RLS decided to implement an organizational development process (ODP). The most significant outcome of the process was the creation of the Centre for Social Analysis and Political Education, established in 2023 through the merger of the Institute for Social Analysis (IfG), the Academy for Political Education, and the Historical Centre, the latter of which had been established in 2016. The

Cover of the 2020 Annual Report



80 Report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2023. Berlin, 24 October 2023, p. 3.

81 See complete report by the Executive Board and the Executive Director to the General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung on 27 November 2021. Berlin, 2021, p. 10.



Academy of Fine Arts.
Exchange partner:
Academy of Fine
Arts Vienna. Door
handle from the
Academy's building on
Schillerplatz. Installed
in room 6.01.

Executive Board appointed the head of this new department, as well as the heads of the Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (ZID) and the Political Communication department, on 13 October 2023 — with the appointees assuming their roles on 1 December 2023.

From 14 to 21 September 2020, after extensive preparations and several delays (most recently due to the COVID-19 crisis), the foundation officially relocated to its new headquarters at Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A in Berlin (for logistical reasons, the ZID was to remain at Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 until 2024). The new building was ready for use on 12 October 2020. In addition, there were changes at the leadership of the RLS. On 26 November 2022, the General Assembly elected Prof. Heinz Bierbaum, former president of the European Left, as Chair of the Executive Board. His predecessor, Dr. Dagmar Enkelmann, did not run for re-election after a decade in office.

POLITICAL EDUCATION WORK

During the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing restrictions, the RLS developed new formats for political education and events. In early 2020, the foundation aired the first episode of the weekly live talk show *Ausnahme & Zustand* (State and Exception). Guests from politics, academia, and social movements discussed social and political issues related to the COVID-19 crisis. This was followed in May by the English-language online series *Global Crisis — Global Solidarity*, which saw guests from all over the world examining the pandemic and other global crises, their economic and political implications, as well as the way forward for the international left.

Launching in the summer of 2020, the history podcast *Rosalux History* covered historical topics and notable anniversaries. The first episode on the history of German colonialism had racked up over 6,000 listens on the available platforms by the end of 2020.

In honour of Friedrich Engels on the eve of his 200th birthday, the RLS organized a major online event comprising three lectures and a reading. On 4 and 5 March 2021, to mark the 150th anniversary of Rosa Luxemburg's birth, the foundation held a livestream titled *Eine Ermutigung in Zeiten der Pandemie und anderer Katastrophen* (Taking Courage in an Age of Pandemic and Other Catastrophes). During the event, we discussed Luxemburg's work, traced her footsteps, shared quotes from newly discovered letters, as well as broadcasting narrative reportages, strolls through the city, and artistic segments.

From 12 to 14 May 2023, the RLS, in cooperation with local and regional trade union branches, held the 5. *Konferenz Gewerkschaftliche Erneuerung* (5th Trade Union Renewal Conference) at Ruhr University in Bochum, which brought together more than 1,500 people.

On 5 September 2023, 400 guests attended the presentation of *Systemsturz*, the German edition of Kohei Saito's *Capital in the Anthropocene*. From 1 to 3 October 2023, 170 people participated in *Kritische Bildungstage* (Critical Education Days), a series of 40 workshops inspired by the idea of a "critical university" or a "university from below", held at the foundation's new headquarters. The 800 seats available for the presentation of US Senator Bernie Sanders's new book *It's Okay to Be Angry about Capitalism*, on 12 October 2023 at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, were sold out shortly after the event was announced. The size of the turnout for the book presentation *The Diversity of Exploitation: On the Critique of Dominant Antiracism* on 19 October 2023, with editors Eleonora Roldán Mendivil and Bafta Sarbo, meant that the foundation's conference hall in Berlin was full to capacity, with around 300 guests inside and many hopeful attendees turned away at the door.

Contrary to the dominant political approach of the ruling elites, which aimed to make Germany "ready for war", the political education work at the RLS during this period focused on the need to make Germany "ready for peace" — an approach that resonated widely. The dossier *Gegen die Logik der Gewalt* (Against the Logic of Violence) was the RLS's most visited online dossier in 2023. The podcast *dis:arm — Friedensgespräche der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung* (The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung's Peace Talks) attracted nearly 3,000 subscribers (30,000 downloads) within the space of a few months. The most successful podcast to date has been the theory podcast *tl:dr* hosted by Alex Demirović, which had around 45,000 subscribers and had been downloaded over 800,000 times by October 2025.⁸²

82 See the report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2024. Berlin, 24 October 2024, p. 31.



Rosa 150: Eine Ermutigung in Zeiten der Pandemie und anderer Katastrophen was held on 4 and 5 March 2021 to mark the 150th anniversary of Rosa Luxemburg's birth.



Employees of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung on the western terrace of the foundation's new headquarters in November 2022. The picture was taken by Jean Molitor from the Deutsche Bahn building (Ostbahnhof), which is just opposite.



SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY ADVICE

Beginning in April 2020, the Institute for Social Analysis examined the interaction between epidemiological, social, and political aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and conducted a thorough assessment of the situation and the expected ramifications. The findings were documented in the publication *A Window of Opportunity for Leftist Politics?*⁸³ as well as in two subsequent wide-ranging dossiers.

Another focus of our work in 2020 was the continuation of the project *Wem gehört die Stadt?* (Who Owns the City?), launched in 2018. It has aimed to research and expose ownership structures in Berlin, thereby ensuring greater transparency in the property market. One result was a study of the same name published in November 2020, which constitutes the first systematic evaluation of ownership structures in the Berlin residential property market.

In recent years, the IfG has strengthened the thematic priorities of the political and social left through studies and expert reports. Alongside comprehensive analyses on class theory, evolving class structures, and unifying class politics, the IfG has repeatedly brought together various actors for specific campaigns on rent and housing, health and care, mobility and the social-ecological transformation, and — last but not least — foreign and peace policy. In early 2022, it published *Spurwechsel* (Switching Lanes), a series of studies on the mobility industries, employment potential, and alternative production methods. The contributions to this publication concluded that a mobility transition rooted in social and climate justice has enormous potential for job creation. In the case of a “reduced full-time for all” — that is, bringing working hours down to about 30 hours per week — this could generate up to 436,500 new jobs.

In 2022, the RLS presented the results of the project *Sozial-ökologische Transformation der deutschen Industrie* (Social-Ecological Transformation of German Industry), developed in collaboration with the Association for Alternative Economic Policy. The report summarizes the current state of affairs in a comprehensible fashion, thus providing those active in social causes with guidance and support. The project’s conclusion is that ecological transformation can only succeed in combination with social transformation.

A study published in mid-March 2024, which received widespread media coverage, showed that, despite the requirement for parties to put up a “firewall” against the far right, there have been and continue to be numerous

83 Institute for Critical Social Analysis and Friends, “A Window of Opportunity for Leftist Politics?”, *LuXemburg*, June 2020, https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/LUXEMBURG/RLS_LUX_Mini_CORONA_EN_FINAL.pdf.

examples of established parties cooperating with the Alternative for Germany (AfD) at the local level. The study listed over 100 instances between 2019 and 2023, ranging from voting with AfD city council motions to the creation of joint voting groups. The party that had cooperated most often with the AfD was the CDU, but the study also documented cases of cooperation with the AfD from all other parties represented in the Bundestag.⁸⁴

INTERNATIONAL WORK

In 2010, the RLS's international work continued to focus on the fight for social and climate justice worldwide, global feminism, and food sovereignty. Wars and the coronavirus pandemic made our work on the ground more challenging.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the RLS had to shift its international work to digital formats such as podcasts and webinars, and to migrate its networking activities to virtual spaces. From 4 to 5 March 2021, more than 30 experts from different continents gathered on Zoom for the academic symposium *Radical Life and Legacy*, focusing on the reception of Rosa Luxemburg's work in Asian and South American texts. By employing this approach, the foundation was able to reach multiple thousands of people. In collaboration with the Fondation Gabriel Péri (Paris), the RLS invited German and French academics and politicians to an online conference on 18 March 2021 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune. Across numerous panel discussions, participants discussed the impacts of the Commune on the history of the labour movement.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 had an immediate impact on the RLS offices in Kyiv and Moscow. The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung took a clear stance at the outset of the war, condemning Russia's war of aggression as a violation of international law and calling for an immediate end to the hostilities. Since the start of the war, the operational capacity of our staff at the RLS office in Kyiv has been highly constrained. The RLS office in Moscow was forced to cease operating in April 2022 when the Russian government withdrew its accreditation.

The war in Gaza, triggered by the Hamas terrorist attack on 7 October 2023, significantly affected the foundation's work in the Middle East. Due to the rapidly worsening security situation in the region, the offices in Tel Aviv, Ramallah, and Beirut were greatly constrained in terms of what they could do.

84 See Steven Hummel and Anika Taschke, *Hält die Brandmauer? Studie zu Kooperationen mit der extremen Rechten in ostdeutschen Kommunen*, Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 2024.

With the pandemic behind us, the RLS was able to officially open an office for local staff in Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina). In April 2022, the Brussels office hosted the international conference *Global Green New Deal*, where more than 100 guests from politics, trade unions, and the climate movement participated in panel discussions, workshops, public events, and a reception to discuss the global ecological transformation. Between 25 and 28 October 2022, the RLS offices in Dakar and Tunis co-organized the conference *Facing the Socio-Ecological Crisis: Delinking and the Question of Global Reparations* in Dakar, Senegal, addressing issues related to Africa's much-needed economic and monetary sovereignty.

The men's football World Cup was held in Qatar in 2022. In September, during a speaking tour that attracted significant media attention, five activists and trade unionists from Nepal and Kenya shared their experiences working at World Cup construction sites and their struggles for humane working conditions.

The RLS leadership and the ZID repeatedly discussed how strengthening the links between its work internationally and its teams in Germany could help the foundation make better use of the wealth of experience gained from the linking of its 26 international offices — and their over 200 employees — with local struggles. Successful examples in this regard include the decentralized activities organized in November 2022 to critically engage with COP 27 in Egypt, as well as the events to mark the World Cup in Qatar that were organized in Germany in November and December of the same year. In addition to the publication *Reclaim the Game: What We Can Learn from the Controversial World Cup in Qatar*, the RLS organized the *Reclaim the Game Speaker's Tour*, which passed through nine German cities in September 2022, attracting considerable attention from the public. The speakers' tour platformed migrant workers who discussed how their labour had been



exploited, and labour and human rights violations in Qatar more generally, resulting in considerable media coverage.

In October 2023, the RLS held its European Summer School in Prague. Around 50 participants from 19 European countries, including left-wing politicians, activists from NGOs, and members of political think tanks met to discuss the current challenges and strengths of the left in the run-up to the 2024 elections for the European Parliament.

On 31 August 2024, on the eve of Anti-War Day, the RLS invited renowned left-wing figures from around the world to discuss approaches to ending the war in Ukraine at the *Diplomacy Now!* conference. Following the debates, prominent figures of the left, including the co-chair of Die Linke, Janine Wissler, former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, Italian left-wing politician Luciana Castellina, Brazilian Workers' Party member Mônica Valente, and Kazuo Shii from the Japanese Communist Party published *A Plea for Peace in Ukraine*.⁸⁵ It states: "We stand with the people of Ukraine and all victims of this war, who deserve peace, reconstruction, and freedom as soon as possible". However, for the signatories of the plea, it was clear that without diplomatic negotiations, there would be neither peace, reconstruction, nor freedom. For that reason, they called on Western governments to "invest not in weapons but in diplomacy".⁸⁶

In November 2024, the RLS hosted the premiere of *No Other Land* – winner of best feature-length documentary at the 2024 Berlinale – which tells the story of a village community in the West Bank fighting against the Israeli occupation's plans to resettle them. The Tel Aviv office had been supporting the journalistic work of filmmakers Yuval Abraham and Basel Adra for several years. The film's premiere and discussion with the filmmakers took place at a sold-out screening in the Babylon cinema.

SCHOLARSHIP DEPARTMENT

Since the beginning of the 2020s, the number of students funded by resources from the federal budget has been hovering at around 900 each year, dropping to 800 in 2024. The number of doctoral students declined from 241 in 2020 to 185 in 2024. The number of students and doctoral candidates funded by the Foreign Office also decreased, from 100 in

85 See Pauline Jäckels, "Internationale Linke formulieren 'Appell für den Frieden'", *Neues Deutschland*, 2 September 2024.

86 Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung and the International Peace Bureau: "Diplomacy Now! A Plea for Peace in Ukraine", 31 August 2024, Berlin, https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/images/Themen/Frieden_und_Sicherheit/A_Plea_for_Peace_in_Ukraine_31_8.pdf, pp. 1–2.

2020 and exactly 102 in 2021 to just 84 in 2022 and 79 two years later.⁸⁷ In contrast, the Scholarship Department was able to expand its circle of academic trustees, climbing to 206 by March 2024.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scholarship Department also had to switch its educational programme to digital formats. Digitizing and redesigning the introductory seminar for newly accepted scholarship holders proved to be a mammoth task. Nonetheless, the Scholarship Department's main role during the pandemic was to guarantee scholarship payments, organize and carry out the selection process, and maintain contact with scholarship recipients, alumni, and academic trustees.

In a new political education podcast titled *Bildung in Rosa – ein Podcast auf dem Weg zu inklusiver Bildung* (Education in Pink – A Podcast Towards Inclusive Education), the Scholarship Department spoke to experts about the various dimensions of educational inequality and explored ways out of this predicament. In 2020, the department's team developed a new digital series, *RLS. (Um-)Wege* (RLS: (De)Tours), which focused on the lives of scholarship recipients and reflected upon (im)possible educational paths. As part of this series, journalist and writer Christian Baron, a former RLS scholarship recipient, read from his bestseller *Ein Mann seiner Klasse* (A Man of His Class).

After the interruption of the pandemic, the Scholarship Department was able to resume hosting numerous in-person events in 2022. In autumn, 12 students and doctoral candidates from Vietnam debated with 12 RLS scholarship holders (including doctoral candidates) in Germany on the topic of *Sozial-ökologische Herausforderungen Vietnam – Deutschland* (Social-ecological Challenges in Vietnam and Germany).

ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY

Since the relocation of the archive and the library to the new headquarters, the documents and collections of the Archive of Democratic Socialism (ADS) – along with the library's books, newspapers, and magazines – are now accessible to the public in a modern, well-lit reading room. Between 2020 and 2022, the ADS acquired 245 linear metres of archival material and approximately 680 gigabytes of digital data (mainly from Die Linke's Bundestag parliamentary group), and worked on cataloguing the documents. As part of the retro-digitization process, over 2,400 posters were digitized and made searchable.

⁸⁷ See the report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2024, Berlin, 24 October 2024, p. 32.

The library now specializes in texts related to left-wing history and theory, with a particular focus on Die Linke and its milieu, as well as on Rosa Luxemburg. In 2022, its holdings comprised around 35,000 media items, which were searchable not only in its online catalogue, but also in the Common Library Network (GBV) and in WorldCat, the world's largest bibliographic database. The collection also includes 1,500 different periodicals. In 2022, the library acquired and catalogued the collected writings of Hermann Klenners, an important legal philosopher from the GDR. The book presentation series *Linke Literatur im Gespräch* (Left-Wing Literature in Conversation), which has been held regularly since 2016, has met with a very positive response.

At the end of 2023, following the organizational restructuring process, the ADS was integrated into the Key Tasks Department, while the library and the academic advisors (from Research and Contemporary History) became part of the newly established Centre for Social Analysis and Political Education. The full effects of this restructuring process are yet to be seen.

REGIONAL BRANCHES AND THE RLS NETWORK ACROSS GERMANY

As in previous years, the Regional Coordination department organized the collaboration between RLS departments and the regional offices and regional branches. The activities of the latter were mainly funded through the RLS core association, but also through donations, membership fees, and, in many places, through funding by individual federal states. Due to the pandemic, the regional branches had to significantly modify or cancel parts of their programmes. While they were able to host in-person events in their usual formats until March 2020, they then had to switch to digital formats for many events, a trend that continued into 2021 and 2022. As evidenced by the notable increase in video and audio productions, both volunteers and employees in the regional foundations, offices, and associations embraced opportunities to expand their work horizons and utilize new educational formats.

In 2020, the RLS network hosted approximately 800 in-person and 450 online events, with around 88,000 people participating either at the time or streaming the videos later. In 2022, the number of online events increased to 667. Taking into account the online events and the 760 in-person events organized that year, there were in total around 94,000 attendees. In 2022, roughly 250 online and hybrid events attracted more than 10,000 participants, while over 50,000 people attended the approximately 1,300 in-person events. In 2023, the RLS network organized around 1,600 in-person events, with over 65,500 participants.

In 2020, the regional branches came together to organize the online event series *Infektionsschutz und demokratische Grundrechte – ein Widerspruch?*

RLS Podcasts:
Weltunordnung
(World Disorder)
Podcast on international politics
Armutszeugnis
(Certificate of Poverty)
The economy podcast
tl;dr
The theory podcast
ManyPod
The podcast for "the society of the many"
Rosalux History
The history podcast

Listen on the RLS website, Soundcloud, Spotify, and wherever you get your podcasts.



(Is There a Contradiction Between Infection Protection and Basic Democratic Rights?) The series examined contemporary debates on pandemic policy and its social consequences, and was particularly well received. In December 2020, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Initiative (Bremen), in collaboration with Cooperativa-Film and the initiative Together We Are Bremen, developed and launched the website *Voices of Resistance*, which gave a platform to refugees and activists.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Georg Lukács's death in June 2021, Helle Panke e. V. (the RLS branch for the State of Berlin) together with the International Georg Lukács Society and other partners organized a one-day conference — which had to be online-only due to the pandemic. With over 1,200 participants, the conference attracted significant interest. In 2022, the RLS Hessen and medico international organized a two-day conference in Frankfurt am Main on the topic of self-government in northern and eastern Syria (particularly in Rojava, which has a Kurdish majority). Towards the end of the year, the RLS Baden-Württemberg and the Heilbronn Rosa-Luxemburg-Club, in cooperation with the Volkshochschule Heilbronn, presented the exhibition *In Rosas Schatten: Zur Geschichte einer jüdischen Familie in Polen* (In Rosa's Shadow: The History of a Jewish Family in Poland).

Since 2022, the RLS Brandenburg and the head office in Berlin have organized an annual colloquium on contemporary history, dedicated to political anniversaries and current history-related debates. In 2024, for example, the colloquium focused on reassessing 40 years of GDR history in the context of the political debates surrounding today's "East-West dissensus". The series was named after Detlef Nakath, a renowned East German historian who passed away in 2021. Nakath was involved in the RLS network from the very beginning, headed the RLS Brandenburg for eight years, and was a long-serving member of the RLS Executive Board.

RLS SUBSIDIARIES

The RLS subsidiaries continue to engage in dedicated, predominantly voluntary work. The Modrow-Stiftung, together with the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, the RLS Brandenburg, and the association "alternativen denken" e. V. Strausberg, took advantage of the temporary easing of lockdown restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic to organize an event in Seelow, Brandenburg, on 1 September 2020 in celebration of World Peace Day. Hans Modrow, as a contemporary witness, recalled his memories of the largest battle of the Second World War within modern-day Germany. Following his death in September 2023, the Modrow Foundation published the anthology *Abschied von Hans Modrow: Reden, Nachrufe und Kondolenzen* (Farewell to Hans Modrow: Speeches, Obituaries, and Condolences).



In 2021, to mark the 90th anniversary of Erik Neutsch's birth, the Erik-Neutsch-Stiftung again held a literary competition for young writers. Under the title *WENDEpunkte* (Turning Points), the authors were invited to explore how the younger generation reflects upon, influences, and assesses today's social developments, upheavals, and turning points. In 2022 and 2023, the Harald-Breuer-Stiftung supported students at the Academy of Performing Arts Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg with the production and release of the short film *Stray Flower*, which addresses the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples by the German colonial power in South West Africa. It also supported the project of the German African Society (DAFRIG): *Selbstbestimmung durch Bildung* (Self-Determination through Education) in northern Cameroon.⁸⁸

Berlin, 5 September 2023. People queuing for the book launch of *Systemsturz* (Capital in the Anthropocene) by Kohei Saito, with the author in attendance.

Since the early 2020s, the Clara-Zetkin-Stiftung has supported a number of publications, including the comprehensive second volume of Clara Zetkin's (post-1919) letters and a four-volume edition of the complete works of philosopher Peter Ruben. The Max-Lingner-Stiftung put together an extensive programme of lectures on painting, graphic design, art,

⁸⁸ See the report on the Work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the regular meeting of the General Assembly of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2023. Berlin, 24 October 2023, p. 6.

architecture, and literature, the majority of which took place in 2022 and 2023.

The Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung excelled with a series of publications and events on architectural history. In 2021 and 2022, it presented the exhibition *Bauhaus Shanghai Stalinallee Ha-Neu: Der Lebensweg des Architekten Richard Paulick* (Bauhaus Shanghai Stalinallee Halle Neustadt: The Life of Architect Richard Paulick) in the Neustadt district of Halle. The exhibition was followed on 1 July 2022 by the panel discussion *HA-NEU – Transformation der Moderne: Projekte, Debatten, Ideen* (Halle Neustadt – The Transformation of Modernism: Projects, Debates, Ideas). On 25 and 26 October 2022, the foundation organized the colloquium *OstWestOst: Architektur und Städtebau der Berliner Nachkriegsmoderne* (EastWestEast: Architecture and Urban Planning in Berlin's Post-War Modernism). In November 2023, it paid tribute to architectural theorist Bruno Flierl (1927–2023) with the colloquium *Bruno Flierl – Planen und Streiten für die Berliner Mitte* (Bruno Flierl – Planning and Wrangling for Berlin's City Centre).⁸⁹

FUNDED PROJECTS

In 2020 and subsequent years, the RLS continued to fund external projects with the same goals in mind as in previous years. In 2020, because of the pandemic the number of applications fell by approximately 100 compared to the previous year, a trend that persisted in 2021 and 2022. Of the 364 project applications received in 2020, the RLS supported 109 projects with a total of 286,300 euros. In 2021, there were 332 applications, of which 128 projects were funded with 313,313 euros. In 2022, out of 204 applications, the RLS funded 68 projects with 200,584 euros, while in 2023, it supported 59 out of 195 applications with just under 110,000 euros.

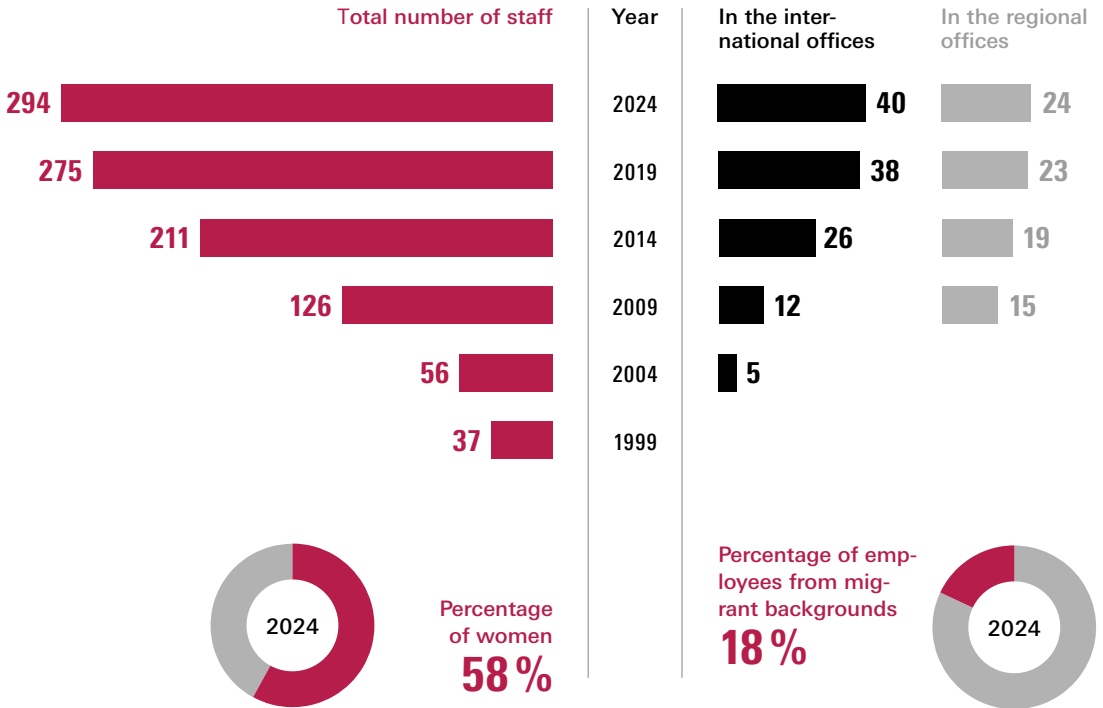
FINANCES AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

From 2020 to 2022, funding for the RLS, excluding construction and investment funds, increased from 73 million to 78 million euros. However, it then decreased to 75 million euros⁹⁰ in 2023 because of cuts to the federal budget allocated to political foundations. The RLS share of the total funding available to political foundations was 10.64 percent from 2020 to 2022, before declining to 9.9 percent in 2024. As of October 2024, the RLS was employing 289 staff, excluding local staff at its international offices and those employed by state foundations (*Landesstiftungen*). Out of the staff

⁸⁹ See Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung, <https://www.hermann-henselmann-stiftung.de>.

⁹⁰ See the 2023 financial statement of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, p. 8.

FIG. 9: STAFFING LEVELS (AS OF 31 DECEMBER EACH YEAR)



employed by the RLS proper, 39 were posted abroad, and 26 were working in regional offices. More than half of the workforce were women.⁹¹

The boost in finances and staffing numbers that the RLS experienced at the start of the 2020s was halted mainly because of the waning electoral fortunes of Die Linke, which only secured 4.9 percent of the vote in the 2021 federal election.⁹²

Die Linke’s surprisingly good result in the federal elections on 23 February 2025 provides the RLS with some breathing room to concentrate on its thematic focal points, the effectiveness of its educational work, and its strategic goals in 2026. However, it has not changed the cost-cutting measures that are already in place. Furthermore, the new Foundation

91 See the report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Meeting of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2024, Berlin, 24 October 2024, p. 21.

92 See report on the work of the Executive Board, the Executive Director, and the Academic Advisory Board to the Ordinary General Meeting of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung in 2023. Berlin, 24 October 2023, p. 4.

Financing Act could enable the Desiderius-Erasmus-Stiftung, affiliated with the AfD, to receive funding after the AfD secured more than 20 percent of the party list vote in the 2025 federal election. It remains uncertain whether this would mean a general increase in the budget allocated to the political foundations. In any case, the economic recession is expected to result in reduced tax revenues for the federal budget.

Despite all this, the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung's (financial) situation is secure for both the current and upcoming legislative periods. It now falls to RLS staff, volunteers, and supporters — as has often been the case since 1990 — to seize every opportunity to achieve day-to-day goals and carry out the foundation's mission, as outlined in its policy documents from all those years ago. Given the current global context, this is more necessary than ever.

4 TIMELINE: HISTORY OF THE ROSA-LUXEMBURG- STIFTUNG⁹³

93 For 1990–2015, see: "Eine Auswahl von Ereignissen 1990 bis 2015", *Ich lebe am fröhlichsten im Sturm*, edited by Dagmar Enkelmann and Florian Weis, Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 2015, p. 218.

1990

- 4 July 1990** Registration of the Stiftung Gesellschaftsanalyse as an independent association with legal capacity at the Berlin-Mitte District Court (of the GDR) under the registry number 906.
- September 1990** Publication of the magazine *Utopie konkret* (Tangible Utopia), later *Utopie kreativ* (Creative Utopia), which ran until the end of 2008.
- 16 November 1990** The association is renamed Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. during a General Assembly held at the former Academy of Social Sciences at Johannes-Dieckmann-Straße (Taubenstraße) 19–23. A three-member Executive Committee is established, consisting of Evelin Wittich, Hans Dehnert, and Karl-Heinz Thieme.

1991

- 24 April 1991** Entry in the association registry of Berlin's Charlottenburg District Court.
- August 1991** Opening of the association's first dedicated office at Littenstraße 106-107 in Berlin-Mitte; October 1991: relocation to Rigaer Straße 27 in Berlin-Friedrichshain.
- 31 August–
2 September 1991** The start of political education work with a seminar on the history of the Weimar Republic titled *Demokratie ohne Chance?* (Democracy without a chance?) with the involvement of Ossip K. Flechtheim.
- Summer/Autumn
1991** Establishment of the first PDS-affiliated political foundations bearing the name "Rosa Luxemburg". Occurs at the state level (in Saxony and Brandenburg), with funding from the respective state budgets.
- 3–8 October 1991** Conference *Hinterm Horizont geht's weiter: Linke politische Bildung Selbstverständnis und Angebote* (There's More Beyond the Horizon: Left-Wing Political Education — Mission and Programme) at Haus am Köllnischen Park.

1992

- January 1992** First event in the series *Meine Biographie in dieser Zeit* (My Biography in this Time) with author Hermann Kant.
- September 1992** A complaint is filed before the Federal Constitutional Court seeking financial equality with other political foundations.

1993

- May 1993** Project week *Jung gewesen 1968 – Einsprüche gegen Anpassung und Bevormundung* (Young in 1968 – Objections to Conformity and Paternalism) in collaboration with Volkshochschule Friedrichshain.
- June 1993** Symposium *Menschen ohne Hoffnung – Flucht aus Osteuropa* (People without Hope – Fleeing Eastern Europe).

1994

- March 1994** Establishment of the first departments: the Social Research Project Group, the Institute for Political Education, and the Coordination Office for International Projects.
- June 1994** Conference *Neues Denken oder alte Machtpolitik?* (New Thinking or Old Power Politics?), organized in collaboration with the Moscow-based Gorbachev Foundation.
- August 1994** Relocation to the headquarters at Franz-Mehring-Platz 1 in Berlin-Friedrichshain.

1995

- February 1995** UN accreditation as an NGO.
- September 1995** Conference marking the 50th anniversary of democratic land reform.

1996

- 28 January 1996** Recognition as PDS-affiliated foundation at the 4th PDS party conference in Magdeburg.
- February 1996** Construction of a facility for mothers and children in the Gaza Strip in cooperation with the Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken and the Union of Health Work Committees (UHWC).
- March 1996** Event series *50 Jahre Vereinigung von KPD und SPD (50 Years of a United KPD and SPD)*; conference *Konservative Hegemonie überwinden, aber wie?* (How Can We Overcome Conservative Hegemony?).
- October 1996** Major interpellation by PDS members of parliament on the financing of political parties and political foundations.
- December 1996** Panel discussion *Wende nach der Wende* (Change after Reunification) on the relationship between the SPD and PDS, with Egon Bahr, Dieter Klein, Daniela Dahn, Lothar Bisky, and Gregor Gysi.

1997

- March 1997** Welcomes its 20,000th event participant in Berlin.
- March 1997** Parliamentary hearing organized by PDS members of parliament on political education in the Federal Republic of Germany.
- November 1997** Book presentation of *Die Globalisierungsfalle* (The Globalization Trap) featuring author and investigative journalist Harald Schumann.

1998

- July 1998** Forum *Tickt der Osten wirklich anders?* (Do Things Really Tick Differently in the East?), with Petra Pau (PDS), Carola von Braun (FDP), Klaus Eschen (constitutional judge), and Rolf Reißig (sociologist).
- 27 September 1998** The PDS enters the Bundestag with 5.1 percent of the vote, entitling the foundation to public funding under the German Basic Law.
- 3 December 1998** Christa Luft (member of the Bundestag's Budget Committee) writes to inform the RLS that it can expect 8 million deutsche marks in annual general subsidies.

1999

- Early 1999** Withdrawal of the lawsuits filed by the association and the PDS before the courts alleging financial discrimination against the foundation.
- 29 April 1999** The printed paper 14/624 informs all members of the Bundestag about the funds being allocated to the PDS-affiliated political foundation.
- 25 June 1999** Election of a Board of Trustees as advisory body and adoption of the name Bundesstiftung Rosa Luxemburg by the General Assembly. The Federal Ministry of the Interior rejects the new name for formal reasons. The General Assembly changes the name to Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e. V. on 14 January 2000.
- 1 August 1999** Agreement on regulations governing cooperation between the head office and the regional branches at a meeting in Potsdam.
- August 1999** First notification of funding: 4 million deutsche marks in general subsidies for the second half of 1999.
- October 1999** First seminar series on Karl Marx's *Capital*, which gave way to the Marx reading courses in 2006 and the first Marx Autumn School in 2008.
- November 1999** The new Scholarship Department awards five scholarships

2000

- Early 2000** The RLS supports the launch of the digital network www.linksnet.de, which soon attracts over 5,000 users.
- June 2000** Launch of the first RLS website.
- 5–6 October 2000** International conference *Gerechtigkeit oder Barbarei* (Justice or Barbarism) in Berlin.
- November 2000** Creation of an independent International Relations department: first allocation of funds by the BMZ and the AA amounting to 573,000 deutsche marks.

2001

- 25–30 January 2001** First edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with representatives from the RLS in attendance.
- 7–9 September 2001** Conference *Grenzüber tretungen – Umgang mit den Anderen* (Crossing Borders – Interacting with Others) on refugees and migration at Haus am Köllnischen Park in Berlin.
- Throughout the year** The RLS organizes some 170 projects in West Germany, most of them in NRW, Bavaria, and Bremen. The foundation is active in around 50 cities in West Germany.

2002

- Summer 2002** The RLS is divided into the following departments: Political Education, Political Analysis, International Relations, Scholarship Department, Archive/Library, Public Relations, Administration, and Finance/Controlling, with a total of 50 employees.
- 22 September 2002** The PDS receives four percent of the vote in the federal election and is now represented by only two directly elected members of parliament, Gesine Löttsch and Petra Pau. The RLS Archive of Democratic Socialism (ADS) acquires the archives of all 36 former parliamentary offices.
- Throughout the year** Publication of over 50 books and pamphlets, as well as 21 additional publications

2003

- 2003** Opening of international offices in Johannesburg, Moscow, Warsaw, and São Paulo.
- 28 May–1 June 2003** First presentation of the RLS at the Ecumenical Church Day in Berlin.
- Autumn 2003** The General Assembly elects Evelin Wittich as the first sole executive director.
- Throughout the year** The RLS receives over 400 funding applications for external projects; a total of 220,000 deutsche marks goes to funding 50 projects.

2004

- 13 November 2004** Creation of the Chair of the Executive Board as head of the RLS. The General Assembly elects Reinhard Mocek for the position.
- 9–10 December 2004** Conference *15 Jahre PDS* (15 Years of the PDS) in Berlin.

2005

- 21–24 July 2005** First Social Forum in Germany, in Erfurt, where the RLS makes a presentation on its activities.
- 18 September 2005** Early federal election. Linkspartei.PDS obtains 8.7 percent of the vote with open lists for WASG members.
- 4 November 2005** Conference *Sozialismus als Tagesaufgabe* (Socialism as a Daily Task) in Berlin, with Daniela Dahn, Oskar Lafontaine, and Gregor Gysi.
- Throughout the year** Educational work focuses on *60 Jahre Befreiung vom Nationalsozialismus* (60 Years since Liberation from Nazism).

2006

- January 2006** Acquisition of Johannes Agnoli's library, comprising around 1,500 books and pamphlets.
- 3–4 March 2006** First *International Rosa Luxemburg Conference* with guests from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, among others.
- 18 November 2006** The General Assembly elects Heinz Vietze to succeed Reinhard Mocek as Chair of the Executive Board.

2007

June 2007 The RLS supports protests against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, including, for example, with an information centre in Rostock.

16 July 2007 Die Linke is formed through the merger of the Linkspartei.PDS and WASG. It recognizes the association Gesellschaftsanalyse und Politische Bildung e.V. (and thus the RLS) as its affiliated political foundation.

2008

January 2008 The Municipal Academy and the Cultural Forum begin their activities.

23 September 2008 Heinz Vietze, Chair of the Executive Board, discusses the transformation of the Board of Trustees into an Academic Advisory Board in an interview with the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*.

November 2008 Opening of regional offices in Hamburg, Mainz, Kiel, and Hanover.

6 December 2008 The General Assembly elects Florian Weis to succeed Evelin Wittich as Executive Director.

10 December 2008 Opening of the international office in Brussels. Friedrich Schorlemmer delivers a keynote speech marking 60 years since the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

2009

20–21 March 2009 Academics, trade unionists, and politically active people discuss *Linke Auswege aus der Krise* (Left-Wing Ways out of the Crisis) at an international conference organized by the RLS and the parliamentary group of Die Linke.

12 May 2009 First *Luxemburg Lecture* at the ballroom of Berlin's state parliament building with Chantal Mouffe.

August 2009 *Luxemburg. Gesellschaftsanalyse und linke Praxis* (Luxemburg: Social Analysis and Left-Wing Praxis) replaces the magazine *Utopie kreativ*.

27 September 2009 Die Linke achieves its best result to date in a Bundestag election: 11.9 percent.

2010

- October 2010** The Executive Board of the RLS opts to create the Regional Coordination department.
- 28–30 October 2010** The RLS and the parliamentary group of Die Linke organize the international conference *Auto.Mobil.Krise* (Auto.Mobile.Crisis) in Stuttgart on future ecological and economic policy issues.
- Autumn 2010** Following complex financial discussions between Germany's various political foundations, the RLS becomes fully integrated into the financing model for political foundations. As a result, the RLS is able to award more scholarships, expand its nationwide work, and develop new focus areas.

2011

- March 2011** The first English-language edition of Rosa Luxemburg's complete works is launched in London and New York.
- 26 April 2011** Joanna Gwiazdecka, head of RLS Warsaw, receives an award from the Association of Jewish Resistance Fighters on the 68th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising for her work to counter xenophobia, nationalism, and antisemitism.
- 20–22 May 2011** *Jenseits des Wachstums?!* (Beyond Growth?!), conference organized in collaboration with Attac, FES, HBS, and the Otto-Brenner-Stiftung, with over 2,500 participants.

2012

- March 2012** Introduction of the IfG's fellowship programme to strengthen academic cooperation.
- 9 October 2012** Opening of an RLS liaison office in Athens.
- 14 November 2012** Opening ceremony of the RLS New York office at the Library of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, with Gregor Gysi and Heinz Vietze.
- 1 December 2012** Dagmar Enkelmann is elected as Chair of the Executive Board by the General Assembly.

2013

- 26–27 April 2013** The event *#cross_solidarity* sees around 150 international activists discuss possibilities for global cooperation in Wuppertal.

22 September 2013 Die Linke receives 8.6 percent of the vote in the federal election, becoming the strongest opposition party in the Bundestag.

2014

2014 Wide range of events on the topic *1914–1939–1989: Wendepunkte europäischer Geschichte* (1914–1939–1989: Turning Points in European History).

5 June 2014 The Bundestag approves construction funding for the RLS.

2–4 October 2014 Third RLS *Streikkonferenz* (Strike Conference) in Hanover.

8 October 2014 Opening of the RLS North Africa office in Tunis.

2015

13 April 2015 RLS symposium in Erfurt on the Collective Bargaining Unity Act, featuring speakers such as Die Linke politician Bodo Ramelow, trade unionist Claus Weselsky, and Reinhard Göhner, Chief Executive of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations.

16–25 July 2015 Festival of migration policy *Die widerspenstige Internationale* (The Rebellious International) is held on the grounds of the new headquarters at Berlin-Ostbahnhof.

17–20 September 2015 First International Willi Münzenberg Congress in Berlin.

27 November 2015 Colloquium on international work. Ceremony at Postbahnhof, Berlin, to mark the 25th anniversary of the RLS.

2016

3–5 June 2016 International conference *Europe — What's Left? Strategies after the Coup* in Berlin.

10–12 June 2016 Networking meeting of the Welcome2Stay initiative in Leipzig with 800 activists, in cooperation with the parliamentary group of Die Linke.

30 September–2 October 2016 Third conference *Erneuerung durch Streik* (Renewal through Strike), together with regional trade union members from IG Metall, ver.di, the NGG, and the GEW in Frankfurt am Main. 700 participants.

11–13 November 2016 Reading of *Ästhetik des Widerstands* (The Aesthetics of Resistance) at Peter-Weiss-Haus in Rostock, to mark the 100th anniversary of the author's birth.

17 November 2016 Opening of the regional office in Kyiv.

2017

- 27–28 January 2017** Conference *Genug für alle! Sozial.öko.logisch* (Enough for Everyone! Social. eco.logical) in Essen, organized together with the parliamentary group of Die Linke.
- 9–10 February 2017** First RLS Education Congress in Berlin with 200 participants.
- 31 March 2017** Conference *Für ein solidarisches Europa: Zu Alternativen und Strategien für ein anderes Europa* (For a Europe Based on Solidarity: Alternatives and Strategies for a Different Europe) in Berlin.
- 17–18 March 2017** Conference *Die russische Linke zwischen März und November 1917* (The Russian Left between March and November 1917) on the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, kicking off a series of events that would run until November 2017.
- 24 September 2017** Die Linke receives 9.2 percent of the vote in the federal election.
- 4–8 October 2017** European Summer School in Madrid around the theme of *Organizing for a Left Hegemony*.
- 26–29 October 2017** Marx Autumn School in Berlin to mark the 150th anniversary of *Capital*.
- 3–5 November 2017** International congress *Perspektiven auf den Roten Oktober: 100 Jahre Russische Revolution 1917* (Perspectives on Red October: 100 Years Since the Russian Revolution of 1917) in Berlin with 250 participants.
- 4 December 2017** Event *Die smarte Stadt neu denken* (Rethinking the Smart City) in Berlin; the audience skews younger.

2018

- 2–6 May 2018** *Marx200: Politik — Theorie — Sozialismus*, conference marking the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth in Berlin. Marx conferences take place in Jena, Cologne, Stuttgart, Frankfurt am Main, and Leipzig.
- 30 May–1 June 2018** *Marx, Marxism, Marxisten* conference in St. Petersburg on the historical context of Marxism as well as the reception of Marx's writings in Russia.
- 13–15 September 2018** *über:morgen*, a conference on the future, taking place in Berlin. Premiere of *Gesundheitstribunal* (The Health Tribunal), a theatre piece with activists from the Berlin Hospital Movement, who campaign for increased staffing.
- 30 September–4 October 2018** European Summer School in Belgrade with 100 academics and activists from Europe, North America, and Latin America on the prospects of a "Feminist International".

3 October 2018 Discussion on left-wing populism as part of the *Luxemburg Lectures* featuring Chantal Mouffe.

26–28 October 2018 Marx Autumn School on “the global market and crisis”.

2019

10 January 2019 International conference in Berlin on the contemporary relevance of Rosa Luxemburg’s ideas.

12 January 2019 All-day event at Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, in honour of Rosa Luxemburg. The cultural and political programme included the premiere of the documentary film *Rosa Luxemburg oder der Preis der Freiheit* (Rosa Luxemburg or the Price of Freedom), produced for *Arte* with RLS support. From October 2018 to April 2019, over 300 events nationwide celebrate Rosa Luxemburg.

17 January–28 February 2019 Exhibition *Max Lingner — auf der Suche nach der Gegenwart* (Max Lingner — In Search of the Present), a programmatic selection of nearly 40 works by Max Lingner organized by the Max-Lingner-Stiftung and Centre Max Bloch at the Institut Français Berlin.

28 February–1 March 2019 Conference *RLS Cities: Rebellisch. Links. Solidarisch* (Rebellious, Left-Wing, Grounded in Solidarity) in Berlin with over 400 attendees. Discussions and workshops on housing, rent, and urban development policy.

20 August 2019 Opening of the touring exhibition *Schicksal Treuhand — Treuhand — Schicksale* (Destiny Treuhand – Treuhand Destinies) in Erfurt with Bodo Ramelow and Gregor Gysi.

28–29 August 2019 Symposium *Globalisierung des Autoritarismus: Aspekte der Krise der Demokratie* (Globalization of Authoritarianism: Perspectives on the Crisis of Democracy) in Berlin, with 150 participants.

12–15 September 2019 International *Feminist Futures Festival* in Essen with guests from over 30 countries.

29 October 2019 The RLS and activist Jane McAlevey start the project *Organizing for Power (O4P)*, one of the most successful examples of digital political education work. By the end of 2021, the project had built a community of over 5,000 organizers from 60 countries.

30 November 2019 Daniela Trochowski is elected Executive Director by the General Assembly.

2020

- 17 March 2020** First COVID-19 lockdown.
- 24 April 2020** Broadcast of the first episode of the live talks on *Ausnahme & Zustand* (State and Exception), a weekly discussion of global debates related to the coronavirus crisis.
- 6 May 2020** Launch of the English and German-language online series *Global Crisis — Global Solidarity*. Some episodes of the weekly broadcast reached an audience of several thousand.
- 26 August 2020** Launch of the history podcast *Rosalux History* with an episode on the history of German colonialism. By the end of 2020, it had been accessed over 600 times.
- September/
October 2020** Relocation to the new headquarters at Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A, Berlin, home to the RLS since 12 October 2020.
- 24 September–
13 October 2020** Online *Strike School* with 4,500 participants from 70 countries.
- 27 November 2020** Online event to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Friedrich Engels's birth.

2021

- 4–5 March 2021** Livestream event on the 150th anniversary of Rosa Luxemburg's birth titled *Eine Ermutigung in Zeiten der Pandemie und anderer Katastrophen* (Taking Courage in an Age of Pandemic and Other Catastrophes). With discussions on Luxemburg's life and work, quotes from her letters, reportages, city strolls, and artistic segments.
- 4–5 March 2021** Academic online symposium *Radical Life and Legacy* on the reception of Luxemburg's work in multiple continents.
- 12–13 March 2021** The Executive Board decides to initiate an organizational development process (ODP).
- 18 March 2021** Online conference to mark the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune, organized in collaboration with the Fondation Gabriel Péri (Paris).
- 26 September 2021** Die Linke receives 4.9 percent of the vote in the federal election.

2–3 October 2021 Hybrid conference *Linker Green New Deal für die Mobilitätswende* (A Left-Wing Green New Deal for the Mobility Transition) in Stuttgart, organized by RLS Baden-Württemberg, the IfG, and the discussion group *Zukunft Auto. Umwelt. Mobilität* (Future Auto.Environment.Mobility).

2022

- 24 February 2022** As a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, activities at the RLS office in Kyiv are limited. The Russian government withdraws the RLS's accreditation in April 2022. The RLS office in Moscow closes in June 2022.
- 26–28 April 2022** International conference *Global Green New Deal* in Brussels with over 100 guests from the fields of politics, trade unions, and the climate movement.
- 18 June 2022** First *Festival de:lux* in Berlin featuring plenty of culture, music, left-wing politics, and debates. Coming out of the drawn-out pandemic years, it attracts around 1,000 visitors.
- 1 July 2022** The Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung hosts the panel discussion *HA-NEU — Transformation der Moderne: Projekte, Debatten, Ideen* (Halle Neustadt — Transformation of the Modern: Project, Debates, Ideas) to mark the end of the exhibition *Bauhaus Shanghai HA-NEU* in Halle (Saale).
- 18 September 2022** Kick-off for the speakers' tour *Reclaim the Game!* in Berlin. The tour, which received significant media coverage, aimed to draw attention to the living and working conditions of migrant workers in Qatar ahead of the World Cup.
- 25–28 October 2022** Conference *Facing the Socio-Ecological Crisis: Delinking and the Question of Global Reparations* in Dakar, Senegal.
- 26 November 2022** The General Assembly elects Heinz Bierbaum as Chair of the Executive Board.

2023

- 5 September 2023** Book presentation of *Systemsturz*, translation of Kohei Saito's *Capital in the Anthropocene* with 400 attendees.
- 1–3 October 2023** *Kritische Bildungstage* (Critical Education Days) with a total of 170 participants.
- 4–8 October 2023** RLS European Summer School in Prague with the participation of 50 left-wing politicians and activists from NGOs and political think tanks from 19 European countries.

- 7 October 2023** Hamas kills around 1,200 people in a terrorist attack on Israel, triggering the war in Gaza in which tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed and resulting in a humanitarian catastrophe. The rapidly deteriorating regional security situation means RLS offices in Tel Aviv, Ramallah, and Beirut can only operate on a limited basis.
- 12 October 2023** Bernie Sanders presents his book *It's Okay to Be Angry About Capitalism* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin. All 800 seats sell out rapidly, and a video of the presentation is viewed 20,000 times within five days.
- 13 October 2023** The Executive Board appoints new directors for the Centre for International Dialogue, the Political Communication department, and the newly formed Centre for Analysis and Political Education. These new directors are to take office on 1 December 2023.
- 19 October 2023** Book presentation in Berlin for the German edition of *The Diversity of Exploitation: On the Critique of Dominant Antiracism*, featuring editors Eleonora Roldán Mendivil and Bafta Sarbo in Berlin to an audience of more than 300.
- 8–10 November 2023** Discussions, concerts, and readings at the Volksbühne Berlin under the title *Europa den Räten!* (Europe to the Councils!) ahead of the European Parliament Election in June 2024.

2024

- 2 March 2024** RLS spring festival with 500 participants, with the audience skewing younger.
- April–May 2024** RLS publication *Ausgeliefert* (Delivered) on the work of parcel delivery workers, many of whom are migrants.
- 14–15 June 2024** Stuttgart Peace Conference organized in collaboration with ver.di-Stuttgart.
- 31 August 2024** International conference *Diplomatie jetzt!* (Diplomacy Now!) in Berlin, followed by the publication of the widely acclaimed *A Plea for Peace in Ukraine* by an international group of leftists.
- 3–6 October 2024** Summer school *Feministische Ökonomie und soziale Gerechtigkeit* (Feminist Economics and Social Justice) with 50 left-wing activists, politicians, and experts.
- 15–16 November 2024** Conference *Monster verstehen: Faschisierung, grüner Kapitalismus und Sozialismus* (Understanding the Monsters: Fascistization, Green Capitalism, and Socialism) in Berlin with 400 participants.

2025

- Early March 2025** The publication *KiTa-Krisenbuch* (eds. RLS and ver.di) on the untenable conditions in German childcare facilities receives widespread media coverage amid public-sector strikes.
- 27–30 March 2025** Conference *Good Night, Far Right*, an international exchange of strategies to counter the far right, taking place in Berlin.
- 4–6 April 2025** Local politics conference in Wiesbaden.
- 2–4 May 2025** Sixth edition of the *Gewerkschaftliche Erneuerung* conference (Trade Union Renewal; more simply “Strike Conference”) in Berlin with around 3,000 participants.

5 APPENDIX

Straße der Pariser Kommune

8A

5.1 MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND FOUNDING MEMBERS

CHAIRS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Heinz Bierbaum (since 2022)
Dagmar Enkelmann (2012–2022)
Heinz Vietze (2006–2012)
Reinhard Mocek (2004–2006)

DEPUTY CHAIRS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Jan Korte (since 2022)
Lena Saniye Güngör (since 2022)
Sabine Reiner (2012–2022)
Thomas Händel (2007–2022)
Dagmar Enkelmann (2010–2012)
Gesine Löttsch (2008–2010)
Michael Brie (2004–2008)
Claudia Gohde (2004–2008)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Daniela Trochowski (since 2020)
Florian Weis (2008–2020)
Evelin Wittich (2003–2008)

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Evelin Wittich (1990–2004)
Michael Brie (1996–2004)
Lutz Brangsch (1998–2004)
Jochen Weichold (1992–1998)
Dieter Klein (1994–1996)
Karl-Heinz Thieme (1990–1994)
Hans Dehnert (1990–1992)

5.2 PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Lisa Albrecht (born 1982) studied cultural studies and human resources administration. Member of the management team of the international department, advisor to the Executive Director, and a Senior Advisor for Resource Management and Budget at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

Dr. Jane Angerjäv (born 1977) holds a law degree from the University of Tartu (Estonia), a Master's in German and European Law and Legal Practice (M.LL.P), and a doctorate from the Faculty of Law at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Advisor and later Deputy Head of the Scholarship Department from 2009 to 2016. Head of the Scholarship Department since 2020.

Prof. Heinz Bierbaum (born 1946) studied sociology and economics. He has been a representative of IG Metall Frankfurt am Main, a university lecturer, a member of the Saarland state parliament for Die Linke, the chair of the International Commission of Die Linke, and the president of the Party of the European Left. Chair of the RLS Executive Board since 2022.

Dr. Lutz Brangsch (born 1957) holds a diploma⁹⁴ in economics. Member of the Academy for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED from 1984 to 1990, member of the Executive Board of the PDS from 1990 to 1999, Head of Administration and Finance at the RLS from 1999 to 2003, and member of the Managing Executive Board from 1998 to 2004. Head of the Political Education department at the RLS from 2004 to 2009, and staff member at the Institute for Social Analysis at the RLS from 2010 to 2023.

Prof. Michael Brie (born 1954) studied philosophy at Leningrad State University and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he worked as a research assistant and university lecturer. Member of the RLS staff from 1999 to 2019, including as director of the Institute for Social Analysis. Chair of the RLS Academic Advisory Board from 2019 to 2023. Member of the policy commission of Die Linke.

Cathleen Bürgelt (born 1976) is a historian (MA). Research assistant to Gerd-Rüdiger Hoffmann, a member of the Brandenburg state parliament for the PDS and the Linkspartei, in Senftenberg from 2004 to 2014, and to Sigrid Hupach, a member of the Bundestag, in Berlin from 2015 to 2017. Political education advisor at the RLS Brandenburg from 2017 to 2024. Advisor to the Brandenburg Ministry of Science, Research, and Culture since September 2024.

⁹⁴ The *Diplom* (diploma) is an academic qualification found in German-speaking countries, and can be considered equivalent to achieving a combined bachelor's and master's degree.

Murat Çakir (born 1960) is a sworn interpreter and translator for Turkish. Press spokesperson for the RLS from 2006 to 2009. Head of the RLS Hessen since November 2009.

Nadja Charaby (born 1977) holds an MA in Southeast Asian Studies, Library Science, and Sociology. Head of RLS Southeast Asia from 2010 to 2015. Project Manager for East and Southeast Asia in 2015. Global Issues Advisor from 2015 to 2019. Head of International Politics, North America, and Climate Policy between 2019 and 2023. Director of the Asia, International Politics, and North America units since late 2023.

Dr. Dagmar Enkelmann (born 1956) is a historian. Member of the German Bundestag from 1990 to 1998 and from 2005 to 2013. Deputy Chair of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung from 2010 to 2012 and Chair from 2012 to 2022. Member of the Executive Board of the Erik-Neutsch-Stiftung.

Dr. Barbara Fried (born 1970) is a psychologist (diploma) and sociologist. In 2011, she developed a postdoctoral project, with RLS support, on the care-work crisis and prospects for a reproductive economy. Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *LuXemburg* from 2012 to 2023. Deputy Director of the Institute for Social Analysis from 2013 to 2023. Responsible for the *Sorgende Städte* (Caring Cities) project since 2020, and policy advisor for feminist class politics since 2024.

Prof. Dieter Klein (born 1931) is an economist. He took part in the *Modern Socialism Theory* project, which promoted alternative development paths even prior to the fall of the GDR in 1989. He was a fellow at the Centre for Social Analysis and Political Education (specializing in transformation theory) and a professor of Economic Foundations of Politics at the Institute for Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Member of the RLS Executive Board until 2012.

Erhard Korn (born 1951) studied political science, German language and literature, and history. A retired headmaster, Deputy Chair of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Baden-Württemberg, and teacher of further education, he has been active in the Education and Science Union Baden-Württemberg and as a staff council representative, and is now a member of the executive committee for policy issues. He has published in the trade union press and left-wing newspapers on topics such as legal developments, militarization and remilitarization, the history of the labour movement, and the history of democracy.

Dr. Gregor Kritidis (born 1971) holds a diploma in sociology. Worked as a research assistant at Leibniz University Hanover, project assistant at the Association of Lower Saxony Educational Initiatives, and advisor to the DGB regional district of Lower Saxony/Bremen/Saxony-Anhalt. Executive Director of the RLS Saxony-Anhalt from 2016 to 2023. Since 2024, he has been the Executive Director of Naturfreunde Niedersachsen (Friends of Nature Lower Saxony).

Axel Krumrey (born 1982) holds a diploma in political science. He served as assistant and adviser to the Executive Director, has been head of the RLS construction team, managing director of the RLS subsidiary that was to oversee construction — Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A GmbH & Co. KG — and senior advisor for construction and subsidiary foundations.

Prof. Christa Luft (born 1938) holds a diploma in economics and is a specialist in foreign trade. She studied in the Foreign Trade department of the Berlin Economics College, and at the International Institute for Economic Problems of the Socialist World System in Moscow. As Minister of Economics in the Modrow government (1989–1990), she was the architect of economic reforms and served as Chair of the Budget Committee in the freely elected People's Chamber. Between 1994 and 2002, she was a directly elected member of the German Bundestag for the PDS. Member of the RLS.

Meinhard Meuche-Mäker (born 1958) holds a diploma in political science and is a founding member of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Member of the Executive Board of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Hamburg between 1997 and 2024, and a longstanding member of the RLS Board of Trustees. From 2003 to 2024, he was the director of the RLS Regional Office in Hamburg.

Dr. Sabine Nuss (born 1967) is a political scientist and journalist. She was the recipient of an RLS scholarship and later honorary staff member at the Institute for Social Analysis, as well as a policy advisor at the Academy for Political Education. Head of Political Communication from 2010 to 2017. From 2018 to 2023, she was co-executive director at Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin. Since then, she has worked as a freelance author, publicist, and co-host of the RLS economics podcast.

Hana Pfennig (born 1982) studied political science, sociology, and philosophy. From 2011 to 2023, she worked at the Centre for International Dialogue at the RLS (as an assistant, project manager, policy advisor, and member of the management team). Since 2024, she has been Deputy Director of the Political Communication department at the RLS.

Prof. Rainer Rilling (born 1945) studied political science, sociology, and modern history. From 1983 to 1998, he was the managing director of the Association of Democratic Scientists (BdWi). Professor of sociology at Philipps University in Marburg since 2002. Member of the RLS Executive Board from 2014 to 2019.

Dr. Annegret Rohwedder (born 1958) holds a diploma in economics and demography. She was an assistant to the Chair of Demography at the Berlin Economics College from 1981 to 1990 and a research assistant at the Progress Institute for Economic Research in Bremen from 1990 to 1991. She worked as a project manager and authorized signatory at a&O research GmbH from 1991 to 2000, and as an Executive Director at Unique Gesellschaft für Arbeitsgestaltung, Personal- und Organisationsentwicklung from 2000 to 2008. Between 2008 and 2014, she served as Human Resources Advisor, Director of Human Resources, and Deputy Head of Central Tasks at the RLS. Head of Human Resources for Die Linke in the German Bundestag since April 2025.

Dr. Jörn Schütrumpf (born 1956) holds a diploma in history. Editor of the monthly magazine *Utopie kreativ* from 1990 to 2008 (from 1992 to 1999 in a volunteer capacity). Chair of the Helle Panke association (volunteer) from 1991 to 2001. Head of Public Relations at the RLS from 2001 to 2005. Executive director at Karl Dietz Verlag Berlin from 2003 to 2016. Head of Rosa Luxemburg Research from 2015 to 2022. Author and editor of works by authors such as Paul Levi, Angelica Balabanoff, Rosa Luxemburg, and Clara Zetkin.

Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (born 1961) holds a diploma in history. Executive Director of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Brandenburg from 1998 to 2006. Director of the RLS office in South Africa from 2006 to 2010. Head of various RLS departments since 2010. Deputy Executive Director of the RLS from 2015 to 2025. In 2025, he was reappointed as Director of the Southern Africa Office in Johannesburg.

Meinhard Tietz (born 1951) is a sociologist (diploma) and chartered accountant. He has been head of the accounting department, coordinator of the risk management working group, responsible for the RLS subsidiaries and, in the early years, a member of the RLS sustainability discussion group. He has collaborated with the *Landesstiftungen* to implement a uniform accounting system with Lexware and has been active in political education in Strausberg, where he volunteers with the RLS Brandenburg.

Daniela Trochowski (born 1969) holds a diploma in economics. Advisor on taxation and finance to the German Bundestag from 1996 to 2002 and from 2005 to 2009. Advisor to the Berlin Senate Department for Economics, Labour and Women's Issues from 2002 to 2005. State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance in Brandenburg from 2009 to 2019. Executive Director of the RLS since 2020.

Dr. Florian Weis (born 1967) is a historian. He has been volunteering at the RLS since 1996. He was responsible as a full-time coordinator of the regional branches in the West from 1999 to 2009, and was the first Chair of the Works Council in 2000, serving as co-responsible person for external projects until December 2000. He assisted in the process of founding Die Linke between 2004 and 2007. Personnel officer at the RLS at different times between 2005 and 2008. Member of the RLS Executive Board from 2008 to 2020. Advisor on antisemitism and on the history and present of the Jewish left as well as on class and social structure; coordinator of the associated discussion groups at the RLS.

Dr. Evelin Wittich (born 1950) holds a diploma in civil engineering. She was a problem analyst at the Building Academy of the GDR from 1973 to 1980 and undertook postgraduate studies on software economics at the Academy of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the SED from 1980 to 1985, where she later worked as a senior assistant. Co-founder in 1990 of the organization that would go on to become the RLS. Member of the Executive Committee until 2003, then sole Executive Director. Head of the Academy for Political Education and of Rosa Luxemburg Research from 2009 to 2015.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What were the initial motivations that inspired you to start a political foundation?
 2. Could you please describe the context or circumstances under which you and your colleagues started working at that time?
 3. What were the main challenges you faced?
 4. What would you consider the different stages of the foundation's history? How would you define them, and under what criteria?
 5. From today's perspective, how would you describe the development of the foundation? Which expectations have been met and which have not?
 6. What have been the greatest successes along the way?
 7. What do you believe are the foundation's principal tasks today?
 8. What is your vision for the foundation in the coming decade?
-

EDITORIAL TEAM AND AUTHORS

Effi Böhlke (born 1963) holds a doctorate in philosophy and is a research advisor to the Executive Director of the RLS. She is one of the people who got the ball rolling for this publication and is the author of the essay on the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung (Chapter 1). She also conducted the first interviews, selected and compiled interview excerpts, and edited the manuscript.

Alrun Kaune-Nüßlein (born 1961) is a journalist and press spokesperson for the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. She is the author of Chapter 2 and was responsible for editing the entire publication.

Lutz Kirschner (born 1955) holds a doctorate in sociology and was the Head of the Regional Coordination department of the RLS for many years. He conducted most of the interviews and transcribed all of them.

Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (born 1961) holds a diploma in history. He currently heads the Johannesburg office, and is among the initiators and co-editors of the texts included in this publication.

Jochen Weichold (born 1948) holds a doctorate in history and was director of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Archive for many years. He is the author of chapters 3 and 4 of this volume.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt)
ADS	Archive of Democratic Socialism
AdW	Academy of Sciences of the GDR (Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR)
AfD	Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)
AfG	Academy for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED (Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim Zentralkomitee der SED)
AG	Working Group (Arbeitsgemeinschaft)
BAföG	Federal Training Assistance Act (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz)
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung)
BMFTR	Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (Bundesministerium für Forschung, Technologie und Raumfahrt)
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern)
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)

bpb	Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung)
BSW	Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht)
DAFRIG	German African Society (Deutsch-Afrikanische Gesellschaft e. V.)
DES	Desiderius-Erasmus-Stiftung
EL	European Left
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FNS	Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung
GBV	Common Library Network (Gemeinsamer Bibliotheksverbund)
HBS	Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung
HHS	Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung
HSS	Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung
HZ	Historical Centre (Historisches Zentrum)
IfG	Institute for Critical Social Analysis (Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften)
IML	Institute for Marxism-Leninism for the Central Committee of the SED (Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED)
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
KPD	Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODP	Organizational Development Process
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus)
RLS	Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)
SODI	Solidaritätsdienst-International e. V.
StiftFinG	Foundation Financing Act (Stiftungsfinanzierungsgesetz)
TU	Technical University (Technische Universität)
UHWC	Union of Health Work Committees
UN	United Nations
WASG	Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit)
WSF	World Social Forum
ZID	Centre for International Dialogue and Cooperation (Zentrum für internationalen Dialog und Zusammenarbeit)

ART IN ARCHITECTURE

Since 12 October 2020, the building at Straße der Pariser Kommune 8A has been the official headquarters of the foundation. The *Art in Architecture* competition was won by the *Door Handle Project* by professors Wilem-Jan Beeren and Paul Jonas Petry from the Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences in Alfter near Bonn. The idea: the doors of the new building should feature door handles from buildings or rooms that have a special connection to the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, either because partner organizations are based there or because they are part of left-wing history.



Replacement door handle from the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Stainless steel handle with engraving from the new RLS headquarters.

These handles are connected to very special stories spanning 35 years of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. In the publication, they function as a design element and simultaneously illustrate the diversity of the foundation's work.

Further information on all handles is available on the project website www.rosalux.de/klinken in both German and English.

All door handle photos: © Willem-Jan Beeren





**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**