

**Wilhelm Heinrich Otto Dix** (2 December 1891 – 25 July 1969) was a German painter and printmaker, noted for his ruthless and harshly realistic depictions of [Weimar](#) society and the brutality of war.

### Early life and education

Otto Dix was born in [Untermhaus](#), Germany, now a part of the city of [Gera](#). The eldest son of Franz and Louise Dix, an iron foundry worker and a seamstress who had written poetry in her youth, he was exposed to art from an early age. The hours he spent in the studio of his cousin, Fritz Amann, who was a painter, were decisive in forming young Otto's ambition to be an artist; he received additional encouragement from his primary school teacher.

### World War I service

When the [First World War](#) erupted, Dix enthusiastically volunteered for the German Army. He was assigned to a [field artillery](#) regiment in [Dresden](#). In the autumn of 1915 he was assigned as a [non-commissioned officer](#) of a machine-gun unit in the Western front and took part in the [Battle of the Somme](#). In November 1917, his unit was transferred to the Eastern front until the end of hostilities with [Russia](#), and in February 1918 he was stationed in Flanders. Back in the western front, he fought in the German [Spring offensive](#). He earned the [Iron Cross](#) (second class) and reached the rank of [vizefeldwebel](#). In August of that year he was wounded in the neck, and shortly after he took pilot training lessons. He was discharged of service in December 1918.<sup>[2]</sup>

Dix was profoundly affected by the sights of the war, and would later describe a recurring [nightmare](#) in which he crawled through destroyed houses. He represented his [traumatic experiences](#) in many subsequent works, including a portfolio of fifty [etchings](#) called *Der Krieg*, published in 1924.

### Post-war artwork

1918 Dix returned to Gera, but became a founder of the [Dresden Secession](#) group in 1919, during a period when his work was passing through an [expressionist](#) phase. In 1924 he joined the [Berlin Secession](#); by this time he was developing an increasingly realistic style of painting that caused such a furor, the [Wallraf-Richartz Museum](#) hid one of his paintings behind a curtain.

Dix's work was extremely critical of contemporary German society and often dwelled on the act of [Lustmord](#), or sexual murder. He drew attention to the bleaker side of life, unsparingly depicting prostitution, violence, old age and death.

Among his most famous paintings are the [triptych](#) *Metropolis* (1928), a scornful portrayal of depraved actions of Germany's Weimar Republic, where nonstop revelry was a way to deal with the wartime defeat and financial catastrophe. His depictions of legless and disfigured veterans—a common sight on Berlin's streets in the 1920s—unveil the ugly side of war and illustrate their forgotten status within contemporary German society.

### World War II and the Nazis

When the [Nazis](#) came to power in Germany, they regarded Dix as a [degenerate artist](#) and had him sacked from his post as an art teacher at the [Dresden Academy](#). He later moved to Lake Constance in the southwest of Germany. Dix's paintings *The Trench* and *War cripples* were exhibited in the state-sponsored Munich 1937 exhibition of degenerate art, [Entartete Kunst](#). They were later burned.

In 1939 he was arrested on a trumped-up charge of being involved in a plot against Hitler, but was later released. During [World War II](#) Dix was conscripted into the [Volkssturm](#). He was captured by French troops at the end of the war and released in February 1946.

### Later life and death

Dix eventually returned to Dresden. After the war most of his paintings were religious [allegories](#) or depictions of post-war suffering, Otto Dix died in [Singen, Germany](#), in 1969.

**Rosa Luxemburg** (5 March 1871 – 15 January 1919, Berlin, Germany) was a Marxist theorist, philosopher, economist and revolutionary socialist of Polish Jewish descent who became a naturalized German citizen.

In 1915, after the SPD supported German involvement in World War I, she and Karl Liebknecht co-founded the anti-war Spartakusbund ("Spartacus League") which eventually became the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). During the German Revolution she founded the Die Rote Fahne ("The Red Flag"), the central organ of the Spartacist movement.

#### Before World War I

Luxemburg's rhetorical skill made her a leading spokeswoman in denouncing the SPD's reformist parliamentary course. Luxemburg taught Marxism and economics at the SPD's Berlin training centre. A student of hers, Friedrich Ebert later became SPD leader, and later the Weimar Republic's first president.

#### During the war

Luxemburg founded the Die Internationale group; it became the Spartacus League in January 1916. They wrote illegal, anti-war pamphlets pseudonymously signed "Spartacus"

The Spartacist League vehemently rejected the SPD's support for the war, trying to lead Germany's proletariat to an anti-war general strike. As a result, in June 1916 Luxemburg was imprisoned for two and a half years, as was Karl Liebknecht. Friends smuggled out and illegally published her articles.

#### German Revolution of 1918–1919 and murder

Luxemburg was freed from prison on 8 November 1918. In January 1919, a second revolutionary wave swept Berlin. Unlike Liebknecht, Luxemburg rejected this violent attempt to seize power. In response to the uprising, Social Democratic leader Friedrich Ebert ordered the Freikorps to destroy the left-wing revolution. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were captured again in Berlin on 15 January 1919. Luxemburg was knocked down with a rifle butt, then shot in the head, her body was flung into Berlin's Landwehr Canal.

After the murders began a new series of violent outrages in Berlin and all Germany, with thousands of KPD members, other revolutionaries and civilians being killed. Finally Workers' and Soldiers' councils and the People's Navy Division (Volksmarineteilung), who had meanwhile moved to the political left, disbanded. Some Marxists came to regard Luxemburg and Liebknecht as martyrs.

#### Quotations

»Freedom is always the freedom of the one who thinks differently.« (Freiheit ist immer Freiheit der Andersdenkenden)

"Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element".[23]

"We stand today...before the awful proposition: either the triumph of imperialism and the destruction of all culture, and, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a vast cemetery; or, the victory of socialism." [25]