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In Memoriam

To Our Comrades

Karl Liebknecht
1871-1919

Rosa Luxemburg
— 1919



Martyrs to the
German Revolution

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KARL LIEBKNECHT

“‘And for all that, mind you, there is one figure that has risen above the war and will blaze with the beauty and strength of his courage—’

“‘I listened, leaning on a stick towards him, drinking in the voice that came in the twilight silence from the lips that so rarely spoke. He cried with a clear voice— ‘Liebknecht!’ You ask me the bravest man in all Europe?’ says the soldier, ‘I will tell you—Karl Liebknecht!’”—*From Le Feu (Under Fire), by Henri Barbusse.*

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To Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg

By MAXIMILIAN COHEN

*They slew you in their beastly rage,
Because you dared the struggle wage
With tyrants and with traitors too—
The traitors feared and so they slew.
Deluded knaves! Your lifeless tongues
More potent now in martyr songs
Will trumpet forth the truth until
The very earth will rock and thrill;
And thrones and states will crash and fall—
And labor triumphs over all.*

* * *

*So comrades, sleep—your work is done;
Sleep on! The battle will be won.*

—From the Revolutionary Age, Feb. 1, 1919

In Memoriam

“Militarism is the curse of the peoples! The hunger-whip, the menacing sound of which is driving the wage-workers into the profit-grinding mills of capitalism, is a symbol of liberty compared with the slavery into which the bloody-iron rule of militarism is forcing them.”

KARL LIEBKNECHT.

Karl Liebknecht is no more!

The fearless fighter, the dauntless leader, the true revolutionist, is gone from us—gone forever—murdered, brutally murdered.

The profound grief for his loss brings tears to the eyes of millions of poor wage slaves the world over, and deadens the joy felt in every corner of the earth at the destruction of the imperial militaristic government of Germany.

Karl Liebknecht was born on the 13th day of August, 1871. His father, Wilhelm Liebknecht, the “soldier of the revolution,” was the friend of Marx and the theoretical pilot of the young Social-Democratic party of Germany. His mother, Natalie, was the unselfish helpmate of his father in all the vicissitudes of the latter’s political career, in and out of jail. She was ever untiring in her

care and devotion to the young Karl, who, at his birth, was given the formidable name of Karl Paul August Frederick.

The very air young Liebknecht breathed was saturated with the ideas of Socialism. The belief that radicalism could be suppressed by law had entered the head of Germany's leading statesman, Bismarck, and found its expression in the anti-Socialist laws from October, 1878, to October, 1890. During almost all of that time Socialist life in Germany centered in the homes of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel. The boy, Karl, was at home in both of their houses. Though victims themselves, Bebel and the elder Liebknecht were active day and night to relieve the suffering of countless victims of the infamy of the capitalist class in Germany.

The atmosphere created by these exertions was not very favorable to the development of a patriotic spirit in the heart of Karl. The result was that Karl and his brothers escaped the teachings of jingoism, and were thus able to base their Socialist principles upon the rock foundation of genuine fidelity to the working class alone.

Karl always realized this advantage. He knew that the patriotic ardor injected into the minds of the youth, was liable to show its effects in times of crisis when the misleaders of the na-

tion, by deliberately throwing the nation into a fit of patriotic frenzy, could blind the people to their real class interests.

"Get the youth, and yours will be the world!" That was the propaganda formula of Karl Liebknecht's whole career. The quintessence of his book, "Militarism and Anti-Militarism," is: get the youth and you control the army. He called upon the parents to counteract the poison of official education by rational Socialist education in the home. He demanded that the party organize the young people and complete this parental education. He was the recognized leader of the Young People's Socialist International.

Karl studied law. He graduated as a Doctor of Jurisprudence. He did not, however, take his profession as a mere means of livelihood. For him it was a way of helping the down-trodden, a method of obtaining justice for the poor.

Elected to the Prussian Diet as a member from Berlin, he mercilessly criticized the administration of justice. He took the Minister of Justice to task for the wrongs committed. He was hated fiercely by the bourgeois members. They left the assembly whenever Karl spoke. He was their conscience from which they tried in vain to escape. Karl never spoke to please. To speak

the truth, and nothing but the truth as he saw it—that was his mission. Every one of his speeches was the axe cutting at the roots of the tree of capitalism. With a courage undaunted by the most formidable opposition, he demanded restitution for wrongs committed and threw defiance into the face of the enemy. Regardless of danger, he considered this to be his duty. "My honor is mine," he called out to the prosecutor in his trial for writing the book "Militarism and Anti-Militarism"; "My honor is mine and you cannot rob me of it. Whatever you think of it, Herr Oberreichanswalt, not for the world would I change places with you in this hall!" Eighteen months imprisonment in the fortress of Glatz was the answer of the court.

In 1911 the district of Potsdam-Ost-Havelland elected Liebknecht to the Reichstag. Tirelessly he labored there in the interests of the workers, criticizing, accusing, revealing the manipulations of the War Trust.

After the historical 4th of August, 1914, he declared war against the government and its "Socialist" supporters. On and after December 2, 1914, he voted against the war credits. He hurled the most embarrassing questions at the government, the answer to which the government and the Majority Socialists

yet owe the people of Germany. Liebknecht soon gave up his hope of accomplishing anything by appealing to the membership of the Reichstag. He henceforth appealed to the masses, to the people themselves. He spoke and also published pamphlets. Many of the latter were written in the form of letters, some by Liebknecht, others by Rosa Luxemburg, and still others by Franz Mehring. These were signed with the name of the ancient leader of a Roman slave revolt, Spartacus; hence the name given the Liebknecht group, "Spartacus." The danger of this activity was quickly recognized by the government. Luxemburg, the woman, and Mehring, the aged historian, were jailed without a charge; while Liebknecht was sentenced to four years and one month in the penitentiary, and was stripped of his parliamentary mandate.

His release from prison in October, 1918, was the first unmistakable sign of the breakdown of the imperial militaristic regime, the first proof of the effectiveness of Bolshevik propaganda in Germany.

"The hour of the people is at hand," that was Liebknecht's greeting to the workers of Berlin upon his release from prison.

Yes, the hour of the people was at hand, and Liebknecht was the man of

the people—the man of the hour. A dictatorship of the working-class for the transition period was his demand.

He was murdered in January of this year, 1919.

But his spirit still lives. His voice still rings in the ears of hundreds of thousands of German workers. His words are impressed upon the memory of millions all over the globe. His activity for the cause of the workers will not be forgotten. His death but strengthens the determination of all Socialists to redouble their efforts in bringing about, within their lifetime, Freedom, Industrial Democracy, and Justice for all and forever.

Liebkecht's Position in the German Socialist Movement

To understand Liebkecht's position in the Socialist movement it is necessary to know some fundamental facts about the political situation in Germany before the war.

Germany was then a constitutional monarchy. The descendants of the feudal nobility were entrenched in all the important official positions of the empire. They constituted the bureaucratic machinery of the country, and at the same time the counterbalance of the economic power of the Industrial and Banking lords. The aim of this bureau-

cracy was a rule of absolutism by the great landlords through a monarch with unlimited power. This would have meant a Capitalist government controlled by agrarian Capitalists. Industrial and Banking Capitalists, on the other hand, wanted more "liberty"; liberty for their class. Their direct representatives in the legislative bodies stood consequently for such an extension of the constitutional guarantees as would make them the absolute rulers. The intellectual representatives of the Capitalist class of the empire formulated these demands into reforms which they considered essential.

The direct representatives of the Industrial and Banking Capitalists were, however, more interested in immediate profits than in ultimate political changes. Their action was not directed so much by their political program as by their immediate economic interests. Instead of insisting upon political demands they obtained their objects by compromises—compromises that generally benefited them and the agrarians. These compromises resulted in no economic losses to either of these two parties, as the bill was always footed by the working-class. Thus the many intellectuals who honestly stood for political reform continually found themselves deserted by the very class for

which they were demanding these reforms.

They were forced then to turn for support to the Left. There they found the Socialists, who had nothing to gain by compromising. The Socialists were the only political unit that really opposed the government. So the honest Republicans joined the Social-Democratic Party. By using Socialist terminology in their criticisms they persuaded the masses that they were really Socialists. They even believed it themselves. Socialist theories afforded them excellent weapons for their criticisms while they gave very little thought to the practical realization of these theories.

The ultimate aim of Socialism was regarded as unimportant and all activity concentrated upon the immediate movement. But the less important the ultimate aim was considered to be, the less it influenced the tactics of the movement. Opportunism and political trading prevailed within the Party. The most important consequence of this state of affairs was that the Revolutionary spirit of the masses, instead of being awakened, was completely paralyzed. The masses trusted to the peaceful development of Capitalism into Socialism by the elementary force of the righteousness of the latter.

Such was the Social-Democratic Party of Germany. Right wing, radical bourgeois; Center, Socialists influenced by the intellectual development of the propaganda and teachings of the Party during the previous thirty years; Left wing, the International Socialist group, to which Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg belonged.

There were but very few really revolutionary International Socialists in the movement. The Right wing of the Party could always see the points of common interest between them and the Liberal Parties and easily forget the points of difference. But in considering the Liebknecht wing, they could only see the points of difference and forget about the points of common interest. A political bloc from Bebel, the leader of the Socialists, to Basserman, the leader of the Liberal Party, was considered possible; was even advocated in fact. But a solid bloc within the Social-Democratic Party itself from Kolb, the Extreme Right Wing, to Liebknecht, the Extreme Left Wing, would always have been spurned by the Right Wing. In reality, Dr. Landsberg, Dr. David, Dr. Heine, Dr. Sudekum, Mr. Kolb and the others in their group were never, in fact, Socialists. Liebknecht, on the other hand, was never anything else but a Socialist. The Center, like a pendulum, swung

from one extreme to the other; in points of theory to the Left toward Liebknecht, in points of tactics to the Right toward Dr. David and Kolb. Strange as it may seem it was this very inconsistency of the Center that kept the incoherent mass of the Social-Democratic Party in a state of apparent unity.

Karl Liebknecht was always an uncompromising Socialist. His Socialism was chemically pure. The cause of the working-class was his cause—no other sympathies ever influenced his actions. He gave his life for it, the greatest sacrifice a man can make for his convictions.

As long as the red blood circulates through the hearts of Socialists the world over, Karl Liebknecht will not be forgotten.

ROSA LUXEMBURG

The author wishes to explain that it has been impossible to secure sufficient reliable information about Rosa Luxemburg to include herein a sketch of her Socialist activities, beyond the common knowledge of the leading part she has taken with Karl Liebknecht and the other International Socialists of Germany in their revolutionary activities during recent years.

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