

KARL LIEBKNECHT, AFTER FIVE YEARS

BY MAX SCHACHTMAN

THE celebration of International Liebknecht Day on January 23rd of this year brings again to the forefront the martyr of the revolutionary movement in Germany and one of the foremost representatives of the spirit of revolt and struggle that is now leading the German working class to the overthrow of capitalism and the inauguration of a soviet republic.

Of the five leading spirits in the early communist movement in Germany, Luxemburg, Jogiches, Mehring, Zetkin, and Liebknecht, the last was not the best equipped theoretician. But Liebknecht was endowed with an unflagging devotion and a fearless passion for the fight of the workers against the capitalist masters. When cowards flinched and traitors sneered, Liebknecht kept the red flag of revolution waving aloft.

He was born in Leipzig in August, 1871; the same year in which his famous father, Wilhelm Liebknecht, was arrested on the charge of high treason against the government. Karl studied first in Leipzig, then in the university of Berlin, from which he received his doctor's degree in political economy and law. In Berlin, after a period of organizing literary societies for the study of social problems, he became acquainted with the socialist movement. By his untiring efforts, he became one of the leading spirits in the party. He stood strongly against any attempts of the revisionists led by Bernstein to emasculate the class program of the socialists.

Fights Militarism.

It was thru his anti-militarist activities that Liebknecht became known all over the nation. In September, 1906, he delivered a lecture on Militarism to a conference of young people in Germany. The lecture was enlarged upon and printed as a book. After some time, the authorities confiscated the book, charged the author with high treason and after a farcical trial of three days found him guilty and had him sentenced to a year and a half imprisonment. It was afterwards discovered that the Kaiser had kept constantly in touch with the proceedings of the trial by a special wire. Liebknecht declined to plead guilty and took the entire responsibility upon himself. Upon hearing the sentence pronounced he said boldly:

"The aim of my life is the overthrow of monarchy as well as the emancipation of the exploited working class from political and economic bondage. As my father, who appeared before this court exactly 35 years ago to defend himself against the charge of treason, was ultimately pronounced victor, so I believe the day not far distant when the principles which I represent will be recognized as patriotic, as honorable, as true."

Elected to Landtag.

In answer to the reactionary measure of the government, the workers of Berlin elected him to the Prussian Landtag. There it was that he started his attacks against Prussian militarism with a bitterness and keenness that made the reactionary Junkers writhe in their seats. Nothing could halt him; he knew how to make revolutionary use of bourgeois parliaments in spite of innumerable tricks used by the Right to call him to order, to hiss him down, to shout, and even to go to the extreme of removing him from the floor of the chamber.

Liebknecht represented the workers of Germany in other bodies. He was their spokesman in the common council of Berlin. In 1912 the workers of Potsdam-Spandau selected him to represent them in the national Reichstag. The joy of the workers all over the country was great, for Liebknecht had gained a reputation of integrity, fearlessness and of being an uncompromising fighter. He had been elected in spite of all the machinations of the governmental authorities to manipulate the vote against him.

In the Reichstag his voice rang out against the war intrigues of the militarists. He exposed the armament trust and its insidious control of government officials and the press. A man whom the Kaiser had been about to select as war secretary was shown by Liebknecht to be nothing but an ordinary swindler. Liebknecht dared even to speak for the

abolition of the monarchy and the substitution of a republic, at a time when merely entertaining of such an idea was considered heresy, and as a result he brought upon himself the most invectives of the supporters of the status quo.

Against the War

The story of Liebknecht's part in the war is too well known to detail it here. When the Social Democratic faction in the Reichstag met to decide if they were to vote for war credits, Liebknecht's was the single strong voice in the desert of vacillation and treason. Where Haase counselled voting for them, and Kautsky advised for abstention from voting, Liebknecht presented the issue clearly and demanded a straight vote against the war credits. "This war is an imperialist war for domination of world markets, and for the benefit of bankers and manufacturers. It is also a war tending to destroy the growing labor movement. It is not a war for defense. It is therefore our plain duty to vote against the war budget."

But the position of the social traitors carried in the caucus. So strong were the bonds of discipline that even Liebknecht voted for war

crisis in the Social Democracy, wrote letters from prison on the political situation, signed Spartacus. When she, together with Liebknecht, was released from prison, they organized the Spartacus Bund, which later became the Communist Party. The Spartacists began an intensified campaign for the organization of the workers for the struggle.

On the fifth of January, 1919, the Rote Fahne, organ of the communists, called for demonstrations. The masses poured into the streets. Liebknecht is seen everywhere. At first in the Sieges Allee, then in the Alexander Platz, always surrounded by a bodyguard of red sailors from Kiel with rifles and sabres in hand, Liebknecht speaks to the masses with his clear incision. From the balcony in Alexander Platz, he speaks to thousands; so do Ledebour, Däumig and Eichhorn, who is deposed from police presidency of Berlin because of his revolutionary stand. Arms are distributed to the workers nevertheless, just as he promised. The revolutionary workers entrench themselves in the Vorwaerts building, the Boetzow brewery and behind other barricades. But Ebert and Noske, the social-democrats are

national at the conferences at Kienthal and Zimmerwald. The "Junius" pamphlet, for example, is considered one of the fundamental works of the Communist International, along with Lenin's Collapse of the Second International.

The international movement has grown more powerful. Its sections grow in power from day to day. The great, powerful Communist Party of Germany stands now as the inheritor of the spirit of Liebknecht, ready to carry on his work to a successful conclusion.

Today, in the face of the Hittlers, the Ludendorffs, the Von Seecks and the lesser lights of counter-revolution, the communists are gathering their forces, preparatory to flinging the decadent bourgeois order over the brink. The workers of Germany, who have met with so many disappointments at the hands of the capitalists and the Social-Democrats, are now turning to the leadership of the communists.

In the achievement of this great task, the winning of the majority of the working class which is the preliminary to a proletarian revolution, Karl Liebknecht must be set down as one of the pioneers. The establishment of his splendid work and a final assurance that the martyrdom of Liebknecht and the innumerable fighters in the ranks was not futile.

THE PENINSULA OF SOMALI-LAND

(Translated from Russian by Leonid Chatsky.)

I remember that night and the dreary sand
And the moon in the sky just above that land.

I remember that I could not turn my eye
From its golden way in the glittering sky.

And that evening as soon as the shadows grew long
In my ears crept the sound of Somali's war gong.

Their leopard-like chief with a crown of red hair
Was the bringer of death to the white and the fair.

I knew well that at dawn would the arrows rain
And I and my slaves would have fought in vain.

But I looked at the moon and thought all the night,
That there I would have no men to fight.

When the morning came near and the moon sank low—
Not more as a friend, but a scarlet foe—

It was clear to me that it was a shield
Shining for the heroes who fell in the field.

Then I ordered my slaves to withdraw and to run,
And I bound my soul to my Winchester gun.

—NICHOLAS SCUMILEV.



KARL LIEBKNECHT

credits on the first vote. But at the second session of the Reichstag in December, his revolutionary heart burst the bonds of treasonable discipline and he stood forth, one against all, and voted against the war budget.

On May 1, 1916, he spoke at a May Day Peace demonstration in Berlin, and called for the cessation of the war. For this crime he was arrested despite his claim of immunity accorded to all members of the Reichstag. On June 28, 1916, he was sentenced to 30 months in jail. The workers were indignant and a movement was set afoot for an appeal. The appeal resulted in the increase of his term of imprisonment to four years and one month; so little did the Junkerdom of Germany mind the voice of the masses.

The Struggle for Power.

The revolution which overthrew the Kaiser, effected the freedom of Liebknecht. The compromises made by Ebert and Noske with the capitalists showed the real revolutionaries that it was necessary to have a revolutionary political organization for the assumption of complete power by the working class. Rosa Luxemburg, who had written the

famous "Junius" pamphlet on the massing monarchist troops on the outskirts of the city. In a swift move, the incipient revolution is crushed. Liebknecht and Luxemburg are arrested. In a short while, the two brave leaders of the German working class are brutally murdered by sotted officers of the Horse Guards. These brave gentlemen shot the half-unconscious Liebknecht in the back in the darkest spot of the Charlottenburger Chaussee and bludgeoned and shot Rosa Luxemburg, disposing of her body by throwing it into the Landwehr Canal. And all this with the assent of the social-democrats, whose official organ, the Vorwaerts, carried pretty little verses on this vile deed. The murderers went scot free.

Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered in Berlin on January 15, 1919; Leo Jogiches was murdered in prison during the same year. Klara Zetkin remained the only outstanding leader of the revolution from the advent of the Spartacists to the present day.

These revolutionists were murdered or died. They helped to lay the foundation of the Communist Inter-



Womanhood.