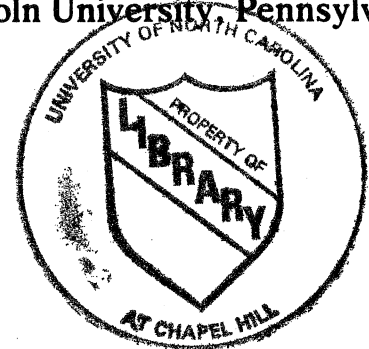


**KARL LIEBKNECHT  
AND THE UNITED STATES**

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## KARL LIEBKNECHT AND THE UNITED STATES

On July 16, 1910, the *Cleveland Citizen*, a Socialist weekly published in Ohio, carried the following announcement:

Karl M. Liebknecht, the famous son of a famous father and member of the German Parliament, will begin a tour of the country in October. He will address the German-speaking people on the subject of socialism. Liebknecht was to have come this summer, but on account of private and party matters postponed the visit until autumn.

Liebknecht was invited to the United States by the Socialist Party. He arrived in New York City on October 10 and left for Germany on November 30. During his six-week stay, he travelled across the United States, lecturing in leading cities to audiences made up mainly of German-American Socialists.

Karl Liebknecht was not the first Socialist of that name to visit the United States. In 1886, his distinguished father, Wilhelm Liebknecht, leader of the German Social-Democrats and editor of the foremost German Socialist paper, *Vorwärts*, came to the United States at the invitation of the Socialist Labor Party. He came in the company of Eleanor Marx Aveling and Dr. Edward Aveling, daughter and son-in-law of Karl Marx. Their tour was widely publicized and did much to arouse an interest in Socialism among large sections of the American people. (1)

The German Social-Democratic Party (SPD), which resulted from the unification of two separate movements at the famous Gotha congress in 1875, soon established itself as the largest and most influential of the Socialist parties in Western Europe. The two groups that united at Gotha were the Lassalleans and the so-called Eisenachers (named after the town where their founding convention was held). The latter group was under the leadership of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, who considered themselves loyal followers of Karl Marx. The compromise program adopted at Gotha was basically Lassallean in content, and it was severely criticized by Marx in a document which was not published at the time, but which later became famous as *The Critique of the Gotha Program*. As the new party grew, so, too, did the influence of Marxist ideas, while that of Lassalle's declined, with the result that it soon became evident that a revised program was needed. During the 1880's, however, the SPD was outlawed and no national congresses could be held, so that the first opportunity to adopt a new program did not present itself until 1891 at the Erfurt congress. The Erfurt Program is only slightly less well known in the history of the Socialist movement than its predecessor at Gotha, but for a different reason. For the first time, the SPD openly embraced Marxism and in a form that had the hearty approval of Engels. In a letter to Friedrich A. Sorge in the United States, Engels wrote:

Kautsky's draft program, supported by Bebel and myself, served as the basis of the new program's theoretical section. We have the satisfaction of seeing the Marxian critique win all along the line. (2)



Ironically, at just about the time the SPD was adopting an orthodox Marxist program and becoming something of a model for the entire international Socialist movement, *in practice*, it was becoming more and more reformist in character. In 1896, one year after Engels' death, Eduard Bernstein, who had spent the years of illegality in England, published the famous tract, *Evolutionary Socialism*, which provided an ideological foundation for the party's increasingly reformist practice, even though, on paper, it remained a revolutionary party.(3)

Karl Liebknecht was born in Leipzig on August 13, 1871, the same year in which his father was arrested on the charge of high treason. (Wilhelm Liebknecht spent the period from December 19, 1870 to March 28, 1871 in a Leipzig jail for his attacks on the Prussian militarists and his opposition to the Franco-Prussian War.)(4) Karl studied first in Leipzig and then in Berlin, attending the university in each city. As a student, he was active in organizing literary societies for the study of social problems. He received his doctorate in Political Economy and Law at the University of Wurzburg. From 1889 on, he practiced law in Berlin, while at the same time participating actively in that city's Socialist Party. In 1902, he was elected councilman to the *Stadverordneten Versammlung* (Common Council) of Berlin.

Raised in the Marxist tradition, Karl Liebknecht soon clashed with the bureaucrats who dominated the SPD after his father's death. They were, in the main, Socialist trade union leaders, primarily concerned with immediate demands under capitalism, and were systematically abandoning Marxist beliefs, especially that of the class struggle. To Karl Liebknecht, this was reformism, pure and simple, and he fought it with all his energy.

In his battle with the reformists, Liebknecht appealed particularly to the young workers whose interests were being largely ignored by the party and trade union bureaucrats. At his insistence, the Young Socialist League was formed, and it was to a section of the League that Liebknecht delivered a course of lectures in 1906 on "Militarism and Anti-Militarism."

Liebknecht regarded the armed forces as the bulwark of capitalism, and since young workers and peasants formed the bulk of the conscripts, he directed his appeal to the youth. "He who has the youth has the army," he declared, and he proclaimed as a principle:

That the fatherland for which he [the worker] is to fight is not his fatherland; that there is only one real enemy for the proletariat of every country — the capitalist class which oppresses and exploits the proletariat.

Clearly and precisely, Liebknecht defined the class function of capitalist militarism, declaring:

Militarism does not only serve for defense and attack against the foreign enemy; it has a second task, one which is being brought out ever more clearly with the growing accentuation of class antagonism . . . that of being a pillar of capitalism and all reactionary forces in the war of liberation of the working class.(5)

Liebknecht's lectures were published in book form in 1907, and they created an immediate sensation in Germany. The books were confiscated by

the German authorities, and the author was tried at Leipzig for high treason in October, 1907. Liebknecht had become a lawyer in order to defend fellow Socialists in the courts, and he conducted his own defense. He assumed full responsibility for the contents of the book, but steadfastly denied that he had written anything warranting his being tried for treason. Nowhere, he maintained, had he advocated any illegal action, and therefore, his trial was nothing but political persecution. Knowing he had frightened the establishment whose rule was based on military domination, he predicted that he would be found guilty.

The prediction proved accurate; Liebknecht was found guilty of treason and was condemned to eighteen months in prison. All copies of the plates and forms on which his book had been printed were ordered destroyed. The Kaiser, who was said to have followed the trial by means of daily transcripts, congratulated the judges upon their verdict, but the workers of Berlin had a different reaction. While Liebknecht was still in prison, they elected him to the Prussian Landtag.(6)

Robert Hunter, a leading American Socialist,(7) was in Germany at the time of Liebknecht's sentencing and spent the latter's last evening at liberty with the Liebknecht family. The two men walked and talked for several hours. Among other topics, they discussed "conditions in America." (8) Liebknecht evinced great interest in visiting the United States after his release from prison so that he might see to what extent conditions had changed since his father's visit in 1886. Hunter undoubtedly conveyed this sentiment to the American party, and when the invitation was extended to Karl Liebknecht to visit the United States, he announced:

Karl Liebknecht, son of William Liebknecht, is soon to arrive on American soil.

He is a member of the German parliament and a vigorous, powerful speaker, promising in many ways to fill the loss we suffered by the death of his great father. . . .

He is sometimes referred to in Germany as "Karl, the hope of the party" . . . .

It is fortune for the movement in America to have this visit of young Liebknecht.

He is a powerful personality, a man of great force and ability, who will no doubt be received with tremendous enthusiasm by our German comrades.

He deserves all the courtesy and hospitality that we can give him, and it is hoped that none of the locals of the party who want to reach the Germans will fail to take advantage of this opportunity to engage Liebknecht on his propaganda tour.(9)

Despite Hunter's emphasis on the German comrades — which was logical in view of the fact that Liebknecht spoke little English — the truth is that at least in that sense, the Socialist movement was quite different from what it had been at the time of Wilhelm Liebknecht's visit. In 1886, it had consisted mainly of German workers and intellectuals, many of whom simply transferred to America what they had learned in Germany without attempting to understand the differences between the two countries. V. L. Rosenberg, secretary of the Socialist Labor Party, put it quite candidly in 1885: "Let us not conceal the truth: the Socialist Labor Party is only a German

colony, an adjunct of the German-speaking Social Democracy.”(10) A year later, Frederick Engels himself criticized the German-American Socialists for failing to properly integrate their movement among the American masses:

The Germans have not understood how to use their theory as a lever which could set the American masses in motion; they do not understand the theory themselves for the most part and treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic way, as something which has got to be learnt off by heart but which will then supply all needs without more ado. To them it is a credo, and not a guide to action. Added to which they learn no English on principle. Hence the American masses had to seek their own way . . . (11)

Despite these shortcomings, during the years between the visits to the United States by the two Liebknechts, the Socialist movement in that country grew by leaps and bounds. In the 1890's, Daniel De Leon became the most prominent figure in the Socialist Labor Party. As editor of *The People*, the party's English-language organ, and as national lecturer for the party, he did much to broaden the appeal of the SLP beyond the narrow confines of the German-speaking element. Thus, while the Socialist Labor Party, during the decade of the 'nineties, still had its main base among foreign-born workers, it had set up numerous English-speaking groups. Lecturers for the party went all over the country, speaking at "cross roads, school houses, street corners, on Commons, before debating societies, reform or radical clubs, or wherever an audience can be gathered to listen to the gospel of Socialism.”(12)

In the late 1890's, the Socialist movement in the United States gained a remarkable new leader when Eugene V. Debs embraced Socialism. Until the great railroad strike of 1894, known as the Pullman Strike, Debs had been convinced that the working class would be able to abolish poverty, unemployment, and injustice through progressive trade unionism alone. But the combination of the ruthlessness of the railroad companies and the eager cooperation of the national government in breaking the strike had opened his eyes. As Debs himself put it: "... in the gleam of every bayonet and flash of every rifle *the class struggle was revealed.*" Later, while in jail for having defied an injunction during the strike, he read many books and pamphlets dealing with social and economic problems, including the first volume of Marx's *Capital*. He emerged from jail a confirmed Socialist. In June, 1897, Debs helped to found the Social Democracy of America, and in a circular letter to his associates in the labor movement, he wrote: "The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity.”(13)

Two months after the founding of the Social Democracy, the Jewish Socialists of the east left the Socialist Labor Party and joined the new party. They had long been chafing under Daniel De Leon's domination and the political philosophy of the Socialist Labor Party under his leadership. They were opposed to his tactics of dual unionism, his indifference to immediate demands, and his inability to work with anyone who did not unreservedly accept his doctrines.(14) The Jewish Socialists had been expelled at the 1896 convention of the Socialist Labor Party because of their opposition to some of De Leon's policies. In August, 1897, they voted to affiliate to the Social Democracy of America.

Early in 1900, other disgruntled elements in the Socialist Labor Party, led by Morris Hillquit, Job Harriman, and Max Hayes, decided to take steps to achieve unity with the Social Democracy. In the political campaign of 1900, Debs was nominated by both groups for president of the United States and polled nearly one hundred thousand votes. A year later, a united Socialist movement emerged. In August, 1901, at a convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana, the Socialist Party of the United States was formed under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs, Victor Berger, and Morris Hillquit.(15)

No longer isolated from the main body of the American people by its confinement to the German-speaking element and by De Leonist opposition to immediate demands, the Socialists were now able to attract many supporters in both the cities and the countryside who were losing faith in the major political parties. Moreover, in Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist Party had a leader whose magnetic personality, brilliant oratory, and tireless energy captured the hearts of thousands of workers and farmers. Finally, for the first time in American history, the Socialist movement was really moving outside the ranks of the foreign-born and appealing to native Americans. As early as December 9, 1902, the Milwaukee *Daily News*, a Democratic paper, declared:

The assumption that the Socialist party appeals alone to the foreign born voters is hardly borne out by the election returns, although it is quite true that until recently the socialist propaganda in the United States has been carried out largely by German Socialists.

In 1904, Debs gained over 400,000 votes as candidate for president of the United States on the Socialist Party ticket. But the party's greatest growth in influence occurred just before and during Karl Liebknecht's visit. In the spring of 1910, the Social Democratic Party of Milwaukee, a branch of the Socialist Party, carried this, the twelfth largest city in the United States, by the largest plurality that any political party had ever won there. In the fall, the Socialists won the major offices in Milwaukee County and elected the first Socialist Congressman, Victor L. Berger, to sit in the U.S. House of Representatives.(16)

Socialist leaders hailed Berger's election as "the beginning of a new and more hopeful era in the history of American Socialism.”(17) But even the most optimistic Socialists were ready to concede that the American movement was tiny compared with the giant Socialist movement in Germany. While Socialist votes were increasing and more and more Socialists were being elected to office, the party in the United States was still a decidedly minority element in American political life while the Socialist movement in Germany was a major, and perhaps the most important force in that country. Moreover, Socialist influence was not growing among farmers, middle class elements, and intellectuals while in Germany, Socialist influences were dominant in the labor movement. To be sure, the Socialists constituted the main forces in the organization of the militant strike struggles of the Jewish workers in the needle trades of New York, Chicago, and Cleveland, and became the leaders of these unions. But in the basic mass production industries, where the majority of American workers toiled, Socialist influence was slight. Nor was it growing to any appreciable extent in the dominant American labor organization, the American Federation of Labor. In-

deed, the rosy predictions of Socialist leaders in 1904-05 that the AFL would accept a Socialist viewpoint in the near future proved to be nothing but wishful thinking.

At the time of Karl Liebknecht's visit, a split was developing in the ranks of the Socialist Party of the United States. The national organization was controlled by Right and Center elements in the party who insisted upon limiting its activities to electioneering, and who had abandoned any pretense of combatting the conservative policies of the leadership of the American Federation of Labor. These groups had refused to emphasize a revolutionary program for fear of antagonizing potential voters for Socialist candidates who, once elected, they claimed, would secure reform legislation that would "increase the socialist content of the national political and economic life." Opposing them was the Left-wing, which wanted the party to advance the principles of revolutionary Socialism and to lead in developing mass struggles, particularly in the field of industrial unionism. Many of the adherents of the Left-wing position were either members of the Industrial Workers of the World (organized in 1905) or sympathetic to it.(19)

In this situation, there was a feeling in Socialist ranks that there was much to be learned from the distinguished young German Socialist, Karl Liebknecht. The Right and Center hoped to learn about the methods used by the Socialists in Germany to achieve such stunning prestige and influence in that nation's political life and labor movement. The Left hoped to learn how Liebknecht was able to build a large following in the party in his battle against the reformists. Morris Hillquit had written in his *History of Socialism in the United States* that the 1886 tour of Wilhelm Liebknecht and Eleanor and Edward Aveling "had a market effect on the socialist movement of this country."(20) The Socialists were confident that Karl Liebknecht's tour would produce similar results.

\* \* \*

On September 17, 1910, J. Mahlon Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Party, wrote to Morris Hillquit from Chicago: "You are aware of the contemplated visit and tour of Comrade Karl M. Liebknecht of Germany. The indications are that he will have a very successful tour with enormous meetings at every point." Barnes stressed the importance of having the national party represented at the time of Liebknecht's landing and appointed Hillquit to be present on behalf of the national organization and the two states neighboring the point of his arrival.(21)

Liebknecht arrived in the United States on October 10, 1910 and was met at the pier of the North German Lloyd in Hoboken, New Jersey by Hillquit, Wilson K. Killingbeck, the Socialist candidate for governor of New Jersey, Edward Meyer and Max Bedacht of the German agitation bureau, Arno Geiser, Liebknecht's nephew, and several other Socialists. Hillquit welcomed him on behalf of the Socialist Party of America. Soon after his arrival at the Hotel Manhattan, where he stayed while in New York, a representative of the *New York Call* appeared for an interview. He asked first what message Liebknecht brought to the Socialists of the New World from their comrades in Germany. Liebknecht's reply was brief: "Struggle and life; struggle and life."(22) It is unfortunate that the *Call* reporter failed to note

that this was almost the precise advice Karl Marx had given to John Swinton, the progressive American journalist who visited Marx in 1880.(23)

After pointing out that Socialists were "everything in Germany," and that Socialism gave "tone and color to our political, social, economic, artistic, and literary life — in short to each and every walk of life," Liebknecht pointed with pride to the fact that Socialism had become "a new religion" with the German workers. Indeed, it was Socialism that kept the German worker in Germany, "for without Socialism Germany would have been no better than Russia, and hundreds of thousands of people would have emigrated to America, anywhere." This was not to say that there were no problems there. More than 60 percent of the German people were disfranchised because the right to vote was determined by taxes and property, and the Socialists were determined to achieve universal suffrage. By this, he did not mean *universal male suffrage*. What the German Socialists were working for was "a general, equal direct ballot for men and women." He had not the slightest doubt that this would be won, but not without a struggle:

We in Germany are eager for the fray. Cheerfulness is perhaps the strongest characteristic of the German Socialist movement. We are the most optimistic people in the world.

One reason for this optimism was the German party's discipline, which was the product of the Socialist press. Every German town of 100,000 people or more had a daily Socialist newspaper. Even as they were speaking, he pointed out, the Socialist press was mobilizing the German people in mass demonstrations against the high cost of living.

Asked by the *Call* reporter how the Socialist movement in the United States was viewed by the German party, Liebknecht replied:

We realize that in America you have peculiar conditions to meet. In the first place your working people have not yet found themselves, as it were. You seemingly have more political freedom and likewise you seemingly have more opportunities. Now, this keeps your workingmen from being class-conscious. Most workers in your country still hope to work up to become rich, to make a success, like men before did. This develops a sort of workingman's aristocracy among you. Then, of course, your workingmen lack enlightenment, political and social enlightenment. They are not nearly as well-trained as the German workers are.(24)

When he was reminded that the United States boasted of having "the best equipment for popular education in the shape of public schools," the German Socialist only smiled and observed that one did not obtain political training in public schools: "It is a reaction against the whip of the soldier, whether figuratively or literally, that enlightens the workingman politically." The puzzled reporter wondered whether this meant that America was "not reactionary enough" compared with Europe. Liebknecht shot back:

Oh, no. You are pretty reactionary here, too, only the people don't see it yet. Your man Roosevelt is just as staunch a militarist as the Kaiser is.(25) If your army is small, your navy makes up for it. As for imperialism, it is the product of capitalism and is just as strong in America as it is

in Germany. The American government is looking for colonies to annex just like any European government, if not more. It tries to get a finger in the pie everywhere. (26)

It was customary for a foreign visitor to the United States to spend his time describing conditions in his own country on the theory that it was not proper for a guest to criticize the country he was visiting. But Karl Liebknecht did not cease being a revolutionary Socialist when he left the ship and landed on American soil. In his first public statement, he had already made it clear that he would not worry about being criticized for voicing his opinion as to what was wrong in the United States, and he expanded upon this tendency during his stay in the country. As he moved across the country, visiting steel mills, textile factories, and sweatshops, and observing the merciless exploitation of men, women, and children, the widespread corruption in American life, and the worship of Mammon everywhere, his indignation mounted steadily. And he voiced this indignation in a series of brilliant speeches, while at the same time continually pointing out that the real solution for these problems lay in Socialism.

Liebknecht felt that he could best help the struggle in the United States by dispelling a number of illusions that still persisted in the American labor and Socialist movements. Especially did he feel that too many American radicals believed that it was difficult, if not impossible to make headway in the United States because conditions in their country were so different from those prevailing in Europe. Liebknecht conceded that there were important differences between the United States and Europe, but throughout his tour, he emphasized that the exploitation of the working class in the United States was, if anything, more intense than in Europe. (27) He exposed the myths surrounding the American scene — the concepts that there was no class struggle in the United States, that the workers could escape from misery in the factories and shops by moving to free land in the west, and that their enjoyment of democratic rights enabled the American workers to solve their problems more easily than the European workers could.

Since he spoke only in German, Liebknecht addressed mostly German-speaking audiences. But most of his speeches were reported in full in the English-language Socialist press. As a result, many Americans outside the German-speaking population were able to learn what this outstanding German Socialist said.

The German Imperial Government also learned what Liebknecht was saying, and it obtained this information from sources that were unknown to the German Socialist and his comrades in the United States. While Liebknecht was in the United States, his movements and speeches were being reported to the Berlin police by its agents in this country — men who had wormed their way inside the leadership of the Socialist movement. (28) (The same practice had been followed during his father's visit to the United States in 1886.) (29) On October 2, 1910, one agent in New York informed the Berlin police:

The revolutionary element in this city is making preparations to give a great ovation to Dr. Carl Liebknecht of Berlin, who is due here Tuesday, October 4th. He will remain until the 7th of November. With Daszynsky (30) and Liebknecht here the Socialists expect to carry on a most suc-

cessful propaganda for Socialism and Revolutionary Syndicalism, and to roll up a tremendous vote at the next election. (31)

On October 10, the agent reported:

Dr. Carl Liebknecht arrived in New York on the S.S. "George Washington" . . . At 8:30 P. M. he delivered his message to the working class of America at Sulzer's Harlem River Park. The hall was too small for the eager crowd. (32)

In introducing Liebknecht, Alexander Jonas stressed that while he was the son of a "distinguished champion" of Socialism, the speaker of the evening was "worthy of respect and admiration for his own achievements. As a youth Karl Liebknecht drew his sword — his pen and speech — against the existing order and he has since made himself a fearless foe to the powers that be." When Liebknecht arose to speak, the crowd went wild with cheering. Red flags and red handkerchiefs waved on all sides. (33)

Liebknecht began by urging closer solidarity between the Socialists of all nations. In this respect, he advised the workers to take a lesson from the capitalist class. The capitalists of various countries, he said, fought each other in the business world "like wolves," each one trying to get the best of the other:

But the minute the workers begin to show signs of revolt anywhere on the globe, the capitalists of all lands unite. Strikebreakers from one country are transported to break a strike in another land.

To meet this capitalist solidarity, workers must unite regardless of any differences among them, and mobilize to liberate themselves from capitalism, since "there are no liberators for the masses."

Liebknecht conceded that it was more difficult to unify the workers in the United States into a solid front against capitalism than it was in Germany, where "peculiar forces" existed which served "to unite the workers, to make them class conscious." After all, Germany had a monarch, and the German Kaiser had even gone so far as to attribute his authority to the grace of God, thereby restoring the ancient theory of the divine right of kings. In actuality, however, the monarchy rested, not on "the grace of God," but on the power of the military, but this bulwark of the German monarchy, Liebknecht declared, was already weakening because of "the new character of the German army":

The teaching of Socialism to young people in various young people's leagues is beginning to bear fruit and promises to become one of the important factors in freeing Germany from absolutism. When these youngsters enter the army, they are full-fledged Socialists. When more and more of them enter, the German Kaiser will soon begin to feel that he cannot rely upon the army to uphold him in his divine right theories.

Liebknecht then delivered another prediction. He prophesied that the Socialist movement in the United States "will soon take a leap forward which will make the world of capitalism gasp." Fundamentally, he main-

tained, the United States, despite its reputation as the land of liberty, was no better for the working classes than the monarchies of Europe:

When I read about your great strikes, and see the tremendous growth of poverty in your land alongside of the colossal piling up of wealth, I feel that America is not far removed from monarchic Europe, that the workers here are just as much enslaved, only they have not learned to feel their chains yet. (34)

To be sure, the United States had no kaiser, but its courts functioned on behalf of the capitalists just as those in Germany did: "If proof of this is wanting, look back to your Chicago martyrs." (35) Then, too, the American army was puny compared with that of Germany. "Yet I have observed that you have plenty of soldiers to club your strikers, to subdue your interior enemy." Finally, it was true that the United States was "the richest country on earth." But it was an American, Henry George, who, more than a quarter of a century earlier, had "already perceived the startling relation between progress and poverty in your land." (36)

Liebknrecht ended on a prophetic note which proved to be more accurate than his two earlier predictions:

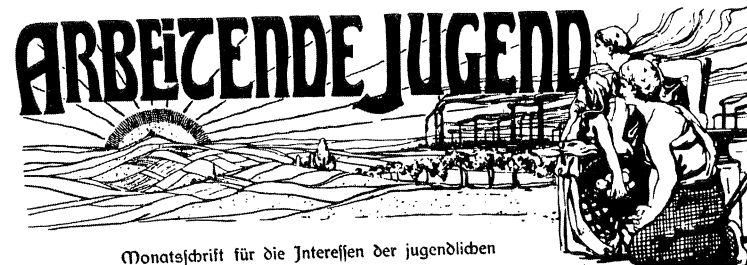
Here in America is the heart of international capitalism; here is its future. From here it will dominate the world. For capitalism has today broken down all boundaries between nation and nation, between country and country. Capitalism is today the real monarchy, and its kingdom is the entire earth. (37)

The following evening, Liebknrecht delivered two talks. In the first, at the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum, he spent a good deal of time discussing the situation in Germany and he scornfully derided the statement of Charles Taft, the brother of President William Howard Taft, who had just returned from Berlin and had told the press that the leading industrialists of Germany were all good patriots. (38) Liebknrecht exclaimed:

Krupp is a German patriot. The managers and owners of the Krupp gun works are all considered among the best and most patriotic types of Germans. Yet the same company will sell guns, cannons, and any and all ammunition to England, to America. Yes, even to France, the supposedly bitterest enemy of the German fatherland and German people. They will sell the most modern of machine guns with which to kill the German people in case of war. This is capitalist patriotism for you. (39)

Turning next to the United States, Liebknrecht once again insisted that there were no really fundamental differences between the exploitation of workers in American and Germany. In addition, reaction was intensifying in both countries:

When the German government was dispersing street meetings, I used to think that it was only in Germany that such things could take place until one day I picked up the paper and saw what was happening to your cradle of liberty in Philadelphia, where America, the "freest country in the world," was denying its citizens the right of free speech and assemblage. (40)



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### Der Hochoverratsprozess gegen Dr. Liebknrecht und die freien Jugendorganisationen.

Newspaper of the German Youth Organization 1907

Yet in at least one respect, there was a great difference between the situations facing the workers in the United States and Germany, and this difference gave the Socialists of America a "special mission." "You must be the advance guard of the International proletariat because your position is most advantageous. You have that which we are struggling for — the ballot." The Socialists of Germany had to undergo severe hardships and devote much of their time and energy trying to win what had already been achieved in the United States:

You Socialists of America have that struggle won for you by your ancestors, by past generations. You can enter this struggle against capitalism most advantageously, most effectively. (41)

With this "special mission" bestowed upon them by past struggles, he went on, the Socialists of America could not afford to falter, for they were fighting not only for themselves, but for "International Socialism." Nor were they fighting for a "vision, for a dream, but for a natural law. For Socialism must follow upon capitalism as surely and as inevitably as day will follow this night." (42)

As he was whisked away by car to the next meeting, the overflow audience at the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum left the hall carrying with them, in the words of the *Call* reporter, "a vision which will linger in their minds to the end of their days, and a lesson which will bear fruit to the Socialist movement in America, in the near, one might say, immediate future." (43)

At the Lipzin Theatre in Manhattan, where a rally was being held for the election to Congress of Meyer London, Socialist spokesman and leader of the United Hebrew Trades, Liebknrecht aroused the audience to a peak of enthusiasm by pointing to the contributions of Jews to Socialism. He noted the great number of valiant champions of the cause of socialism that the Jews of Russia had produced, and expressed confidence that the Jews of



America would be no less faithful to this cause. They could prove this by sending London to Congress.(44)

The *Call* noted editorially that Liebknecht's speeches added a dimension that had often been lacking in the American Socialist movement: he was able to supply "a tone of supreme confidence, of heroic resolve, of unconquerable energy" derived from his own confidence in the ultimate triumph of Socialism and from the fact that he represented a working class "aroused, . . . clearly aware of its interests and its rights, and . . . determined to secure the former and conquer the latter by every means in its power." Hence, the paper went on, all those associated with the Socialist Party in America should either attend Liebknecht's lectures or carefully read the reports of his speeches:

It will do good to our Comrades to listen to this German Socialist and to become imbued, so far as it is possible in our own comparatively weak movement, with the same heroic spirit and indomitable confidence in the inevitable triumph of our great cause.(45)

Liebknecht's speech in Newark, New Jersey was sponsored by the Brewery Workers' Union,(46) and, in keeping with the nature of the sponsorship, he devoted his talk to the problems facing organized labor. In Germany, he pointed out, the workers conducted their struggle for higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions through strikes and boycotts. But they also fought on the political front through the Social-Democratic Party. This two-pronged approach gave the German working class considerable power. It also intensified the efforts of the capitalists and the government, which faithfully served their interests, to disrupt and weaken the labor movement. The main weapon they used in Germany was the church. The formation of Catholic and Protestant unions was part of a massive effort to confuse the workers and prevent them from joining the Socialists. Of course, the effort to disrupt labor organizations was not confined to Germany. Everywhere, capitalists were trying to weaken the labor movement through a variety of disruptive devices, by stirring up racial hatred and religious intolerance among the workers so as to "keep them from becoming class conscious." American workers, he emphasized, were in danger of having their unity and solidarity repeatedly destroyed by such tactics, and they had to be constantly on the alert lest they play into the hands of the capitalists.

Although he had only spent a few days in the United States, Liebknecht continued, he had already seen evidence of the strong efforts being made by the church to influence the American labor movement against radical ideas and tactics.(47) Special efforts were being made by the church to influence working class youth so as "to keep them from becoming class conscious, from becoming radical, and joining the Socialist movement."(48) Beware of the so-called Christian unions, Liebknecht warned: "Let no religious or national differences enter the field of your economic struggle." And he went on:

I have never yet seen a Catholic exploiter who made an exception of the Catholics in his employ and exploited them less. Nor have I seen a Protestant or a Jew make any distinction with a co-religionist of his. They exploit them all alike. Capital knows no nation, no religion. It is international in its exploitation. The labor movement must be the same. The bones of the

Jew are ground just as much and into the same kind of dollars as the bones of the Catholic or Protestant.(49)

Liebknecht also warned organized labor in the United States to be on guard against politicians of the major parties who offered "panaceas and cure-alls for the evils which infest modern society." The history of the working class proved that only through their own party, "which is the Socialist Party," could labor solve the problems of contemporary society. Anyone who believed that political parties which spoke and acted for the capitalist class could serve the interests of the working class had only to turn his attention to France. For in that country, the first "to produce liberty, equality and fraternity," the strike of the French railroad workers was being suppressed by a republican government. This revealed once again that "the exploiting, the ruling class controls our governments in its own interests and against the interests of the working class, no matter whether these governments are republics or monarchical." The French strikes, moreover, should teach the workers another lesson, for it was Prime Minister Briand, a former Socialist, who broke the strike by recruiting the strikers into the army and using troops against those who refused to return to work. "The Socialist movement," Liebknecht stressed, "must beware of having politicians of the type of Briand get into its ranks, grow strong at its expense and then turn their strength against it."(50)

The basic lesson of the French railroad strike was that there was "not much difference between a monarchical form of government and a republic when both the monarchy and the republic are ruled by the same god of gold, of Mammon." This applied to the United States just as much as it did to France:

The difference between the German government and the government of the United States is that the German throne is made of gold and shrouded by a sort of medieval mysticism while the American throne stands on sacks of gold. There we have a Junker class ruling over the people. Here you have a band of pirates, financial pirates, ruling over you. The German autocracy rules by grace of god, while the American plutocracy rules by the grace of Mammon. Not much difference as far as the working class is concerned.

In some ways, Liebknecht insisted, the slavery of the American working class was even worse than that of the German toilers. Here, workers were used up more quickly than were workers in Germany: "You are thrown upon the scrap heap quicker than the workers in Germany are, for you are right in the heart of capitalism."(51)

Liebknecht referred to the celebrations of Columbus Day that he had witnessed in Boston during a quick visit to that city.(52) He was appalled to see the participation of soldiers, military bands, and worst of all, of children in military uniforms. (The reference was to the Boy Scouts.) "The entire celebration was of a kind which has nothing in common with freedom, with liberty. A martial spirit pervaded the atmosphere." Yet this was only a symptom of the great transformation that had occurred in the United States. He concluded:



No, America today is no longer America. It is no longer the land of Columbus or of Washington, the land of freedom. America must be discovered once more. And the liberator must be no other than the working people, not Roosevelt nor Taft, but the exploited and plundered workers. They must be the discoverers of and liberators of America.

The proletariat in this land must tear itself loose from the old parties, it must organize and with united, solid ranks it must usher in the only liberator of mankind — International Socialism. (53)

Following his Newark speech, Liebknecht departed on a nationwide tour, lecturing in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Oakland, and other leading cities, all under the auspices of the Socialist Party. Everywhere, he addressed overflow meetings; some of the thousands in the audiences waited patiently for hours for his arrival. Everywhere, too, he stressed the difference between myth and reality as far as the United States was concerned. As he visited the leading industrial centers and studied working conditions there, his indictments became bitterer and bitterer. He scored the United States as a land where human life was valued far below the dollar; where childhood was sapped of its bud, so that "uncrowned kings might reap millions"; where womanhood was sacrificed, both in the factory and in the street, and where unemployed workers foraged for food in slum garbage cans.

Liebknecht admitted that he had found the conditions of the working class in the United States far worse than he had anticipated. Despite his awareness, through discussions with American Socialists, that the image of the United States as a real democracy was an illusion, he had still believed that much of the promise embodied in the Declaration of Independence was indeed a reality:

I came to America with high expectations. I thought to find here a real democracy, the home of the free and the brave. When I thought of your great universities, your system of universal free education, your many libraries, your manhood suffrage, your democratic institutions, your Statue of Liberty welcoming all the downtrodden and persecuted people to your shores, when I thought of these things, I said to myself: Here I will find a race of kings living in equality and freedom — this virtually must be the land of milk and honey.

It did not take long for him to realize his mistake:

No sooner did I come ashore in New York than the disillusionment began. There I found a great machine with many cogs and wheels all whirling and buzzing in the effort to secure the almighty dollar. In New York, real liberty, real happiness does not exist. The population is a hurrying, scurrying mob, intent on the worship of the god Mammon. In another city I found a church called the Church of the Good Shepherd erected in memory of the inventor of the revolver. A church of the Good Shepherd in honor of the invention of the revolver smacked of irony to me, but in Pennsylvania the mystery was explained, for there the club and the revolver are actually the good shepherds of the capitalist with which they round up the striking workmen. I was told that in Philadelphia, during the general strike, the workmen were forbidden to gather in front of Independence Hall. On that sacred spot, where freedom had its birthplace in America,

freedom should ever exist, but today the club and revolver rule and your boasted freedom is a name only.

But his greatest shock was to find that conditions in the United States were even worse than those in Germany:

I found that in America the rule of the dollar is so strong that even voters are bought and sold, a thing unknown in "benighted" Germany. I found in the mills and factories of Pittsburgh, conditions which could not be tolerated in Germany or anywhere in Europe. I found men and women treated as if they were mere refuse of the earth, worked to exhaustion, among unguarded machinery which often kills or injures, and then thrown upon the scrap-heap. I came to indict conditions in Germany and laud America, but since I have seen these things, I cannot but praise Germany and indict America.

In every city, Liebknecht closed his lecture with a plea to the American workers to unite, regardless of all differences among them based on religion, race, sex, or nationality; that they reject promises held out by reformers and bourgeois politicians, and alter the picture of the United States he had painted through the only reforms that would be "effective

The image shows the front page of the Leipzig Volkszeitung newspaper. At the top, it reads "Leipziger Volkszeitung" in a large, stylized font. Below the title, it says "Organ für die Interessen des gesamten werktätigen Volkes." The main headline is "Der dritte Stichwahltag. 11 Sozialdemokraten gewählt!" followed by "Insgesamt sind also gewählt: 110 Sozialdemokraten!" Below this, a list of names is provided: "Liebknecht, Potsdam-Osthavelland. Cohn, Nordhausen. Dittmann, Cennep-Mettmann. Haberland, Düsseldorf. Erdmann, Dortmund. Davidsohn, Grünberg. Ebert, Gierfeld-Barmen. Spiegel, Herteln. Schumann, Sorau. Weis, Kalau-Ludau. Feldmann, Striegau-Schweidnitz." The page contains several columns of smaller text, including news items and advertisements.

Front page of LEIPZIGER VOLKSZEITUNG

and lasting" — those which would "come through the effort of the united workers themselves." Thus, he ended every lecture with these words:

We in Europe are waiting with longing for the time when the American workingmen will become class-conscious and join in the great movement which everywhere is stirring the workers of the world. We hope that soon will come over the sea the message that America, too, has awakened, and that the workers there have realized the truth of the immortal words of Karl Marx, "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains." (54)

"The bitter arraignment of America by Dr. Liebknecht has raised a storm of criticism," the agent of the Berlin police wrote in a dispatch of November 8, 1910. (55) As Liebknecht's indictment of conditions in the United States grew in intensity, he was attacked not only by the commercial press in the cities he visited, and especially the German-language papers, but even a number of Socialists began to complain to the National Executive Committee that the German Socialist was guilty of presenting a "one-sided" view of the United States. If he did not alter his presentation, they warned, Liebknecht could damage the Party's influence among those who were sensitive to such bitter criticism of American institutions by a foreign guest. (56) However, the agent of the Berlin police also informed the German government that these attacks were "offset by Socialists who thoroughly applaud the leader of the Radical wing of the German Social-Democratic party." (57) Indeed, these Socialists challenged the American press to disprove a single one of Liebknecht's charges by concrete evidence, and when this challenge was ignored, one Socialist defender of Liebknecht wrote: "The reason is that Liebknecht's accusation against, and sometimes derision of, America, is based upon incontrovertible facts." (58)

While Liebknecht was lecturing in various cities of the west, extracts from his speeches were read at Socialist meetings in New York City, and, as the agent of the Berlin police acknowledged, were "wildly applauded." (59)

Liebknecht returned to New York City at the end of November. After a speech to a conference of all the young Socialist organizations, convened for the purpose of hearing "one of the foremost advocates of Socialist organizations for young people," (60) he delivered his farewell address before a packed Trommer's Hall in Brooklyn. Liebknecht acknowledged that his cross-country lecture tour had brought a barrage of criticism down upon his head, but he pointed out that having spent months in prison in Germany for criticizing institutions in his own country, he was not ready to surrender his critical faculties just because this would make some Americans, including even some Socialists, happy. He was fortified by the knowledge that every statement he had made about the United States was based on concrete facts.

On the basis of such evidence and his own observations during the six weeks' tour, he summed up his evaluation of the United States. His chief conclusion could be set forth in a single sentence: "Your entire country, the country of marvelous resources, has been laid low by capitalism." Specifically, his trip had convinced him that the widely held view, spread by the "preachers of contentment," that the poor man could still go west, buy his own farm, and get rich, was "false and absurd." (61) For one thing, while

there was still plenty of vacant land, it required both irrigation and cultivation, the cost of which was "beyond the means of an individual." Even if one were to purchase land which did not require such investment, one would have little chance to earn a living, "not to speak of getting rich." Monopoly corporations, and especially the railroads, dominated the small farmer so thoroughly as to reduce his opportunities for a livelihood almost to the vanishing point:

In what other country in the world do you find such close connection between the railroads and the coal mines and the machinery trust, and what not? Everything the people need, everything they use, wherever they turn, they are being robbed. (62)

His next conclusion was that human life was cheaper in the United States than almost anything else. He had, of course, been attacked for saying this, but he challenged anyone to deny this statement. He dared anyone who criticized him on this score to visit the major industrial centers of the nation, as he had just done:

Let him visit Pittsburgh. Let him visit McKees Rocks and compare the life of the people in these places with the life of the people in industrial towns in any country in Europe but Russia, and then deny that human life is not the cheapest thing in the United States.

Where else in the world can you find child labor so outrageously exploited as you find it in the United States? (64)

In what other civilized country in the world do you find so many private police to club the working people when they go on strike? . . .

In Los Angeles organized labor is fighting for its life. (65) In Chicago thousands of workingmen are on strike for living wages, on strike against an inhuman system of sweating unknown anywhere else on the globe. (66) In New York you have had strikes. You are having them yet. (67)

How did your government, your democratic government, treat the strikers?

Were the police of New York and Chicago and Philadelphia any less brutal than the police of Russia?

Then, where is your freedom? Is it not an empty word?

Does not freedom in America mean freedom to rob and exploit — freedom on the part of capitalism to crush out the lives of the workers mercilessly, ruthlessly? (68)

Liebknecht revealed that while he was in the west, he had been approached by a woman who asked him what the state of marriage and divorce would be under Socialism. "Would not Socialism destroy the family?" she had asked. Liebknecht told her that she ought to be concerned about the destruction of the American family by the ravages of capitalism. How, for example, could a stable family life be maintained in the type of homes in which American workers were forced to live? "Your menageries, your zoos, are more sanitary than the homes of your workingmen." Then, too, while ministers and preachers in churches throughout America were delivering sermons on the sanctity of the family, prostitution had "become part of the economic system of the United States." Everywhere he went in the United States, he had seen women, even mere children — "little girls of

twelve and thirteen years" — offering their bodies for sale flagrantly and openly. How could it be otherwise?

When girls are employed in department stores, in big business establishments for salaries ranging from \$2 to \$5 a week, with prices of food and clothing and shelter as they are charged by your trusts and corporations, your women are forced into the streets.(69)

And under such circumstances, who will dare to say that the present family is menaced by Socialism?

Liebknrecht concluded his farewell address by pointing out that the bourgeois press had neglected to inform its readers that, along with his criticism of American society, he had always referred to a bright side of the picture — the awakening of the working people. To be sure, so far this only involved a small part of the working class: "The great majority of workingmen are still sunk into a sort of stupid slumber, but America has a great deal of energy and push and will power, and once things begin to stir here, they will not cease stirring until the present shameful order of society is completely wiped off the earth and a new order established." Naturally, he was not surprised that his American critics had failed to point out this "bright side" of the picture. But it was unforgivable that some Socialists did not take this into account when they criticized him. The truth was that he was anything but pessimistic about the United States, and he was convinced that "Socialism will be coming to the United States with a giant's stride." Already the first Socialist, Victor Berger of Milwaukee, had been elected to Congress, and "before you know it, the halls of Congress will be painted red."(70)

Even the agent for the Berlin police was impressed by Liebknrecht's farewell address. He noted in his report that the speech showed clear evidence that Liebknrecht had "studied carefully the principal industries."(71) The same agent sent the Berlin police the following extract from a speech Liebknrecht delivered at a farewell banquet tendered in his honor by the German Revolutionary Agitation Committee at New York City's Labor Temple:

*I am a German, but not a German patriot.* To me man stands above country and everything that oppresses him, whether it be the crowned ruler of Germany, with his vast army, or the uncrowned rulers of America, with their dollars, is equally hateful. In Germany I was condemned to two years' imprisonment for being too little a champion of the crown and too much a champion of the cause of the people. What I have to say about America I say likewise as an enemy of American plutocracy, as an enemy of the American uncrowned kings of finance and industry, and as a friend of the American working people and a champion of their cause. My strongest impression of America is that it is a dreamland. The U. S. Constitution, American liberty, and the right to the pursuit of happiness are dreams.(72)

While the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, the only paper to cover the banquet, did not quote this part of Liebknrecht's speech, it did emphasize that he had concluded his remarks by expressing his great pleasure at having had the opportunity to be in the United States at the time when the first Socialist was elected to Congress, and that he saw in this victory the beginning of greater successes:

Without doubt, the Social Democracy in America is not a fire of straw that will deceive us. No! The time is ripe now for Socialist ideology. Therefore, Socialism will triumph, America is thirsting for Socialism as the dry earth is for rain. And everywhere Socialist truth finds open ears and ready hearts.

Finally, he would like his comrades in the United States to know that when his father had visited the country, the Socialist movement was primarily a German movement, but his visit had convinced him that American Socialism now represented all sections of the population, and was "as international as one could imagine." All this convinced him that "Socialist ideas are marching onward with high speed."(73)

It was altogether fitting that Liebknrecht's last appearance in the United States was featured by the presence of Herman Schluter, the distinguished German-American Socialist and long-time correspondent of Frederick Engels. Schluter told the overflow audience at the banquet in Liebknrecht's honor that

...we must never forget the old Liebknrecht when we celebrate the young. Because Karl Liebknrecht, like his father, is looked upon by the Prussian government as one guilty of high treason, one can assume that the son is following in his father's footsteps and is worthy of him.(74)

The *New Yorker Volkszeitung* featured a farewell editorial in which it thanked Liebknrecht for having planted valuable seeds among the American workers, both Socialist and non-Socialist. By attracting "a great number of workers" to his meetings, he had contributed to Socialist victories at the polls. Furthermore, by detailing the successes of the Socialist parties in Europe, he had inspired many Americans who had been influenced by the propaganda that Socialism was a movement made up of "madmen" who had no influence anywhere. He had left behind a growing confidence in "the sure triumph of Socialism in every land. This will not be forgotten."(75)

The *New York Call* carried no farewell editorial, but instead featured a departing interview with Liebknrecht. It was an interview in depth, covering a wide variety of subjects. Asked by Elias Tobenkin, the *Call* reporter, what his strongest impression was of America, Liebknrecht repeated the theme he had stressed at the banquet in his honor:

You can sum it up in one word — Dreamland. America is a dreamland, a land where the things which the people take as real are mostly dreams.

Your Constitution, for instance. What a beautiful dream! When I read your Constitution as a student, I was inspired by its sentiments, by the freshness and simplicity of its truths. It was and is the grandest document of modern and ancient times. But what has America made of its Constitution? Once the United States Constitution was truth, and meant something. Now it is a piece of paper which must be made truth again.

Your liberty is a dream and your right to the pursuit of happiness is a dream. What is real in America is an oppression which goes beyond all limits; a disregard for human life; a brutal, beastly chase for gold, the path of which is strewn with the bodies of millions of workers.



Karl Liebknecht speaks in Berlin

The coal and iron industry in Germany, Liebknecht continued, compared favorably with that in the United States. "Yet where will you find in Germany — monarchical, army-ridden Germany — a city that compares in its misery and hopelessness and stupidity with that plague spot of Pittsburgh? Why, Pittsburgh is simply hell with the lid off."

The American working class had to be awakened from the dream that workingmen still enjoyed the same freedom and opportunity they once had known in the young Republic. It had to be brought face to face with reality. This could only be done through education which would stimulate the dormant class-consciousness of the American working class: "Their instinct of the class struggle, a class struggle created by your industries and your courts, which make no pretense of being other than class courts; by your police, both private and municipal, needs to be awakened and directed." This could only be accomplished by education.(76)

Another example he cited of the differences between the dream and reality in American life related to philanthropy. In every city he had visited, Liebknecht found a library with the name of the donor, Andrew Carnegie, prominently displayed.(77) But he looked in vain for the name of the artist who had constructed the beautiful statues in front of the building, or of the architect who had built it. He had found their names tucked away in an obscure corner, and sometimes they were not even anywhere in the buildings. But the name of the wealthy donor was always prominently displayed. In Pittsburgh, he had seen the Carnegie Foundation, and had said to himself that it was a "mockery" for the institution to exist "in the same city where

thousands upon of thousands of workingmen have been dragged to the level of beasts."

In Iowa, Liebknecht had run into another type of philanthropy. He was introduced to a manufacturer who prided himself upon having established a system of old age pensions in his factory:

In the next breath, however, he explained to me that this system of old age pensions was an extremely well-paying proposition. You see, the men themselves were helping to pay for their own pensions. But the company, instead of losing by subscribing so much for the pension fund, was really gaining. The pension, this man explained, would only be paid to workers who had been in his employ at least twenty years. This meant that a worker could not leave his employ. He could not go to another factory to improve his condition or he would lose his old age pension.

Thus, the workmen were "tied hand and foot by the dream of the pension to come."

Another "dream" reform he had encountered was the "so-called profit sharing with the workingmen."(78) It was necessary, he declared, for American Socialists to expose this "profit sharing game," and make clear to the workers that it

... will tie the worker closer to the factory, because he will have the illusion of being part owner of it. The pittance which the worker will get in his old age from this profit sharing system will not be tenth or a hundredth part of the amount he will have been robbed in wages during the time he was employed by the concern.

What program, then, should American Socialists advocate? Liebknecht answered:

Old age pensions in America, as elsewhere, must be paid by the national government. The worker must not be tied down to a certain factory, to a certain job or relinquish his claim on a pension. He must be free to go and work wherever he pleases and for whomsoever he pleases, knowing that the government will be paying him a pension after his active period as an industrial soldier is over.(79)

In the years to come, American workers were to learn, to their sorrow, the validity of Liebknecht's criticisms of the pension system in operation in the United States.

"What is your impression of American cities?" the reporter asked. Liebknecht replied that they were far behind cities in Germany, where the municipalities owned the gas, water, and other public utilities:

The public is being robbed, coldly and cynically. It is being mistreated and handled in a dog-like fashion which would cause men in countries other than the home of the free and the land of the brave to rise in indignation against the thieving and plundering public service corporations.

At least Milwaukee, under Socialist administrations, he said, was setting an example of how a city should be operated, and other cities would have to follow this course.(80)

Finally, there came the inevitable question: What did Liebknecht think about American trade unions? The reporter quoted his "interesting" answer as follows:

Your labor movement here suffers from a want of class consciousness and must be guarded against bad and undesirable influences like a child. In the brief time I have been here I have observed that the capitalist class of the United States is fully aware that the labor movement is not as class conscious as it should be, and it comes down to the labor movement and does everything possible to keep it from becoming class conscious. The capitalists and big business interests of the United States are now bending their efforts to make the unions not fighting organizations, but corruption organizations. (81)

This is a serious matter and American Socialists will do well to be on guard against it. It has been done in every country in the world, and it is being done here now. Capitalism, recognizing the strength of organized labor, will begin to hobnob with it, will try to find a community of interests between capital and labor and will invent all kinds of means to prevent the labor movement from becoming class conscious and to weaken it by planting in it the seeds of corruption. (82)

There was an ironic twist to the interview. In the closing moments, Liebknecht criticized American reporters for having distorted a number of his statements. He even criticized a Socialist reporter who had interviewed him in the west. He had welcomed the opportunity to discuss his views with a party member writing for a party newspaper, but the following morning, he had discovered to his dismay that not a single statement he had made to the reporter found its way into the paper, while views were attributed to him that were fabricated in the paper's office because the editors wanted that type of a story. (83) The irony came when the *New York Call* published a letter written by Liebknecht on board the *Mauretania*, en route to Germany. While he found the *Call* interview correct in the main, there were two items which had so distorted what he had actually said that he felt it necessary to send a correction.

For one thing, the reporter had cut his views on profit sharing, and in the process, had eliminated his chief objection to the scheme. He wanted it clearly understood that profit sharing was "not Socialistic at all." It did not even mean higher wages, or a more equitable adjustment of compensation, or even better terms for the worker:

It merely means another mode of calculating the wage, a mode carefully devised in such a way that the wage worker will ultimately not get essentially more than under the common, more simple and more honest method of fixing his wages. If, after all, profit sharing does give to the worker a possibility to earn a little more, he pays dearly for it by the greater intensity of his labor superinduced by his desire for extra earnings. The system itself is luring him on to waste his brawn and labor power. This result is desirable from the employer's point of view, not from that of the worker.

In essence, the effect of profit-sharing was similar to that of the piece-work system — in short, a means "of misleading and corrupting the workers, but not in the least a betterment of their condition."

The second complaint was more serious, since the *Call* reporter had distorted what Liebknecht had said about the American labor movement. He explained:

I never said that your labor movement "must be guarded against any undesirable influences like a child." I think I myself would be a child to say or even think such a thing. The constant motive of my lecture was: The liberation of the workers can be brought about by the workers themselves! They cannot be guarded, they must guard themselves. As long as they must be guarded they cannot be guarded at all. The mission of the Socialists is not "to guard them," but to stir them up to guard themselves, to help them to comprehend that they must guard themselves and that they can only be guarded by themselves. And I am quite sure that the high intelligence and many other splendid qualities of the American workers will lead them to a full understanding of their position in the very near future. (84)

Liebknecht soon found it necessary to once more correct reports of statements he was supposed to have made during his stay in the United States. He published his corrections shortly after returning to Germany in *Vorwärts*, the official German Social-Democratic organ. He observed that he was said to have forecast an imminent revolution in Germany: "Overnight, the German emperor would suffer a Portuguese fate: perhaps even tomorrow. Three-fold horror!" What he had actually said was that nobody in Germany believed any longer in the right of the Kaiser to rule by the grace of God. "God's grace is changeable. Proof? The overnight Portuguese hurricane, a Menetekel for all who ridiculously believe that an enlightened people, like a herd of sheep or a company of recruits, can be terrorized forever." What was important was to realize that "the German monarchy does not exist due to the 'grace of God' but the 'grace of capitalism,' due to the grace of all the fractions of capitalism, including the Junker-agrarian one, and is linked to them for better and worse."

Again, he had been reported as saying while in the United States that compared to America, Germany was a better place in which to live. In reality, he had tried to make it clear that "the grandiose, reckless excesses of American capitalism, its almost complete lack of restrictions, its unheard-of disregard for the life and well-being of the workers and the undisguised capitalist corruption of all public power," would not be possible in Germany. But this was not because German capitalism was any more humane than its American counterpart; rather it was solely "because the organized, class-conscious proletariat had gained a position of strength and had built bulwarks at many points of danger." Indeed, if it had become "a real pleasure to live in Germany, it is thanks to the spirited and brave battle fought with its eyes fixed on its goal." Liebknecht concluded: "This is the remedy I prescribed for the American working class." (85)

"The coming of Comrade Liebknecht," a leading Socialist commentator noted shortly before the German Socialist left the United States, "has served to bring the Germans back to active participation in this movement as in the days of old. Many comrades, who for long years had been inactive, were at his meetings, and unless appearances are very deceptive, these workers will again get in harness and do their full share of work." (86) The agent of the Berlin police not only agreed, but went on to point out that Er





enberg, militant leader of the Socialist Party of Ohio. Liebknecht's influence had a lasting effect. Speaking in Cleveland's Public Square in opposition to America's participation in World War I, Ruthenberg declared: "I am speaking to you as Karl Liebknecht spoke in the German nation, as he spoke in the Parliament of that country, when he denounced the war as a war of the ruling class and stated his unalterable opposition to the war. . . ." Arrested under the Espionage Act for opposing the war, Ruthenberg repeated these remarks at his trial in the Federal Court, July, 1917. Ruthenberg became the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of the United States and served until his death, March 2, 1927. He always paid tribute to the influence on his radicalism by Karl Liebknecht. (95)

It would be a mistake, however, to think that only the Socialists and the Socialist press in America took note of Liebknecht's opposition to the war. Many commercial newspapers carried excerpts from his speech against the war credits, in addition to reports of his expulsion from the German Social-Democratic Party, his trial for opposing the war, and his imprisonment. In Terre Haute, Indiana, Eugene V. Debs carefully clipped these newspaper reports, underlined those parts of Liebknecht's speeches he wished to remember, and pasted them in his clipping books. He underscored heavily the following from Liebknecht's speech explaining his vote against the war credit:

This war, which none of the peoples engaged therein has wished, is not caused in the interest of the prosperity of the German or any other nation. This is an imperialistic war, a war for the domination of the world market, for the political domination over important fields of operation for industrial and bank capital. On the part of the competition in armaments this is a war mutually fostered by German and Austrian war parties in the darkness of half absolutism and secret diplomacy in order to steal a march on the adversary. . . .

The German motto, "Against Czarism," as well as the present English and French cries, "Against Militarism," have the deliberate purpose of bringing into play in behalf of race hatred the noblest inclinations and the revolutionary feelings and ideas of the people. . . .

I . . . vote against the demanded war credits, under protest against the war and against those who are responsible for it and have caused it, against the capitalistic purposes for which it is being used. . . .

And this, too, from one of Liebknecht's speeches:

We must get back our lost liberty! We must win our freedom! We must have our manhood and our womanhood! We must be liberated, and the only hope in the world for us is in gaining that liberation by our own action! The battle is before us. What we must do is clear. Upon how we do it and in what spirit everything depends. In this crisis labor must show the greatness of its ability, the sternness of its purpose, the capacity of its intellect, the depth of its soul and the hardness of its fist! (96)

After studying the accounts of Liebknecht's role in opposing the war and his speeches explaining his stand, Debs published "Karl Liebknecht, Germany's Conquering Hero" in the *National Rip-Saw*, the southwestern Soc-

ialist weekly. The entire war could have been prevented, he began, if the Socialists in every country had stood by their principles. The Socialist deputies in the German Reichstag, he went on, bore a special responsibility for the war: "Had they followed the leadership of Liebknecht," and like him, stood as revolutionary Socialists instead of Junker reformers, as internationalists instead of nationalists, as fighters for the working class of the world instead of for the master class of their fatherland, the war could have been prevented. Everywhere in Europe (except in Russia) — in France, in England, in Italy — Socialists had become nationalists and had followed their rulers into war. Only Liebknecht had voted against war credits for the government, and it was to his "lasting honor" that

. . . never for a moment has he weakened under prosecution or shown the white feather in the face of peril. He is the only Socialist leader in Germany who has boldly and without quibbling or evasion stood for the true international position, and for this he is as much hated by the Socialist dough-faces . . . as he is by the Kaiser and the Junkers themselves.

Liebknecht had maintained his heroic position, Debs continued, in the face of the most shameless persecution to which he had been subjected by the government, "backed to their eternal disgrace, by the majority of dough-faces who at the crack of the Kaiser's whip, leapt like hounds into the fray for their (?) fatherland and for the glory of their exploiting masters."

Thank God, Liebknecht was a traitor, wrote Debs — "a glorious traitor whose name will shine with splendor in the history of the future. He is a traitor to the savage Kaiser, to heartless Junkerdom, and to the whole gang of ruling parasites and bloodthirsty militarists who have despoiled the nation, enslaved the toilers, and are now soaking the earth with their blood."

Debs published the text of the "inspiring message" Liebknecht had managed to send from behind his prison bars, in spite of the strict censorship imposed on him, and urged every Socialist and every believer in democracy and peace to memorize the statement. It began:

The charge of treason against an International socialist is sheer nonsense, for he recognizes no belligerent power to aid, and he opposes every capitalist government alike. His idea is to work in cooperation with the Socialists of every land to oppose alike every imperial power with his full strength: This is the sole idea.

He fights in the name of the international proletariat against an international capitalist class. He fights as best he can, and at all times, even in his own country. He combats at home the representatives of that opposing class which is the enemy of his class in every land.

And in the same way of class struggle against the rulers, the working classes are arrayed against the war power.

After enumerating a number of other duties of an international Socialist, Liebknecht wrote that his special duty was "to fight error whenever and wherever opportunity affords, for by spreading lies governments keep up the war madness, and by nothing more." He concluded:

Wherever possible, I have opposed foreign governments in the open, and I did the same at home. But I will never do this when it may result in arousing a war spirit against any nation.

# Die Rote Fahne

Zentralorgan der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Spartakusbund)

Verantwortlicher Herausgeber: Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg  
 Schriftleitung: Karl Liebknecht und Rosa Luxemburg  
 Druck: Die Arbeiter-Verlagsgesellschaft, Berlin, Unter den Eichen 117

## Masthead of THE RED FLAG

“These are the ringing words of a defiant and uncompromising social revolutionist,” wrote Debs. “He does not quibble or evade, or simply mouth phrases. . . . He indicates in fearless terms from behind prison bars the true international position.” Liebknecht embodied the “true position and infallible test of international socialism” for all Socialists, Debs continued, and he added: “It is in the fire of fierce conflict that true manhood is developed and true leadership vindicated,” adding that, by this standard, “Karl Liebknecht has proven himself.” Debs concluded his tribute to “Germany’s Conquering Hero” with a prophecy:

Karl Liebknecht, heroic minority leader of the present will be the triumphant majority leader of the German Socialist movement of the future, when it shall have been restored to sanity and to a clear sense of loyalty to its international principles, and in that day he will be the most honored by the very ones who are now denouncing him for having stood staunch and true to the cause in its gravest crisis. (97)

As one reads Debs’ emphasis on Liebknecht’s principles, it becomes clear that the young German Socialist’s heroic stand against the war served to inspire the older American Socialist, tired and often ill as he was, with his gaunt figure stooped by the years, to oppose American entrance into the war, even though it would lead him to prison. On September 14, 1918, when Debs was sentenced to ten years in federal prison for speaking out against the war, he echoed many of the principles Liebknecht had voiced in his stand against the war makers in Germany. It is understandable, then, that there were frequently interchangeable references in the American press to “Debs, the American Liebknecht” and “Liebknecht, the German Debs.” (98)

In October, 1917, Liebknecht’s book, *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* (issued ten years earlier in Germany and promptly suppressed), was translated and published in the United States. B. W. Huebsch, the publisher, announced that he was proud to be publishing “Liebknecht’s *Suppressed Book*,” and went on to note:

This is the book whose appearance in Germany made armed autocracy shrink and pale. They promptly put Liebknecht in prison and destroyed his book. . . . To know the mind of the boldest man in Europe — now in prison again because of his passion to *make the world safe for democracy*, you must at once read *Militarism* by Dr. Karl Liebknecht. (100)

The book quickly ran into several editions. In 1918, Macmillan published Karl Liebknecht’s *The Future Belongs to the People: Speeches Made Since the*

*Beginning of the War*. The book, translated by S. Zimand and with an introduction by Walter Weyl, carried the following on its frontispiece:

The aim of my life is the overthrow of monarchy. As my father, who appeared before this court exactly thirty-five years ago to defend himself against the charge of treason, was ultimately pronounced victor, so I believe the day is not far distant when the principle which I represent will be recognized as patriotic, as honorable, as true.

KARL LIEBKNECHT

In his introduction, Weyl, a middle-class progressive who was moving closer to Socialism, pointed out that Liebknecht had not been entirely alone in opposing the war: “Among others of the German socialists who had joined him had been Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Hugo Hasse, George Ledebour, and others. But among all these Karl Liebknecht stands preeminent.” To make this point clear, Weyl quoted the following from Henri Barbusse’s great anti-war novel, *Under Fire*:

“And for all that mind you,” concludes the French soldier Bertrand, “There is one figure that has risen above the war and will blaze with the beauty and strength of his courage.”

“Barbusse continues: ‘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.’”

The reviews of Liebknecht’s books in the United States made it clear that he had emerged in this country as the symbol of the struggle against war and militarism — a man who had voted his conscience despite the pressure of both his Socialist colleagues and his government, and continued to defy the war-makers even while in prison. The *New York World* declared:

A truer patriot than Karl Liebknecht might be hard to find. When the military system finds such a man guilty of treason and punishes him by a prison sentence, thinking Germans must wonder whether there is not something wrong with that system — and not in Germany only. (101)

The *Oakland World* could not find language adequate to express its admiration for Liebknecht’s speeches, so it contented itself with a message to the imprisoned German Socialist:

You are the star of hope. The hope of millions. At the mention of your name, the first rays of peace and liberty dawn on the horizon.

No one who doesn’t know your name knows what courage is, fiery courage and glorious unafraidness.

You stand by your convictions as firm as a rock in the seething waters. Threats, contempt, contumely, a degrading punishment have no power to make you waver from your beliefs.

You are a man, Liebknecht! (102)

The Duluth (Minnesota) *Herald* predicted that there “will come a time in Germany when Karl Liebknecht, pilloried and imprisoned today for daring to speak the truth, will rank higher in the list of German heroes than the Kaiser or

any of his family or retainers."(103) It was an accurate prediction. The Kaiser was forced to abdicate, and Liebknecht was released from prison and showered with honors by the revolutionary working class of Germany.

On January 15, 1919 came the shocking news of his murder (along with Rosa Luxemburg) by the reactionary *Freikorps* in the counterrevolution. But Karl Liebknecht's uncompromising stand against capitalism and for Socialism, against imperialism, militarism, and war, remained to inspire future struggles in behalf of his principles. John Reed said it best in *The Liberator*: "Karl Liebknecht is dead, yet he was never more alive than now, when his name is running like a wind through the world, blowing dead leaves before it."(104)

## LIEBKNECHT'S suppressed BOOK MILITARISM

THIRD EDITION

THIS is the book whose appearance in Germany made armed autocracy shrink and pale. They promptly put Liebknecht in prison and destroyed his book. This translation was made from a copy Liebknecht borrowed from his brother—the only copy obtainable.

To know the mind of the boldest man in Europe—now in prison again because of his passion to **make the world safe for democracy**—  
You will read, at once,

# MILITARISM

by

DR. KARL LIEBKNECHT

ON SALE WHEREVER THERE IS  
A BOOKSELLER ATTENDING  
TO THE PUBLIC WANTS

ONE DOLLAR

Published by B. W. HUEBSCH, 225 Fifth avenue, New York

Advertisement in THE LIBERATOR  
(New York, April 1918)

## International Liebknecht Day

# MASS MEETING

IN COMMEMORATION OF

# Karl Liebknecht

AT

NORTH-WEST HALL

Western and North Avenues

Friday, January 20, 1922

8 P. M. PROMT.

### PROGRAM WILL BE:

1. Singing of the "Internationale."
2. Short address by the chairman, "Significance of Liebknecht Day."
3. Musical Selection.
4. "Liebknecht, the Leader of Youth," by D. E. EARLY.
5. Vocal Solo.
6. "Youth and the Revolutionary Movement," by JOHN EDWARDS.
7. Singing.

Admission 15 cents.

Auspices of: International Liebknecht Day Committee, Young Workers' League,  
Chicago.

Advertisement in VOICE OF LABOR  
(Chicago, January 20, 1922)

# Notes

1. Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, Vol. II, New York, 1955, pp. 20, 40, 43, 110, 113, 177, 182-84.

Wilhelm Liebknecht wrote an account of his visit to the United States. Entitled EIN BLICK IN DIE NEUE WELT, it was published in Stuttgart in 1887. Edward and Eleanor Aveling also wrote an account entitled, THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA which was published in London in 1891.

2. Engels to Sorge, London, October 25, 1891. KARL MARX AND FREDERICK ENGELS: LETTERS TO AMERICANS, 1848-1895, New York, 1953, p. 237; Gustav Meyer, FRIEDRICH ENGELS: EINE BIOGRAPHIE, The Hague, 1934, vol. II, p. 487.

Friedrich Adolph Sorge (1827-1906), a German-American Socialist, music teacher by profession, who fought in the Baden uprising of 1849 with Engels, and emigrated to the United States in 1852; joined the New York Communist Club in 1858, and actively corresponded with Marx and Engels. Sorge was one of the leaders of the First International in the United States. After the General Council of the International was transferred to New York in 1876, Sorge became General Secretary. He was the closest associate of Marx and Engels in the United States and a prolific correspondence developed among them.

3. Eduard Bernstein (1847-1922) had joined the Eisenachers at the beginning of the 1870's; came to London in 1880 and met regularly with Marx and Engels, but early in the 1890's, influenced by English trade unionism and bourgeois literature, he turned to reformism. After Engels' death, Bernstein openly criticized the foundations of Marxism. His VORAUSSETZUNGEN DES SOCIALISMUS (PRE-REQUISITES OF SOCIALISM), published in 1890, became the gospel of German and international revisionism. In 1901 Bernstein returned to Germany, and took over direction of the revisionist SOCIALISTISCHE MONATSSCHRIFT (SOCIALIST MONTHLY).

(4). August Bebel shared Liebknecht's imprisonment for the same offense. Both men were not brought to trial until March, 1872. They were found guilty of High Treason and sentenced to two years' imprisonment each. (August Bebel, AUS MEINEM LEBEN, Stuttgart, 1913-14, Vol. II, pp. 191, 216-23.)

(5). Heinz Wohlgemuth, KARL LIEBKNECHT: EINE BIOGRAPHIE, Berlin, 1973, pp. 120-23, 174-75, 263, 292-94. Karl Liebknecht, GESSAMELTE REDEN UND SCHRIFTEN, Berlin, 1966, Vol. I, pp. 25-51; Vol. II, pp. 256-58.

(6). Wohlgemuth, OP. CIT., pp. 130-54.

(7). Robert Hunter was a Socialist intellectual who was a regular columnist for the NEW YORK CALL, the Socialist Party English-language daily newspaper published in New York City. In a book simply named POVERTY, Hunter in 1904 revealed that of the total population of 80 million in the United States, some 10 million

lived in poverty, "underfed, under-clothed, and poorly housed," with 4,000,000 of them public paupers. Undoubtedly Liebknecht learned much about conditions of workers in the United States from his discussions with Hunter.

(8). Robert Hunter, "Karl Liebknecht," NEW YORK CALL, August 29, 1910.

(9). IBID.

(10). Foner, OP. CIT., Vol. II, pp. 42-43; Philip S. Foner, JACK LONDON: AMERICAN REBEL, New York, 1964, p. 22

(11). KARL MARX AND FREDERICK ENGELS, LETTERS TO AMERICANS, pp. 7, 142, 160-87, 289-90.

(12). James B. Stolvey, "Daniel De Leon, A Study of Marxian Orthodoxy in the United States," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois, 1946, pp. 19-34.

(13). Ray Ginger, THE BENDING CROSS: A BIOGRAPHY OF EUGENE VICTOR DEBS, New Brunswick, 1949, pp. 173-74, 192-93.

(14). For a critique of De Leon's methods and philosophy, see Foner, OP. CIT., Vol. II, pp. 279-81, 296-97, 388-99. For a defense of De Leon, see DANIEL DE LEON: THE MAN AND HIS WORK: A SYMPOSIUM, New York, 1935, Carl Reeve, THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DANIEL DE LEON, New York, 1972, and Bernard Bortnick, "De Leon's Role in the Labor Movement," WEEKLY PEOPLE, December 15, 22, 1973.

(15). Foner, OP. CIT., Vol. II, pp. 388-403.

(16). Marvin Wachman, THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN MILWAUKEE, 1897-1910, Champaign, Ill., 1945, pp. 112-14; David A. Shannon, THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA, New York, 1955, pp. 21-25.

(17). David A. Shannon, "The Socialist Party Before the First World War," MISSISSIPPI VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW, Vol. XXXVIII, September, 1951, pp. 288-89; Victor Berger, "How Will Socialism Come?" BROADSIDES, Milwaukee, 1913, pp. 23-34.

(18). Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, Vol. III, New York, 1964, pp. 367-92.

(19). Ira B. Kipnis, THE AMERICAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, 1897-1912, New York, 1952, pp. 110-113, 164-80. For a critical view of Kipnis' view, see James Weinstein, THE DECLINE OF SOCIALISM IN AMERICA, 1912-1925, New York, 1969, pp. 28, 38, 67, 82.

(20). Kipnis, OP. CIT., pp. 234-36; Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, Vol. IV, New York, 1965, pp. 395-97; Morris Hillquit, HISTORY OF SOCIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES, New York, 1903, p. 253.

(21). J. Mahlon Barnes to Morris Hillquit, September 17, 1910, Morris Hillquit Papers (microfilm edition), State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Morris Hillquit (1869-1933), Socialist lawyer and member of the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, was leader of the Center or moderate elements in the Party, those who occupied a position between the Right-wing and Left-wing. He was for a long time the Party's representative to the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels.

(22). NEW YORK CALL, October 11, 1910.

(23). Swinton asked Marx the "fateful words: 'What is?' . . . to which in deep and solemn tone, he replied: 'Struggle!'" (NEW YORK SUN, September 6, 1880.)

Swinton was chief editorial writer for the SUN, and became managing editor, but he resigned his lucrative post in 1883 and founded a labor paper, JOHN SWINTON'S PAPER. Until August 21, 1887, when it ceased publication, JOHN SWINTON'S PAPER was the outstanding labor paper in the United States.

(24). NEW YORK CALL, October 11, 1920.

(25). Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) had been President of the United States from 1901 to 1909. He was a brazen militarist and imperialist. In 1910 when Liebknecht arrived in the United States, Roosevelt was organizing a movement to return to the White House as a Progressive Republican.

(26). NEW YORK CALL, October 11, 1910.

(27). The same point had been emphasized by a French Trade Union delegation which visited the United States in 1876 in connection with the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. See Philip S. Foner, "The French Trade Union Delegation to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876," SCIENCE & SOCIETY, Vol. XL, Fall, 1976, pp. 278-87.

(28). The reports of these agents are in the Archives of the German Imperial Government at Potsdam. They begin in 1850 and continue until April, 1917. Agents of the Berlin police sent reports to Germany on activities of Socialists, Anarchists, and radical labor groups, not only German but also other nationalities. None of these reports have been published in this country, and they constitute an important source of information concerning the meetings, publications, speeches, even conversations among foreign-born radicals in this country. All of these, along with leaflets and newspapers, were sent to Germany by the agents. Between 1850 and 1900 the reports are in German, but after 1900, they are typed in English.

The present writer was given access to the reports in the Potsdam Archives and has obtained microfilm copies of all of the reports between 1850 and 1917 in the Archives. Plans are under way to make the reports available in this country.

(29). See Karl Obermann, "Die Amerikanische Wilhelm Liebknechts in Jahre 1886," ZEITSCHRIFT FUR GESCHICHTSWISSENSCHAFT, Vol. XIV, 1966, pp. 611-17.

(30). Ignace Daszynsky, Polish Socialist and member of the Austrian Reichsrath, had also been invited to come to the United States for a lecture tour by the Socialist Party. On September 30 the agent informed the Berlin police that Daszynsky had been "imprisoned in Russia for his political views. The object of his tour is to propagate Socialism among the Polish population." (Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.) I am indebted to Professor Dr. Heinz Vosske, Leiter der Parteiarchives, Institut fur Marxismus-Leninismus, Berlin, for making the archives available to me for research and furnishing me with microfilm copies of all of the reports from agents in the United States.

(31). Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives. The comments on "Socialism and Revolutionary Syndicalism" and the vote in the "next election" indicates a rather inferior understanding of these movements. The adherents of "Revolutionary Syndicalism" were opposed to political action in the form of voting. (See William Z. Foster, "Syndicalism in the United States," THE COMMUNIST, July, 1937, pp. 1042-44; Louis Levine, "The Development of Syndicalism in America," Vol. XXVII, September, 1913, pp. 448-50; Foner, OP. CIT., Vol. IV, pp. 20-23, 76-77, 108-113, 427-430.

(32). Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(33). NEW YORK CALL, October 11, 1910.

(34). IBID.

(35). The reference is to the Haymarket martyrs of Chicago who were executed on the trumped-up charge that they had thrown or advocated the throwing of a bomb into the ranks of the police who were trying to disperse a peaceful meeting in Chicago's Haymarket Square, May 4, 1886, to protest police brutality against strikers. Eight men were arrested and placed on trial. All were Anarchists or Anarcho-Syndicalists which was enough to bring in a verdict of "Guilty" in a trial marked by the complete indifference to the democratic rights of the defendants. Seven of the defendants were sentenced to be hanged, and the eighth, Oscar Neebe, was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. Albert R. Parsons, August Spies, George Engel, and Adolph Fischer were hanged on November 11, 1887. Louis Lingg committed suicide in prison (or was murdered by the prison guards), and the other two — Samuel J. Fielden and Eugene Schwab — had their sentence commuted to life imprisonment. On June 26, 1893, the progressive German-American Governor of Illinois, John Peter Altgeld, issued his famous pardon message in which he pardoned

the three imprisoned men; stated bluntly that they were completely innocent, and that they and the hanged men had been victims of packed juries and a biased judge.

(36). The reference is to Henry George's book, PROGRESS AND POVERTY, published in 1879 which exposed widespread poverty in the United States, and proposed a solution, George's idea of the single-tax on all land values. PROGRESS AND POVERTY became one of the best-read books on political economy in the United States, and influenced many in Europe.

(37). NEW YORK CALL, October 11, 1910.

In his report of the meeting to the Berlin police, the agent quoted the following from Liebknecht's speech: "The International Proletariat expects great things from you. You will soon take a leap forward which will make the world of capitalism gasp." The agent continued:

"In speaking about the movement in Germany, he said: — 'In the Kaiser and the chancellor we have the best agitators. In his speeches the Kaiser speaks of the Grace of God. If his speeches are made by the Grace of God, they are made by the Grace of a God who is distinctly hostile to monarchy, for these speeches do more to undermine the monarchy than anything we can say or do. If the Kaiser keeps going on with his incredible foolishness we might awake some day to find that the crown has slipped out of Germany just as it slipped out of Portugal recently. The teaching of socialism to young people in various leagues is beginning to bear fruit and promises to become one of the most important factors in freeing Germany from absolutism.'

"The Arbeiter Saengerbund sang several revolutionary songs." (October 10, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.) The reference to Portugal is to the elimination of the monarchy and establishment of a republic in 1910.

(38). NEW YORK TIMES, October 11, 1912.

(39). NEW YORK CALL, October 12, 1910.

(40). In the spring of 1910 a general strike broke out in Philadelphia in support of the striking street car workers, and during these strikes, the right of free speech and free assemblage disappeared in Philadelphia.

(41). NEW YORK CALL, October 12, 1910.

In his report to the Berlin police, the agent wrote: "Thousands of people packed the Brooklyn Labor Lyceum to hear Dr. Carl Liebknecht...." He reported that Liebknecht stated that the Socialists in Germany "are now entering upon a fight which will bring in its train innumerable hardships, perhaps dangerous consequences to many, which requires sacrifices on every side by the hundreds, by the thousands, you Socialists of America have had the struggle of universal suffrage won for you by our ancestors. You can enter now upon the struggle for International Socialism with all the zeal in the world.'" (Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.)

(42). NEW YORK CALL, October 12, 1910.

(43). IBID.

(44). IBID. Meyer London was not elected to Congress until 1914.

(45). NEW YORK CALL, October 12, 1910.

(46). The Brewery Workers' Union was strongly influenced by the Socialist Party; its leadership was Socialist and many of its members, most of them German-Americans, were members of the Socialist Party. (See John Laslett, LABOR AND THE LEFT: A STUDY OF SOCIALIST AND RADICAL INFLUENCES IN THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT, 1881-1924, New York, 1970, pp. 17-43, 118-20.)

(47). One such organization was the Militia of Christ for Social Service, headed by the Catholic priest, Reverend Peter E. Dietz, which worked closely with conservative officials of the American Federation of Labor. (See Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, New York, 1964, Vol. III, Chapter V, "The Church and Labor.")

(48). The reference is to the Young Men's Christian Association which had branches in all American cities.

(49). NEW YORK CALL, October 14, 1910.

(50). IBID.

(51). IBID.

(52). Liebknecht spoke in Boston's Ford Hall at a meeting arranged by the Lettish branch and the Roxbury branch of the Boston Socialist Club. He addressed an overflow audience. (NEW YORK CALL, October 14, 1910.)

Liebknecht also spoke of the anniversary of the execution of Professor Francisco Ferrer, founder of the Modern School of Barcelona, the pioneer of secular education in Spain, a champion of trade unionism in that country, and known as "the Tolstoy of the Latins," who was executed on the morning of October 13, 1909 by the Spanish monarchy. Ferrer was found "guilty" of inciting the riots which occurred during the Barcelona general strike in the spring of 1909, but his real "crime" was his opposition to church domination over education in Spain. Liebknecht noted that while Ferrer was not a Socialist, he was a champion for freedom, a light-bearer for the German people, the kind of a man whose work would never die, and whose execution should be noted by lovers of freedom everywhere.

(53). NEW YORK CALL, October 14, 1910.

(54). CLEVELAND CITIZEN, November 5, 1910. While the English-language press in the cities Liebknecht visited carried occasional notice of his appearance, none reported his speeches in detail. The account in the CLEVELAND CITIZEN was the fullest of any reporting during his tour.

(55). Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

In this dispatch, the agent also included an extract from Liebknecht's lecture in Milwaukee on "Constitution" which went: "That the 'land of the free' lies seaward, not landward, from the Statue of Liberty; that the American Constitution is 'not worth the paper on which it is written,' and that capitalistic system is rapidly destroying the resources of the U.S., and scattering corruption abroad.

"If you workingmen of America cannot get what you think you are entitled to under the constitution, tear it up and throw it at your feet," said Liebknecht. "We, abroad, have grown to think of America as a land of liberty and happiness, but I soon learned that when one passes the Statue of Liberty one also leaves liberty behind him. Your country is politically devastated and votes are freely bought and sold. We of the International Social Democracy look to the comrades of Milwaukee to make this city the cradle of a new liberty." (IBID.)

(56). NEW YORK CALL, November 30, 1910.

(57). Report of November 8, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(58). NEW YORK CALL, November 30, 1910.

(59). Report of November 8, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(60). Report of November 27, 1910, IBID. "In his speech," the agent wrote, "he ascribed much of the success of the party in Germany to the fact that their young people's Socialist societies have always been strong and flourishing." (IBID.)

(61). As early as 1890, the noted American historian Frederick Jackson Turner had pointed out that free land had all but disappeared in the United States and the frontier as it had been known in the past had practically vanished.

(62). NEW YORK CALL, November 29, 1910.

(63). Iron and steel workers in Pittsburgh, at the time of Liebknecht's visit to the United States, were working twelve hours a day, seven days a week for miserably low wages.

McKees Rocks was the scene of a militant strike of the steel workers, mainly foreign-born, led by the I.W.W. The strike, which took place in 1909, and ended in a victory for the workers, was against inhuman conditions, low wages and incredibly long hours.

(For a discussion of the strike and conditions at McKees Rocks, see Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, Vol. IV, New York, 1965, pp. 281-95.)



(64). Over 200,000 children between the ages of 10 and 15 spent their days in mills, factories, mines and shops in 1910. Throughout the United States, children were being denied the right of childhood, the right to go to school. They grew up with bodies and minds stunted from being forced to work at a tender age in textile mills, glass factories, coal mines, cigar factories, slaughterhouses, and in the tenement house sweatshops.

(65). An open-shop campaign, led by the reactionary LOS ANGELES TIMES, was in full swing at the time Liebknecht visited the United States. Its objective was to destroy the trade union movement of Los Angeles, a number of which unions were closely associated with the Socialist Party. In 1911 Los Angeles was the scene of the McNamara Case involving the bombing of the plant of the LOS ANGELES TIMES.

(66). Thousands of Chicago shirtwaist and cloak makers were on strike against low wages and the sweatshop system.

(67). The reference is to the shirtwaist strike in New York City and the immense cloakmakers' strike which was taking place while Liebknecht was in the United States.

(68). NEW YORK CALL, November 29, 1910.

(69). Women workers received such low wages throughout American industry that many were forced into a life of prostitution to be able to keep alive. The relation of low wages and prostitution was revealed in many government investigations of labor conditions before and during Liebknecht's visit.

(70). NEW YORK CALL, November 29, 1910.

(71). Report of November 28, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

"At the close of the meeting," the agent wrote, "a resolution was adopted expressing sympathy with Fred Warren and protesting against the judicial crime which sentenced him." (IBID.) The resolution was the result of Liebknecht's bitter attack on the courts in the Warren case during his speech. "Where else, in what monarchical government, could you find such class justice as was displayed in the case of the Socialist editor?" Liebknecht asked after describing the case. (NEW YORK CALL, November 29, 1910.)

In January, 1907, the United States government charged Fred Warren with sending "scurrilous, defamatory and threatening" literature through the mails. The action was based on the publication of two articles in the APPEAL TO REASON, a weekly Socialist journal published in Girard, Kansas by Julius A. Wayland and edited by Warren. The articles appeared in the issue of January 5, 1907. The first, written by Eugene V. Debs, the outstanding Socialist leader in the United States, criticized the judicial procedure in the celebrated case of Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone, leaders of the militant Western Federation of Miners, who were accused of the bomb killing of ex-Governor Frank Steunenberg of Idaho in December, 1905. The second article, written by Warren, dealt with a former Governor (Taylor) of Kentucky, who was wanted in his native state in connection with the murder of a political rival. When the governor of Kentucky refused to extradite Taylor from Indiana, Warren offered a reward of \$1,000 to anybody who seized Taylor and turned him over to the Kentucky authorities. (Moyer, Haywood and Pettibone had been seized and illegally extradited from Colorado to Idaho during their case.) After much delay, Warren was convicted in 1909, sentenced to six months in prison, and fined \$5,000. On February 2, 1911, yielding to a mass defense campaign in Warren's behalf (of which the resolution adopted at Liebknecht's farewell lecture was part), President William Howard Taft reduced the fine to \$100 and issued a pardon which kept Warren out of jail.

(72). Report of November 29, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(73). NEW YORKER VOLKSZEITUNG, November 30, 1910.

(74). IBID. The VOLKSZEITUNG also reported that "Comrade Romm thanked Liebknecht for the interest which he has always shown in the Russian revolutionary movement." (IBID.)

(75). IBID. The editorial was entitled "Our Departing Guests" since it also included a tribute to Jonaz Daszynski who was leaving at the same time as Liebknecht.

(76). NEW YORK CALL, November 30, 1910. The interview was entitled "America is a Land of Foolish Dreams, Says Liebknecht."

(77). Andrew Carnegie, the millionaire steel magnate, set up a foundation and donated funds for the building of public libraries throughout the United States. Many workers objected to libraries bearing Carnegie's name because he had broken a strike of the steel workers at Homestead, Pennsylvania in 1892.

(78). Profit sharing was widely introduced in American industry at this time as a method to keep workers from joining trade unions. The United Steel Corporation, a House of Morgan dominated, open-shop corporation, featured profit sharing.

(79). NEW YORK CALL, November 30, 1910.

(80). Milwaukee had elected a Socialist administration with a Socialist Mayor and was regarded as a model for the rest of the country in municipal efficiency.

(81). Liebknecht was undoubtedly referring to the National Civic Federation, organized in 1901 by spokesmen for big business, with the purpose of erecting a community of interest between capital and labor, keeping the trade unions from moving in a radical direction and influencing them to reject Socialist ideas. Leaders of the American Federation of Labor and of the Railroad Brotherhoods and those of the big monopolies met and dined regularly together to discuss their common interests, while these same big businessmen were destroying the unions of the workers who belonged to the A.F. of L. The Socialist Party of America bitterly condemned the leaders of the American Federation of Labor for participating in the National Civic Federation. (See Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, New York, 1964, Vol. III, pp. 61-110.)

(82). NEW YORK CALL, November 30, 1910.

(83). IBID.

(84). IBID., December 21, 1910.

(85). Letter from Karl Liebknecht in VORWARTS, December 15, 1910, and reprinted in KARL LIEBKNECHT GESAMMELTE REDEN UND SCHRIFTEN, Band III, Februar bis December, 1910, Berlin, 1960, pp. 516-18.

(86). NEW YORK CALL, October 14, 1910.

(87). Report of November 14, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(88). Report of November 14, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(89). Kipnis, OP CIT., pp. 314, 357.

(90). Report of November 27, 1910, Berlin Polizeiprasidium, Potsdam Archives.

(91). NEW YORK CALL, November 11, 1917. The letter was written for the purpose of introducing S. Zimand, a young Rumanian student, to Socialists in the United States. Zimand, who arrived in this country in 1913, wrote extensively about Liebknecht.

(92). Wohlgemuth, OP. CIT., pp. 235-354.

(93). NEW YORK CALL, September 12, 1914; AMERICAN SOCIALIST, January 9, 1915; James Weinstein, THE DECLINE OF SOCIALISM IN AMERICA 1912-1925, New York, 1967, pp. 120-121.

(94). THE MASSES, February, 1915, p. 14. THE MASSES was founded in 1911 by the Socialist "Youth Movement," and included Max Eastman, John Reed, and Randolph Bourne. It was particularly famous for its revolutionary art.

(95). See VOICES OF REVOLT: SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF CHARLES E. RUTHENBERG, New York, 1928, pp. 14, 32-34.

"Liebknecht Memorial Meeting Arranged by Chicago Young Workers," went the headline over a story in the DAILY WORKER, Communist Party organ, in its issue of December 16, 1925. "A meeting to commemorate the work of Karl Liebknecht will be held in Chicago on Friday, Jan. 8 at Northwest Hall, corner North and Western avenues." These memorial meetings were annual events.

(96). Eugene V. Debs Scrap-Books, Vol. II, Books 18, 19.

(97). NATIONAL RIP-SAW, January, 1917, pp. 25-27.

(98). Ginger, OP. CIT., pp. 329, 374-78; OAKLAND WORLD, December, 1918 in Eugene V. Debs Scrap-Books, Vol. II, Book 21, p. 18.

In view of Debs' tremendous admiration for Liebknecht and for his uncompromising stand against the war, despite severe persecution he faced in prison, it seems incredible that the pro-war Socialists in the United States spread propaganda that Debs regretted his anti-war stand, had changed his position to one in favor of the war, and wished that the Socialists would do likewise. Debs, however, was compelled to deny this report and assert that this was a distortion of what he had said. (See NEW YORK CALL, June 4, 1918, and S.D. Levine, "Gene Debs, Dauntless Foe of Imperialist War," DAILY WORLD, October 22, 1976.)

(99). The book was published under the title MILITARISM, and carried an introduction by "A Personal Friend of Karl Liebknecht," who was S. Zimand. Zimand is listed as the author of the introduction in the NEW YORK CALL of November 11, 1917, which also featured an interview with Zimand. In the course of the interview, Zimand observed: "Liebknecht is a revolutionist. It so happens that his greatest renown has come through his anti-militaristic proclivities. But he hates the whole system of capitalism throughout the world, wherever it manifests itself. Liebknecht knows that there will be militarism as long as there is capitalism. That is why he is a social revolutionist, striving to root out the seeds of autocracy and plutocracy, and aiding in the reconstruction of the world on the basis of Socialism, in accordance with the principles of his famous father and countrymen, William Liebknecht, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels."

The CALL serialized Liebknecht's book on militarism.

(100). Quoted in introduction by Philip S. Foner to Dover edition of Karl Liebknecht's MILITARISM AND ANTI-MILITARISM, New York, 1974, p. 5.

(101). Quoted in introduction by Philip S. Foner to Dover edition of Karl Liebknecht, MILITARISM AND ANTI-MILITARISM, p. 6.

(102.) OAKLAND WORLD, December, 1918 in Eugene V. Debs Scrap-Books, Vol. II, Book 21, p. 18.

(103). Quoted in introduction by Philip S. Foner to Dover edition of Karl Liebknecht, MILITARISM AND ANTI-MILITARISM, p. 6.

(104). "Liebknecht Dead," THE LIBERATOR, March, 1919, pp. 16-17.

Recalling his visit to Liebknecht in the winter of 1914-15, Reed wrote of having asked him if he stood by his attitude of opposition to the war. "What else," said Liebknecht, "can a Socialist do?" (IBID., p. 16. See also Granville Hicks, JOHN REED: THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY, New York, 1936, pp. 164, 328.)

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