

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe

Vol. I, No. 15

Saturday, January 25, 1919

Price 3 Cents

Our Dead Comrades

KARL LIEBKNECHT and Rosa Luxemburg are dead, and in dying live forever.

Liebknecht murdered by the troops of a "Socialist" government, Rosa Luxemburg lynched by a wealthy mob; both slain that Capitalism may live. . . . "And they cried, 'Give us Barrabas!'"

Opposed by the, as yet, unconscious masses of the German workers and soldiers, acting for the sinister forces of Capitalism, disguised in the clothing of Moderate Socialism and Bourgeois Democracy, the Spartacides in Berlin were, for the moment, overwhelmed and dispersed. Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and their comrades were reported as fleeing to safety, but knowing that the masses were already awakening, that there was work still to be done, they distained flight, as they had always distained compromise, and proceeded with their task—the task of sweeping away the last foul vestige of the present system and in its stead building the new social order: the Brotherhood of the Workers of the World.

"Is life boon, if so it must befall that death, when'er he call, must call too soon," writes the poet, and one may pause to drop a tear by the biers, a tear of regret that these two champions of the world's oppressed passed on before they could see the fruition of the glorious hope that Revolutionary Russia gave to the world and which they themselves in turn inspired in the breasts of their comrades. But regrets are vain and belong to the weak. They died as they lived, battling against ignorance and tyranny.

Liebknecht met a fitting death for a man who never counted the odds in life. Single-handed he faced the might of Imperial Germany and, heedless alike of the scorn of the country or the hypocritical applause of the country's antagonists, he spoke against the war; he voiced the protest of the common people of all countries—the protest they were themselves afraid to whisper. When the war was at its height, when the arms of Imperial Germany were apparently victorious and the inert masses were glorifying the chains that bound them, he voiced the call to action. Dragged into prison he spoke from the prison cell in a voice that sounded round the world and revived the dying hope of his comrades in all lands.

He indignantly spurned compromise when Imperialism was rampant, as he spurned it when the bourgeois "Socialists" succeeded in betraying the proletarian masses in the days immediately preceding his death, and when captured by the troops of these "Socialists" he spurned the compromise of imprisonment. Though wounded and weak from the blows of the wealthy mob he made a dash for liberty against great odds. "Halt," shouted the soldiers; but though the guns were at their shoulders and their aim swift and sure he kept on, knowing that he was needed to urge the awakening masses into their final triumphant struggle. . . . And so he fell with three bullets in his body.

Rosa Luxemburg's death at the hands of a mob composed, according to the press, of the

sons and daughters of manufacturers and war profiteers, is revolting in its savagery and bestiality, but the brutality of the mob is in itself a tribute to the great mind, the powerful oratory and the uncompromising attitude of this great woman. Handicapped by a somewhat unprepossessing appearance and a shuffling gait, Rosa Luxemburg, Red Rosa, as the people called her, was probably the most powerful propagandist in Germany. Fearless and steadfast she also refused to compromise with Imperialism, and when released from the prison cell to which a frightened autocracy had condemned her, she, like Liebknecht, refused to compromise with the men who had betrayed the cause of Socialism. With the rest of the Spartacus Group she sounded the call to the proletariat to proceed with the work they had undertaken, to sweep away with the Kaiser and his throne the society of which he was the expression.

Immediately she was released from prison she began the work of organizing the propertyless workers of the cities and the landless peasants of the countryside. To the men and women, on whose behalf her powerful voice and vivid pen were never idle, she appealed; they followed her and swelled the ranks of the Spartacides. Even when in convention the Spartacus Group were wavering on the verge of compromise over the National Assembly it was she, supported by Karl Radek, the Bolshevik envoy, who pointed out the way and kept the convention true to its revolutionary purpose.

Little wonder that the wealthy mob, given the opportunity by the campaign of hatred and slander waged against her by the *Vorwaerts* and the majority Socialist organs generally, seized the chance to lynch her, for she was one of its most uncompromising foes. She fought privilege and exploitation wherever she found it, with all the strength of her passionate being she embraced the cause of the world's outcasts and there is something not unfitting that the body of Red Rosa should float along the dark waters of a canal, where the bodies of the women of the working class have so often floated when in death they have sought refuge from the persecution, prostitution, and hunger, that is so often their portion under this cursed system of Capitalism. Red Rosa!—her body goes to keep company with the bodies of the sisters in whose cause she spent her life. The roses will bloom red along the banks of that canal.

It is reported that the government "Socialists" fear that the Spartacides may exact vengeance for the deaths of their comrades; but they need not fear vengeance and if they were Socialists in anything else but name, they would not fear it for they would know that the cause for which Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg gave their lives knows nothing of vengeance. It is the bourgeoisie who awaken the passions of the mob. The Spartacides will not insult the memory of their dead by yielding to the baser instincts.

But though they need not fear that vengeance will be visited upon them they may well tremble,

for aroused to further effort by these brutal murders, the revolutionary Socialists will certainly march to the conquest of power sweeping these bourgeois "Socialists" away with the system of which they are a diseased growth. Revenge is no part of revolutionary Socialism but if necessity decrees that the new social order can only be born in the valley of the shadow of death, in the blood and tears of a world in labor, then the dark ways of that valley will be fearlessly trod and those who would cry halt to the forward march of the people's masses must take the consequences. The workers have suffered through the ages and in the agony of their suffering they have glimpsed the new civilization and towards it they march. They march not for vengeance, they come to bring peace not the sword, but they march ever forward, nothing will stay their steps.

Two great fighters are gone, but the cause of which they were such fearless and able advocates would be unworthy of them if it were for a moment to falter. They were a part of that cause which depends not on individualities, and in dying they give to it only a further impetus not alone in Germany, but throughout the entire world.

Powerful in life, they are invincible in death. Already the German proletariat, awakened to consciousness by the tragedy, is swinging into action, already the "Socialist" government talks of delaying the National Assembly. . . . The broad masses are stirring, stirring as do the leaves of the forest trees with the first faint breath of the coming storm. The clarion call is sounding, the workers are massing for the assault, the moment of action is approaching and above the masses, ever beckoning them on to the conquest of power, hovers the spirit of these two heroic souls.

One lies in a coffin, the other drifts with the slow moving waters of the canal, but in spirit they both march in the van of the ever growing army of the revolutionary proletariat.

And we of the Western world send our silent sympathy across the restless sea to our revolutionary comrades in this the hour of their sorrow and of ours. From out the jails of this country, the source from which our dead comrades would most appreciate it, rises the sympathy of those most worthy amongst us to sympathize.

Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, we who have called you Comrade and who strive with faltering steps, as you have so ably striven with firmer tread, to establish the Brotherhood of the World's Workers, salute you as you pass on. We salute you now in silent homage for the great work you have so fearlessly performed, even as the inert masses must in the coming days of emancipation render homage to the great cause in which you died. You have gone to join the noble army of the proletariat's martyred dead, you have well earned the name Spartacus.

In sorrow we salute you, when the class struggle flames in action we will remember you.