

Karl Liebknecht and the International

(Extracts from an article on International Socialism written in April 1917)

By Nicholai Lenin

The following article gives a glimpse of how Liebknecht was viewed by his great contemporary in the Revolutionary Socialist movement. Writing of the tendencies evinced in the different countries during the war and of the people who were the spokesmen of these tendencies Lenin reviews the movement the world over and divides it into three groups. It is in connection with these groups that he speaks of Liebknecht.

THE international Socialist and working class movements the world over have in the course of the war split into three groups. Whoever understands their tendencies, has analyzed them closely and still deserts the fight for real active internationalism, is a weakling and a fraud.

1.—Social-patriots, that is, Socialists in words and chauvinists in fact, who agree to defend their fatherland in an imperialistic war and particularly in this imperialistic war. These men are our class enemies. They have gone over to the bourgeois camp. They count among their numbers the majority of Socialist leaders in every nation. Plekhanov & Co. in Russia, Scheidemann in Germany, Renaudel, Guesde and Sembat in France, Bissolati & Co. in Italy, Hyndman, the Fabians and the Laborites in England, Branting & Co. in Sweden, Troelstra and his party in Holland, Stauning and his party in Denmark.

2.—The second group, that might be called the center, is hesitating between social-patriotism and actual internationalism. These people swear by all that is holy that they are Marxists, that they are internationalists, that they are for peace, for exerting pressure upon the government, for presenting all sorts of demands that show the desire of the nation for peace, they are peace propagandists and want a peace without annexations and they want peace with the social-patriots. The center is for union and against any sort of schism. The center is the heaven of petty bourgeois phrases of lip internationalism, of cowardly opportunism, of compromise with the social-patriots. The fact is that the center is not convinced of the necessity of a revolution against the government of its own country: it does not preach that kind of revolution; it does not wage an incessant fight for the revolution, and it resorts to the lowest, super-Marxist dodges to get out of the difficulty.

The social patriots are the enemies of our class, they are bourgeois in the midst of the labor movement. They represent layers of groups of the working class which have been practically bought by the bourgeoisie through better wages, positions of honor, etc., and which help their bourgeoisie to exploit and oppress smaller and weaker nations, and take part in the division of capitalistic spoils.

The members of the center group are routine worshippers, eaten up by the gangrene of legality, corrupted by the parliamentary comedy, bureaucrats accustomed to nice sinecures and steady jobs. Histo-

rically and economically, they do not represent any special stratum of society; they only represent the transition from the old fashioned labor movement as it was from 1871 to 1914, which rendered inestimable services to the proletariat through its slow, continued, systematic work of organization in a large, very large field, to the new movement which was objectively necessary at the time of the first world-wide war of Imperialism, and which has inaugurated the social-revolutionary era.

The main leader and representative of the center is Karl Kautsky who dominated the Second International (from 1889 to 1914), who has been responsible for the complete downfall of Marxism, who has showed an unheard-of lack of principles and the most pitiful hesitancy and betrayed the cause since August, 1914.

Among the centrists are Kautsky, Haase, Ledebour, and the so-called labor group in the Reichstag; in France, Longuet, Pressman and the so-called minority; in England, Philip Snowden, Ramsay MacDonald and other leaders of the Independent Labor Party, and a part of the British Socialist Party; Morris Hillquit and many others in the United States; Turati, Treves, Modigliani and others in Italy, Robert Grimm and others in Switzerland; Victor Adler & Co. in Austria; the Mensheviks, Axelrod, Martov, Cheidse, Tseretelli and others in Russia.

It goes without saying that some individual members of those groups go unconsciously from social-patriotism to centerism, and *vice versa*. Every Marxist knows, however, that classes retain their character regardless of the free migration of people from one group to another, in spite of all the efforts which are made to blend class or harmonize tendencies.

3.—The third, truly internationalist, is most accur-

ately represented by the so called "Zimmerwald Left."

It is characterized by its complete schism from the social-patriots and the centrists. It has been waging a relentless war against its own imperialistic government and its own imperialistic bourgeoisie. Its motto is: "Our worst enemy is at home." It has fought ruthlessly the nice and respectable social pacifists' phraseology, for those people who are social pacifists in words are bourgeois pacifists in deeds: bourgeois pacifists dream of an everlasting peace which shall not be preceded by the overthrow of capitalist domination. They have been employing every form of sophistry to demonstrate the impossibility, the inopportunities of keeping up the proletarian class struggle or of starting a proletarian Social Revolution in connection with the present war.

The members of this group in Germany are known as the Spartacus or International Group, to which Karl Liebknecht belongs. Karl Liebknecht is the best known representative of that tendency and of the new real, proletarian international.

Karl Liebknecht called upon the workingmen and soldiers of Germany to turn their guns upon their own government. Karl Liebknecht did that openly from the tribune of parliament, the Reichstag. Then he went out on Potsdamer Platz, one of the largest public squares in Berlin, with a batch of unlawfully printed proclamations to head a demonstration that shouted: "Down with the government." He was arrested and sentenced to hard labor. He is now serving his term in a German jail, like hundreds if not thousands of other real Socialists of Germany who have been jailed for waging war against war.

Karl Liebknecht attacked mercilessly in his speeches and his writings not only the Plekhanovs and the Potresofs of Germany (Scheidemann, Legien, David, etc.), but also the centrists of Germany, the German Cheidse and Tseretellis, men like Kautsky, Haase, Ledebour and others.

Karl Liebknecht and his friend, Otto Ruhle, alone among 110 Socialist deputies in the Reichstag, disregarded the party discipline, destroyed the harmonious union with the centrists and the chauvinists, and fought everybody. Liebknecht alone really represents Socialism, the proletarian cause, the proletarian revolution. The rest of the German Social Democracy, to quote the apt words of Rosa Luxemburg, also a member and leader of the Spartacus Group, is "a stinking carrion."

A Tribute from the Far East

By Sen Katayama

This tribute to the man and woman who have died that the toiling masses of the world may realize life in its fulness, is perhaps one of the reddest of the many flowers that are strewn on their graves from all over the world, for it comes from one embodying in his being the reality of the International, one who in a long life of struggle against great odds has always remained true to revolutionary Socialism. It is the new soul of the East crying to Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg as they pass on that their sacrifice has not been in vain. It is the voice of the Oriental races pledging solidarity with the Caucasian and is prophetic of the new era of the Brotherhood of the Workers of the World.

ment. This being the case we can understand why they were mobbed.

We mourn our loss the more that these two brave comrades were murdered at the very moment that the power and influence of the revolutionary movement is about to sweep all over the European continent. The loss may temporarily set back the revolution, at least in Berlin, but henceforth these two stalwarts, murdered by Scheidemann, Ebert & Co., will live in the very life of the world's proletariat and lead, even more successfully to the final victory of the prole-

tarian Socialist Revolution. We, the left wing Socialists, will never cease our protest against the crime of majority Socialism in Germany in murdering our two comrades after they were arrested.

I, personally feel infinite sorrow at the death of Rosa Luxemburg, because I knew her intimately, stayed in the Hotel Posen at Amsterdam in 1904 when she was there, often took our meals at the same table and talked together as we were, then, the left wing. She interpreted my English speech at the Congress, as did her comrade and co-worker in Germany Klara Zetkin. She translated my words into French while Klara Zetkin translated into German.

The Ebert government may think that murdering the opposing leaders, together with the support of the "loyal" army and the bourgeois classes, will keep it in power, but these very murders seal its fate and reveal it as the arch enemy of Socialism and the toiling masses. They are bound to fall before the oncoming Social Revolution directed by the mighty spirit of Bolshevism.

We sorrow at the loss of our great international comrades, but at the same time we are sure of our success in the coming Social Revolution that will establish temporarily in every nation a labor dictatorship. In this great work our comrades Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in their mighty personalities will do ever greater and wider service.

THE international Socialist movement has lost two of its greatest figures in Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The loss to our movement is greatest in that it comes just at this moment. Scheidemann & Co. killed the Second International by supporting Kaiserism and its war, they betrayed the cause of Socialism and the proletariat, but now they have committed their greatest crime by murdering two of our foremost leaders of the Third International.

Varied reports concerning the death of our two comrades reach us through the bourgeois press, which has endeavored to discredit them, but it cannot be denied that they both were completely in the hands of Scheidemann, Ebert & Co., and we can easily imagine both were wilfully murdered by these "Socialists," through their so-called loyalists. The Independent Socialists of Berlin assert that Liebknecht did not attempt to escape but was killed by the soldiers escorting him. "Liebknecht," the New York Times reports, "cool in facing death, smiled derisively as he heard the howls of the Berlin mob, remarking to the soldiers on guard: 'They would kill Jesus Christ, Himself.' He was very pale but otherwise showed no fear."

The hotel near where Rosa Luxemburg was lynched and Karl Liebknecht mobbed is located in the most fashionable quarter of the city, populated by the classes who feared most the "Red" Socialist move-