

**MILITARISM.
[TORONTO]**

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Militarism. [Toronto] by Karl Liebknecht

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KARL LIEBKNECHT

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BY
KARL LIEBKNECHT



WILLIAM BRIGGS
TORONTO

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"He sowed the seed that freedom men might reap."

This book, which is now presented to American readers for the first time, has a unique history, and forms a vital part of Liebknecht's long struggle against militarism. In September, 1906, Dr. Karl Liebknecht, the author, delivered a lecture on "Militarism" at a conference of young people in Germany. The revised lecture was published in book form and the most important portions appear in the following pages. For some time, the German authorities paid little heed to it, and it was not until April 23, 1907, that the book was confiscated and the author charged with treason.

Liebknecht's trial began on the ninth of October, 1907, and lasted three days. The defendant was found guilty and sentenced to a year and a half of imprisonment. In sentencing him, the

Imperial Court declared that Liebknecht aimed at the abolition of the standing army, and that this army was an integral part of the nation's constitution. In one statement, made in the latter part of his lecture, he had theorized concerning the possible future activities of the troops in behalf of the coming revolution, asserting that these activities might be regarded as the logical result of the demoralization of the military spirit. From this statement, which was a purely theoretical hypothesis, the Imperial Court concluded that Liebknecht's intention was to injure the morale of the army. The destruction of this morale, it declared, could be brought about only by forcible means, and the use of such means was but the first step in the destruction of the constitution.

The court paid absolutely no attention to the statement of the author that only lawful means should be used in bringing about the change, and that no agitation should be conducted which would incite the soldiers directly or indirectly to disobedience. The Socialist Party, Liebknecht had maintained, as in the past, should energetic-

ally defend the private soldiers and the non-commissioned officers, should represent their material and professional interests in the press and in parliament and should endeavor tactfully to win the sympathies of these circles. In such remarks a German Imperial Court discovered high treason!

The trial was one of the most sensational ever held in Europe. The Kaiser, it was afterwards learned, was *kept constantly in touch with the progress of the trial by a special wire*. The attorney general urged the accused to plead guilty and promised, if this were done, to ask the court for clemency. To this plea, Liebknecht quickly retorted, "I take entire responsibility for every word I have written." On the second day of the trial, the defendant declared in open court that he was convinced that a verdict of guilty had already been decided on. His address to the judges was one of the clearest, most incisive and boldest attacks ever made against German militarism.

"The aim of my life," he declared, "is the overthrow of monarchy, as well as the emancipation

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

Liebkecht's courageous stand on this occasion was rewarded by a sentence of a year and a half in a military prison, as before stated. As a sharp rebuke to this sentence, the working people of Berlin promptly nominated and elected him, while still in prison, as their representative for the Prussian Landtag. It was in the Landtag that Liebkecht started his real campaign against Prussian militarism. His attacks against the system were bitter. Time without number he was called to order by the chair; frequently he was removed from the floor of the chamber.

He represented the working people of Berlin, as well, in the Common Council, and in 1912, the citizens of Potsdam-Spandau who were em-

employed for the most part in government ammunition works, selected him as their representative in the Reichstag. I saw Liebknecht during the great campaign preceding his election. He described the methods employed by the government to defeat him. The government endeavored to show that he was anti-patriotic, because he had failed to uphold its hands in the Morocco affair. To this the workers gave a deaf ear. The next move was an attempt to terrorize the state employees. The authorities even went so far as to make a ruling prohibiting them from voting for him—on the ground that he was an enemy of the state. However, the dissatisfaction with the government was great. The campaign of intimidation failed and Liebknecht was elected by an overwhelming vote, to the intense joy of those who knew and loved him.

I saw the surging crowd before the office of the Berlin *Vorwärts* the night of the election, and heard the wild applause when announcement of his election was made. A young workingman exclaimed to those who were around him: "The