

Election Appeal on Behalf of Wilhelm Liebknecht (August 30, 1888)

Abstract

This election appeal calls for supporters of the Social Democratic leader Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) to go "To the ramparts!" At the time, Liebknecht was the SPD's candidate in a Reichstag by-election, held in Berlin on August 30, 1888. His place of residence was given as Borsdorf, a village outside Leipzig, because he had been banished from Leipzig in 1881 under the "minor state of siege" provision in the Anti-Socialist Law. Liebknecht had previously represented a Reichstag constituency in Saxony (1867–1871 and 1874–1881) and another in Hesse-Nassau (1881–1887). During the legislative session of 1887–1890, Bismarck's "cartel" of right-wing parties held a slim majority in the Reichstag. As this appeal illustrates, Liebknecht targeted many enemies and government policies in his effort for reelection, including the Conservative and left-liberal parties, the exceptional laws directed against Social Democracy, the taxation of consumer goods, and unfair suffrages at the state and municipal level. Positive points included protection for working women and youths, the demand for freedoms of coalition, speech, and the press, free compulsory education, and a "normal workday" (whereas the Social Democrats' proposed Workmen's Protection Bill of January 1885 had called on the state to establish a maximal ten-hour workday, the party's Erfurt Program of 1891 demanded an eight-hour workday). After winning the Berlin seat in August 1888, Liebknecht represented the constituency until his death on August 7, 1900. (He also sat for the SPD in the Saxon House of Deputies from 1879–1885 and 1889–1892.) Liebknecht's campaign in the summer of 1888 was fought under difficult circumstances. Whereas the Anti-Socialist Law had been applied in a "mild" way—the so-called milder Praxis—in the mid-1880s, after 1887 the persecution of socialists was actually ratcheted up until the Anti-Socialist Law finally expired on September 30, 1890.

Source

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Source: "To the ramparts!" – SPD election appeal on behalf of its candidate Wilhelm Liebknecht. Leaflet for the by-election in the 6th electoral district. August 30, 1888.

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