

The Revolutionary Age

Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe.

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Issued Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday
 885 Washington St., Boston, Mass.

Saturday, November 16, 1918

THE WAR AGAINST RUSSIA

The Soviet Commissaire of Foreign Affairs Tchicherin on October 24 sent a note to President Wilson saying:

"As a condition of the armistice, during which peace negotiations shall be begun, you in your note to Germany demanded evacuation of occupied territories. We are ready, Mr. President, to conclude an armistice on this condition, and request you to inform us when you intend to withdraw your troops from Murman, Archangel and Siberia."

There has been absolutely no official answer to this request. The newspapers have jeered Tchicherin as "cheeky," while proposing an invasion of Russia by way of Constantinople and the Black Sea.

The Boston "American," in its issue of November 14 published a Washington dispatch which declared among other things:

"It can be stated authoritatively that American troops now in Russia, both in Siberia and in the Archangel territory, will remain for an indefinite period. In addition, as soon as conditions in Germany make certain the release of thousands of troops, the expedition in Russia will be reinforced. It will be the intention of the Allied governments and the United States to win Russia back to her senses through sympathy and not further bloodshed."

Sympathy, and not further bloodshed? Then why keep the troops in Russia, and reinforce them? Bullets are peculiar agents of sympathy.

Withdraw from Russia!

AT THE "KERENSKY" STAGE

The German revolution is marching swiftly on its way, much more swiftly than the proletarian revolution in Russia. But, while compressed into a shorter period of time, its stages are paralleling the Russian revolution.

When, about five weeks ago, the revolutionary crisis developed definitely into revolutionary action, the German bourgeoisie attempted to prevent a collapse of its rule by calling upon the Kaiser to abdicate, and by placing in the cabinet Scheidemann and two other Socialists of his traitorous type. Instead of averting revolution, this action simply hastened the revolution, which rushed onward with a speed positively feverish.

The bourgeois-"Socialist" coalition government was intended to halt the onward march of the proletarian revolution—precisely the purpose of the bourgeois-"Socialist" coalition government organized in Russia on May 19, 1917. Government coalition between the bourgeoisie and the moderate Socialists everywhere is used by a desperate bourgeoisie to deceive the militant proletariat,—in France, England, Russia, and now in Germany. The awakening proletariat, at first, does not distinguish between moderate, "government" Socialism and revolutionary Socialism; but the inevitable logic of the developing class struggle compels the proletariat to distinguish between the real and the false.

The bourgeois-"Socialist" coalition government, headed by Imperial Chancellor Max, was shattered into bits by the impact of revolutionary action. It could not reconcile the Revolution with the bourgeois government, nor the bourgeois government with the Revolution. The proletariat was not appeased by giving Scheidemann a share of honor in the government,—the same government which had ruthlessly oppressed the proletariat and waged an infamous war of conquest. The same Scheidemann who had mobilized the bourgeoisie and workers in support of the war.

This government, the bastard product of an illegitimate union of Capitalism and "Socialism" could not secure the confidence of the masses. The revolts of the masses, instead of being ended, were multiplied, and the bourgeois-"Socialist" government collapsed. The new government, with Ebert as Chancellor, appointed by grace of Imperial Chancellor Max, now marched upon the stage of events.

What is this Ebert government? Ebert is a moderate Socialist of the Scheidemann persuasion, an influential member of the Social Democratic Party. The Social Democratic Party during four and one half years of war supported the government and the war, declared that the proletariat owed a duty to the state, and was consistently counter-revolutionary,—acting equally against the oncoming proletarian revolution in Germany and the accomplished proletarian revolution in Russia. In tendency, and as an historical category, the Ebert government corresponds to the Kerensky "Socialist" government in Russia.

The Kerensky government was a "Socialist" government, but it retained the fundamental bourgeois relations of government, of industry, and of society. A "Socialist" government, the Kerensky government played the miserable farce of "unity of all the parties,"—but excluding the revolutionary proletariat. The Kerensky government was a "Socialist" government, yet it acted against Socialism and the revolutionary proletariat. The Ebert government represents the identical tendency.

The Kerensky government marked the final desperate manoeuvres of the Russian bourgeoisie to retain its supremacy by using the camouflage of Socialism. It marked a period of transition, when the final forces of the class struggle prepared for action. It was impotent to act, deprived of all real power. The most important feature of the Kerensky period was the decision to convoke an All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which when it convened decreed all power to the Soviets.

In Germany, the Kerensky-Ebert government occupies the stage of events, but the actual destiny of the Revolution is being determined by the organization and policy of the Councils of Workmen and Soldiers, the instrument of the revolutionary masses. The division is now clearly apparent, as in Russia,—the moderates demand support of the Provisional Government and the Constituent Assembly, while the radicals demand all power to the Councils. It is this division and the struggle it provokes that will determine the course of events.

The revolution in Germany, as in Russia, was made by the revolutionary mass action of the soldiers and workers, snapping asunder the fetters of authority and dragging Kaiserism down in ruins. The instrument of action of the revolutionary masses is the Council, of Workers, of Soldiers, of Peasants. These Councils are necessarily determined in a struggle for an economic and social revolution, while the provisional government wants to tinker with political forms.

The moderates are united in favor of the Constituent Assembly, the radicals are uniting in favor of the immediate convocation of a National Congress of Councils.

There is no revolution unless it is a mass revolution; not simply in the sense that the masses make the revolution, but in the sense that the masses definitely march up on the stage of administrative events, consciously become the government. This can be accomplished only by the German Councils of Workmen and Soldiers being transformed from instruments of revolutionary action into organs of revolutionary government.

Bourgeois democracy has been conquered in Germany: the capitalists and the parliamentary republic are in power. Should the revolution cease now, it will have proven a failure, since the revolution will be a success only if it establishes a Socialist Republic by overthrowing the bourgeois parliamentary forms of government and erecting the new Socialist "state" of the organized producers—a government of the Councils.

The Revolution will conquer by means of the economic and social revolutionary tendency of the masses conquering all power for the proletariat, and annihilating the dominantly political

tendency of the bourgeois liberals and the petty bourgeois Socialists.

Three groups are clearly apparent in the revolutionary movement in Germany:

1.—The Social-Democratic Party, the party of Ebert, Scheidemann & Co. This party is petty bourgeois in tendency and policy, aspiring simply after bourgeois democracy. At its Wuertzburg Convention last year, Scheidemann expressed the policy of the party by declaring that, in spite of all conflicts with the bourgeois state, the proletariat is bound to it, and that the coming of Socialism is a process of all the classes and not of the proletariat alone. This group represents petty bourgeois democracy, and is counter-revolutionary.

2.—The Independent Socialist Party, the party of Haase, Ledebour & Co. This party, organized in the spring of 1917, represents a secession from the Social-Democratic Party on the issue of support of the government and the war. It is not a definitely, uncompromisingly revolutionary party in tendency, being still dominated by the ideology of the older Socialism. But it is not a unified party; it may develop a more revolutionary policy under the pressure of events, or, more likely, it may split, one faction going over to Ebert & Co., the other faction going over to the revolutionary Socialists.

3.—The revolutionary Socialists, not, until recently at least, organized into a political party, but represented by the Spartacus Group and the Group Internationale, the movement of Karl Liebknecht, Otto Ruhle, Rosa Luxemburg and Franz Mehring,—the conscious, uncompromising Bolsheviks of Germany. These groups represent the tendency of the revolutionary proletariat. Their propaganda was a propaganda of Social Revolution. Three weeks ago, while Independent Socialists in the Reichstag talked of defence against the excessive demands of Poland, Ruhle declared: "Only Social Revolution can settle these problems of peace." These Socialists are in favor of the government of Councils, and have unreservedly and enthusiastically greeted the Russian Soviet Republic.

Germany is at the "Kerensky" stage, but much more acutely developed. The Revolution in Germany, said Lenin one year and a half ago, will be slow, very slow in starting; but once it starts, it will march on with the speed of a locomotive. In two weeks, the Germans secured what it took the Russians two months to secure—a bourgeois-"Socialist" government; in five weeks the Germans secured what it took the Russians five months to secure—a Kerensky government; it took the Russians three months to overthrow their Kerensky; how long will it take the Germans to overthrow their Kerensky government and place all power in the Councils of the revolutionary proletariat?

In its proclamation of a republic, the Schleswig-Holstein Council of Workmen and Soldiers said: "The political power is in our hands. A provisional government is in process of formation. Our aim is a free, Socialist Republic along lines that will secure peace for the future."

French Socialists demand that the prevailing military administration of affairs shall end immediately; that a general election be held at once to take action on problems of reconstruction; that union labor shall participate in the work of reconstruction; that international Socialist Congress be held and labor represented at the Peace Conference. These are moderate demands; the proletariat and Socialism in France will yet speak in more aggressive and decisive terms.

The National Civic Federation warns against "anarchistic agitation," and proposes that using the Red Flag shall be prohibited, and that the emergency espionage laws shall be retained. By "anarchist" the Federation means any person who does not thank God three times a day for a system that produces Morgans and Rockefellers, corrupting wealth and degrading poverty. The espionage laws are stranglers of freedom of expression: they should end as the war ends. Repeal the espionage laws!