

"All Is Quiet In Berlin!"

By Rosa Luxembour

Her last Article

"ALL is quiet in Warsaw", declared minister Sabastiany in the Paris Chamber of Deputies in 1831, when the hordes of Suworov, after the capture of Prague, a suburb of Warsaw, entered the Polish capital and began their murderous suppression of the people in revolt.

"All is quiet in Berlin" declares the triumphant bourgeoisie press, declare Ebert and Noske, declare the officers of the "victorious army" whom the bourgeoisie mobs joyfully greet on the streets with floating placards and outbursts of "Hurrah". The glory of German arms is saved before the world's history. Defeated on the fields of Flanders and the Argonne, they restored their reputation by winning a victory over 3000 Spartacans in the building of the "Vorwärts". The times of the first glorious entrance of the German army into Belgium, the times of General von Emmich, the conqueror of Liege, pale before the heroic deeds of Reinhard & Co. on the streets of Berlin. The killed emissaries who intended to negotiate the surrender of the "Vorwärts", mutilated beyond recognition by the butts of guns, mutilated to such an extent that it is impossible to identify the corpses; the prisoners shot in such manner that the walls are sprinkled with their brains—looking on these valiant deeds, who will remember the shameful defeats sustained in the war with the Frenchmen, Englishmen and Americans? Spartacans—that is the enemy; and Berlin—that is the place where our officers are victorious; the "workingman" Noske—that is the general who is able to achieve victories where General Ludendorff was unsuccessful.

Who does not recollect the drunken victories of those that restored order in Paris; who does not recollect the bacchanalia of the bourgeoisie upon the corpses of the fallen defenders of the Commune, that same bourgeoisie which had just capitulated ignominiously before Prussia and handed over the capital to the foreign foe. What a flaming courage inspired the bourgeois youngsters, the gilded youth, the titled officers against the badly armed and starved Paris proletarians, against their unprotected wives and children. With what an ardour these sons of Mars, who humbly prostrated themselves before the foreign foe, now displayed their martial courage by hurling upon the helpless prisoners and the vanquished their brutally cruel vengeance.

"All is quiet in Warsaw"—"All is quiet in Paris."—"All is quiet in Berlin".—Such are the announcements of the upholders of law and order, re-echoing every half century from one world center of the struggle to the other. And the triumphant "victors" do not notice that the order which is maintained by periodic bloody massacres is impelled to move uninterruptedly toward its historic doom, its total destruction. What does the last "Spartacan week" in Berlin signify, what has it given, what does it teach? Even amid the struggle, amid the shrieks of the counter-revolution, the revolutionary proletariat must take an account of what happened, must measure the past and all its consequences with an historic compass. The revolution cannot lose time; through the open graves, through "victories" and "defeats" it sweeps onward to its great goal. To follow its movements consciously is the first task of the fighters of international Socialism. Was it possible in this clash to attain a final victory for the revolutionary proletariat, was the overthrow of Ebert and

Scheidemann and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship possible? Of course not, if we soberly consider the various moments which have a decisive effect upon this question. The weak spot of the revolution at present—the inadequate political maturity of the soldier masses which still permit themselves to be used by the officers for anti-working class and counter-revolutionary purposes—is already sufficient proof that in this clash there was no chance of a lasting victory for the revolution. On the other hand, the insufficient maturity of the soldier masses is a symptom of the general immaturity of the German revolution. The village whence comes a considerable part of the soldier masses remains as yet little touched by the revolution. Berlin is still quite isolated from the rest of Germany. True, the revolutionary provincial centers—in the Rhineland and the adjacent province, in Brunswick, in Saxony, in Wurtemberg—they are heart and soul with the Berlin proletariat. But there is still lacking the co-ordination of action which would considerably increase the blow and the offensive might of the Berlin working classes. Besides, the economic struggle—this chief volcanic source from which the class struggle derives its energy—is as yet in the primary stage of development.

Hence follows the conclusion that at this moment it was impossible to expect a lasting victory. Does it mean that last week's struggle was a "mistake"? Yes, if we admit the assumption of a premeditated plan of action, of a so-called "rebellion". What was the starting point of last week's fighting? In all former cases, as the 6th of December, as the 24th of December—a dastardly government provocation. Just like the bloody bath perpetrated upon the unarmed demonstrators on Schosasstrasse, like the massacre of the sailors, just so now an attempt upon the life of the chief of police was the cause of all subsequent events. The revolution does not operate according to a thought-out plan, in the open field of battle, according to a technical plan of "strategists". Its enemies also display initiative, they generally display even more initiative than the revolution.

Facing the fact of the Ebert-Scheidemann provocation, the revolutionary workers were compelled to take up arms. Yes, the honor of the revolution demanded an immediate energetic repulse of this attack, otherwise the counter-revolution would find courage for a further offensive, while the revolutionary lines of the proletariat and the moral prestige of the German revolution in the "International" would have been shaken.

An immediate resistance developed among the Berlin working masses with such conscious energy that the moral victory was at once on the side of the "street". But such is the internal vital law of the revolution that it must not stop at the point of an initial success, remaining inert and passive. The best means of parrying is a powerful counter blow. This fundamental law of fighting is especially applicable to the revolution. It is self-evident and furnishes an irrefutable proof of the healthy instinct, the internal vital force of the Berlin proletariat, and therefore the workers were not satisfied with the re-instatement of Eichorn, but instinctively proceeded to occupy the other strongholds of the counter-revolution: the bourgeois

press, the official Wolff bureau, the "Vorwärts". These steps taken by the masses were the result of their instinctive consciousness that the counter-revolution, too, would not submit to the defeat which it had sustained, but would bring about a final test of strength between the contending forces.

Here, too, we discover one of the great laws of the revolution by which is shattered into dust the clever trickery and patented knowledge of the Independents, who in every clash endeavor to find an excuse for retreating. It is sufficient to formulate the fundamental problem of the revolution—and in this revolution it is the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann regime, the first obstacle to the triumph of Socialism,—and this problem will again and again reappear in all its acuteness. Each separate episode of the struggle, as if with the fatality of a law of nature, places at the fore this problem in its entirety, though the revolution might be entirely unprepared and the existing conditions utterly inappropriate. "Down with Ebert-Scheidemann!"—this slogan invariably reappears in each revolutionary crisis as the one unifying formula for all the separate conflicts, and, due to its intrinsic objective logic, this slogan, whether you like it or not, tends of itself to sharpen each separate episode of the struggle.

From this contradiction between the intensity of the problem and the inadequacy of the conditions required for its solution at the initial phase of revolutionary development, arises the cause wherefore the separate episodes of the revolutionary struggle end in formal defeats. But a revolution is the only form of war where the final victory culminates from a whole series of "defeats".

What is shown by the history of modern revolutions and Socialism? The first flame of the class struggle in Europe: the uprising of the Lyons weavers in 1831 ended in bitter defeat. The Chartist movement in England—in defeat. The rising of the Paris proletariat in June 1848 ended in a terrible defeat. The Paris Commune was brought to an end by a crushing defeat. The entire road to Socialism—as far as the revolutionary struggle is concerned—is paved with defeats.

And nevertheless, this same history leads uninterruptedly, step by step, to the final victory. Where would we be without those defeats, from which we derive our historic experience, learning, fighting power and idealism? Now, on the eve of the last defeat, in the proletarian class struggle, we actually base ourselves on those defeats which are all supremely important for us, each one of them forming a part of our strength and our consciousness.

In this respect the revolutionary struggle is the exact opposite of the parliamentary struggle. We in Germany have had for forty years steady parliamentary "victories", we marched from victory to victory. But as a result in the great historic test of the 4th of August 1914—an annihilating political and moral defeat, an unparalleled smash, an unprecedented bankruptcy. All revolutions have thus far given us only defeats, but these inevitable defeats are the surest guarantee of the future final victory.

True, on one condition. The question is under what circumstances occurred each defeat: was it on account of the fact that the

(Continued on page 10)