

Order Out of Chaos—By Leon Trotsky

The article printed below was issued as a pamphlet by the Supreme Council of Soviets in Moscow in 1919. It was written at the front lines of the Civil War by the head of the Red Army. It is particularly appropriate today when Europe and the world has once again been plunged into the bloody chaos of the Second World War.—EDITOR.

From the lands where they were hurled by the German plunderers, German soldiers are streaming homeward. The German soldiers are attacked by half-baked Polish regiments; they are disarmed and sometimes beaten. The Anglo-French and the Americans tighten their death-grip on Germany and take careful count of her feverish pulse. This does not prevent them from demanding that her government send the remnants of German troops to engage Soviet Russia in battle and prevent the latter from liberating territories occupied by German imperialism.

The Belgians, whose country was only yesterday crucified by German imperialism, are today seizing purely German Rhénish provinces.

Semi-pauperized, Roumanians, despoiled by their ruling swindlers, whose capital is alternately the prey of Germans and the Anglo-French, are themselves seizing Bessarabia, Transylvania and Bukovina.

Trans-oceanic American regiments sit on the tip of our famine-stricken and icy North wondering why they were brought there.

The streets of Berlin, only so recently proud of its severe orderliness, are swept by the sanguinary waves of civil war. (1) French troops have landed in Odessa; (2) while great areas of France itself are occupied by American, English, Australian, and Canadian troops who treat Frenchmen like they would colonials.

Poland, resurrected after almost a century and a half of oblivion, strains with a kind of feverish impatience to engage the Ukraine and Prussia in battle and provokes Soviet Russia.

American Colossus Bestrides Europe's Ruins

The American President Wilson, a phillistine and hypocrite on whom the white stitching still shows, an oily (Quaker-vegetable-oil) Tartuffe criss-crosses blood-drenched Europe as the supreme representative of morality, as the Messiah of the American Dollar; punishing, pardoning, and arranging the fate of the peoples. Everybody beckons to him, invites him, implores him: the king of Italy, the reigning, perfidious Georgian Mensheviks, the debased and solicitous Scheidemann, the mangy tiger of the French middle class, Clemenceau, all the strong boxes of the London City and even Swiss midwives. With his trouser-cuffs primly turned up, Wilson walks over the bloodpools of Europe with the blessings of Wall Street that has so well played the last stake of the European lottery, he unites Jugo-Slavs with Serbians; appraises the crown of the Hapsburgs; between two pinches of snuff rounds out Belgium at the expense of plundered Germany; and ponders the possibility of drafting orang-outangs and baboons to save Christian culture from the barbarism of the Bolsheviks.

Europe resembles a madhouse. And at first glance it seems as if the inmates themselves are unaware half an hour in advance whose throat they will cut and whom they will next embrace. But in the stormy waves of this chaos one irrefutable lesson is to be discerned—the criminal responsibility of the bourgeois world. Everything now occurring in Europe was prepared for during the past generations, by its economic system, its state relations, its system of militarism; by the morality and philosophy of the ruling classes, by the religion of all the priests. The monarchy, the aristocracy, the clergy, the bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie, the professional intellectuals, the masters of wealth, and the rulers of states—it is they who have prepared and are preparing those incomprehensible events which make old "cultured", "Christian" Europe seem like a madhouse.

Imperialism, Nationalism, Communism

The European "chaos" is chaos in form only; in substance expressed in it are the supreme laws of history which is now destroying the old to make way for the new. The population of Europe now uses the very same rifles in fighting for different tasks and different programs which correspond to different historical epochs. Basically they are reducible to three: Imperialism, Nationalism, Communism.

This war began as a gang-fight between the great capitalist bandits over seizures and the division of the world—this is precisely the sum and substance of imperialism. But in order to plunge the many-millioned masses into the struggle, to bait them against one another, to fan in them the spirit of hatred and fury, "ideas" and "moods" dear to the deceived and doomed-to-destruction masses were required.

This hypnotic medium at the disposal of the imperialist bandits was provided by the idea of nationalism. The reciprocal bond of the people who speak one and the same language, belong to one and the same nation—that constitutes a great force. This bond did not make itself felt so long as people lived a patriarchal life in their villages or provincial regions. But the more bourgeois production developed, the more it tied village to village and the provinces with the cities, all the more did the people drawn into its maelstrom learn to value a common tongue—this great medium of material and spiritual communion. Capitalism sought to entrench itself first and foremost on a national foundation and engendered powerful nationalist movements: in atomized Germany, in dismembered Italy, in harrowed Poland, in Austria-Hungary, among the Balkan Slavs, in Armenia.

By means of revolutions and wars, by hook or crook with a hole here and a patch there, the European bourgeoisie solved part of the national problem. A unified Italy, a unified Germany, without German-Austria but, by way of compensation scores of kings, were created. The peoples of Russia were bound together by the steel tentacles of Czarism. Austria and the Balkans were convulsed by a bitter internecine struggle of nations who were



doomed to live in close proximity but were incapable of establishing peaceful forms of collaboration.

Capitalism Plunges Into Slaughter

Meanwhile, capitalism quickly outgrew the national framework. The national state served it only as a springboard for the leap. Capitalism soon became cosmopolitan—at its disposal were world-wide means of communication—its agents and servants spoke in all tongues and it sought to plunder the peoples of the earth regardless of their language, color of skin, or religion of their priests. While the middle and petty bourgeoisie, together with broad circles of the working class, still continued to remain in the atmosphere of national ideology, capitalism developed into imperialism, into an urge for world domination.

The world slaughter from its very beginning presented the terrible spectacle of the combination of imperialism with nationalism; the omnipotent clique of financial capital and heavy industry succeeded in harnessing to their chariot all the feelings, passions and moods produced by the bond of nationalism, by the unity of language, by common historical tradition and above all, by common existence in a national state. Taking to the highway for robberies, seizures, and manslaughter, the imperialists of each contending camp proved capable of instilling in the popular masses the idea that the struggle presumably involved national independence and national culture. Just as bankers and big manufacturers exploit small shopkeepers and workers, so imperialism subjected completely to itself the nationalist and chauvinist feelings and goals by pretending that it was serving and safeguarding them. It was this terrible psychological charge that fed and sustained the great slaughter for four and one half years.

Communism a Unifying Force

But Communism emerged on the scene. It had in its time likewise arisen on national soil simultaneously with the awakening of the workers' movement at the very first and still uncertain beat of the capitalist machine. With the doctrine of Communism the proletariat opposed itself to the bourgeoisie. And while the latter soon became imperialist and a force for plundering the world, the advanced proletariat, on the contrary, became internationalist and a force for world unification.

The imperialist bourgeoisie represented numerically an insignificant minority of the nation. It maintained itself, it ruled and dominated so long as it was able through the ideas and moods of nationalism to keep broad petty bourgeois and working masses in thrall. The internationalist proletariat constituted another minority at the very opposite pole. It had every justification for believing that it could tear the majority of the people from the spiritual yoke of imperialism.

But up to the last great slaughter of the peoples even the best and most perspicacious leaders of the proletariat never suspected how powerfully the consciousness of the popular masses was swayed by the prejudices of bourgeois state rule and the habits of national conservatism. All this was revealed in July, 1914, which without exaggeration became the blackest month in world history; not only because kings and the stockbrokers were able to unleash the war but because they succeeded in gaining inner sway over hundreds of millions of popular masses, duping them, spinning a web about them, hypnotizing them and

psychologically drawing them into their murderous enterprise.

Internationalism which had for decades served as the official banner of the most powerful working class organization, seemed to have disappeared instantaneously in the fire and smoke of the world slaughter. Later it re-appeared as a weak and flickering tiny flame among disconnected, isolated groups in various countries. All the learned and the unlearned priests and lackeys of the bourgeoisie tried to depict these groups as the dying remnants of utopian sects. But the name of Zimmerwald (3) had already evoked echoes of alarm in the columns of the entire bourgeois press. The revolutionary internationalists marched along their own road. Above all, they gave themselves a clear accounting of the causes underlying the events.

Betrayal of Official Social Democracy

The prolonged era of "peaceful" bourgeois development with its day-to-day struggle of the trade unions, with its reformist petty-foggery and petty parliamentary squabbles created a many-millioned organization, opportunist at the top, which curbed with heavy chains the revolutionary energy of the proletariat. By dint of historical events the official social democracy, born under the sign of the social revolution, became transformed into the most counter-revolutionary force in Europe and in the whole world. It became so intertwined with the national state, its parliament, its ministers, its commissions; it became so accustomed to its friendly enemies—the bourgeois and middle class parliamentary swindlers—that at the outbreak of the bloody catastrophe of the capitalist system it could perceive nothing save—the threat to national "unity". Instead of calling upon the proletariat masses for an assault against capitalism, it called them to defend the "national" state. This social democracy of the Plekhanovs, Tseretellis, Scheidemanns, Kautskys, Renaudels, and Longuets, mobilized in the service of imperialism every national prejudice, all the slavish instincts, the entire scum of chauvinism, everything dark and corrupt which had accumulated in the souls of the toiling and oppressed masses during centuries of slavery.

It was clear to the party of revolutionary Communism that this colossal historical blackmail would terminate in a terrible collapse of the ruling cliques and their retinues. To evoke in the masses a martial upsurge, a readiness for self-sacrifice, and finally even the mere ability to spend years in the filthy stinking mud of the trenches, it was necessary for the rulers to arouse in the masses enormous hopes, monstrous illusions. The disillusionment and embitterment of the masses would inevitably assume proportions commensurate with the scope of this deceit. The revolutionary internationalists (they were not yet called Communists) foresaw this and upon this forecast they based their revolutionary tactic. They "steered a course" toward the social revolution.

Internationalism Versus Imperialism

Two conscious minorities—the imperialist and internationalist—declared a war to the death against each other. And before their combat was transferred to the city streets in the shape of open civil war, it unfolded in the consciousness of millions upon millions of toilers. These were no longer parliamentary conflicts, which even in the best days of parliamentarism educated the masses only to a very limited extent. Here the entire people, down to its darkest and most inert depths, were seized by the steel claws of militarism and violently plunged into the maelstrom of events.

Imperialism was challenged by Communism which said: "You have now shown the masses in action what you really are and what you are capable of doing. My turn is next." The great combat between Imperialism and Communism is decided not by paragraphs of reform, not by parliamentary ballots, nor by the strike reports of trade unions. The events are written in steel and every step of the struggle is sealed with blood. This alone predestined that the struggle between Imperialism and Communism would not be settled within the limits of formal democracy.

The Solution Cannot Be Postponed

To solve the basic tasks of social development through universal suffrage would, under present conditions, when all questions are posed point-blank, signify a cessation of the struggle between the mortal class enemies. It would mean an appeal to an arbitrator in the person of those intermediate and primarily petty bourgeois masses who either have not yet been drawn into the struggle or are participating in it semi-consciously. But it is precisely these masses who were deceived by the great lie of nationalism, who were bled white by the war, who have lost their heads and only seek for a way out, who are subject to the most diverse and contradictory moods—these masses cannot be accepted as authoritative arbitrators by Imperialism, all the less so by Communism, nor even by themselves. Why then not temporize and postpone the solution of the dispute until the bewildered intermediate masses come to their senses and draw all the necessary conclusions from the lessons of the war? How? In what way? Artificial interludes are possible in combats between athletes; on the arena of a circus or on the tribune of parliament—but not in a civil war. The more aggravated all the relations, all the needs and all the misfortunes become as a result of the imperialist war, the less objective possibility there is for leading the struggle into the channels of formal democracy, the simultaneous and universal counting of noses.

"In this war you, Imperialism, have shown what you are capable of and now my turn has come. I shall take power into my hands and show the still vacillating, the still bewildered masses what I can do, where I can lead them, what I want and can give them."

This was the slogan of the October insurrection of Communism; this is the meaning of the terrible war which the Spartacists have proclaimed against the bourgeois world on the streets of Berlin.

How May Day Began

By MARVEL SCHOLL

May Day, 1940, marks the fiftieth anniversary of that first great international working class holiday when the workers of every nation went into the streets, on May 1, 1890, to strike for the legal establishment of the eight hour day. Four years before that, however, the first May Day had been celebrated in the United States.

The history of May Day is the history of the organized labor and revolutionary movement of the world, its rises and downfalls, its martyrs, its leaders—and its mis-leaders. A study of that history contains many valuable lessons for the workers of today.

The first gigantic May Day strike occurred on May 1, 1886, in the United States and grew out of more than fifty years of previous struggles by the American workers for a shorter work day. From its very inception, May Day as a workers' holiday has been recognized as a political institution. The struggle to establish the legal limit for a working day to eight hours was a political battle. To this original demand, as the years passed,

and economic organization for the working class.

May Day began in the United States. From the very beginning of the factory system here, the workers began their fight against the murderous hours imposed on them by their employers. The first demand was for a ten hour day. In 1821, without the benefit of any organization, a group of cordwainers in New York went on strike. During the trial of their leaders for conspiracy later, it was brought out that the "normal" working day for these men was from nineteen to twenty hours.

During the next two decades the number and militancy of the strikes over the ten hour day were so great that many industries had to grant it. In 1837 President Van Buren finally decreed that all government employees work ten hours a day.

Scarcely had this demand been won on a more or less widespread scale than the workers took up

the cry for an eight hour day. The issue was never lost sight of, from 1827, when the first trade union in the world was organized in Philadelphia by the Mechanics until 1884, when the first convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada (later simplified to the American Federation of Labor), passed a resolution setting May 1, 1886 as a day for mass strikes for the eight hour day. The National Labor Union, organized as a federation of trade unions in 1866, the First International, and the Knights of Labor, had all passed resolutions and organized their forces around this demand.

May 1, 1886 is a day which will long be remembered by both the workers of the world and the employing classes. In every large city in the country workers laid down their tools and took to the streets to fight for the legal establishment of the eight hour

day. In many cities they won their demand, and in others they succeeded in appreciably cutting down their hours of work. But it was in Chicago that the strike centered. The size and the militancy of the workers' demonstration there had many far-reaching effects.

Most of the militant labor lead-

ers of Chicago were brought to trial as a result of this deliberate plot of the Chicago bosses to break the movement. Four of the unionists—Spies, Engel, Parsons, and Fisher were hanged. Many others went to prison.

This was the bosses' answer to the workers' militancy.

BECOMES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF STRUGGLE IN 1890

But contrary to their expectations, the Haymarket Riots, instead of killing the labor movement, only increased its tempo. In 1889 the convention of the AFL set aside May 1, 1890 as another day for mass strikes on the eight hour issue. During the same year, the International Workingman's Congress, the Second International, decreed that May 1, 1890 should be an international working man's holiday, when all those who toiled for their living should come out on strike for the eight hour day and for other important political issues for which the workers of the world are still fighting.

May 1, 1890 saw one of the

most of the militant labor lead-

(Continued on Page 8)

The imperialist slaughter has erupted into a civil war. The better the capitalist war has trained the workers how to handle rifles, the more decisively are they beginning to apply these rifles for their own goals. However, the old slaughter is not yet liquidated; here and there new bloody clashes along the old national and state lines still flare up and threaten to spread into a new conflagration. At the moment when Communism is already celebrating its first victories and is fully justified in not fearing isolated defeats, the yellow tongues of nationalist flames still erupt from underneath the volcanic soil.

Inferno of National and Social Conflict

Poland, only yesterday herself strangled, dismembered, torn and bled white—Poland seeks today in a final and belated drunken fit of nationalism to plunder Prussia, Galicia, Latvia and White Russia. Meanwhile, the Polish proletariat is already building its Soviets.

Serbian nationalism seeks a robber's satisfaction for ancient slights and wounds in territories settled by Bulgarians. Italy grabs at Serbian provinces.

The Czechs, who have just freed themselves from underneath the German-Hapsburg boot, drunk with the pseudo-independence proffered them by the mighty sharks of imperialism, are violating the cities of German Bohemia and massacring Russians in Siberia. The Czech communists are sounding the alarm.

Wall Street Is Growing Uneasy

Events pile on events, the map of Europe changes uninteruptedly, but the most profound changes are occurring in the consciousness of the masses. The very rifle which was yesterday used in the service of national imperialism serves today in the same hands the cause of social revolution. Wall Street, which has long and skillfully fanned the European bonfire so as to enable its bankers and industrialists to warm their hands at its flames, now sends to Europe its chief clerk, its supreme broker, its methodical rogue, Wilson, to investigate at first hand whether things have not gone too far.

Only recently, the American millionaires laughed in their clean-shaven chins and rubbed their hands: "Ha-ha! Europe has become a madhouse, Europe is exhausted, bankrupt; Europe is becoming transformed into a cemetery of old culture. We shall tour its ruins, buy up its treasured monuments; lavishly tip the august scions of all the European dynasties! European competition will vanish. Control over industrial life will pass completely into our hands, and the profits from the whole world will begin flowing into our American pockets."

But, at present, the snide chuckle is beginning to stick in the throat of the Wall Street Yankees.

The Communist Order Raises Its Head

Amid the European chaos, the idea of a new order, the Communist Order, is raising its head ever more imperiously and powerfully. In the clash and din of bloody imperialism, nationalist and class conflicts, the peoples most backward from the revolutionary standpoint are slowly but unswervingly beginning to fall in step with those who have already left their first victories behind them. From a prison of the peoples which Czarist Russia was, it is turning before our very eyes—with the liberation of Riga, Vilna, Kharkov—into a free federation of Soviet Republics. (4)

There is no other way out, no other road for the peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian empire and the Balkan peninsula. Soviet Germany will enter as a member into this family which sooner or later will include in its ranks Soviet Italy and Soviet France. The transformation of Europe into a Federation of Soviet Republics is the sole conceivable solution of the needs of national development of great and small nations, which is not detrimental to the centralist requirements of economic unification—first of Europe and then of the whole world.

Bourgeois democrats dreamed in their time of a United States of Europe. These dreams have found a hypocritically belated echo in the speeches of the French social patriots in the first period of the last war. (5) The bourgeoisie proved incapable of unifying Europe because it could counterpose to the unifying tendencies of economic development only the dividing will of national imperialism.

Only Socialism Can Unify the World

To unify the peoples it is necessary to free economic life from the fetters of private property. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat is capable of bringing the demands of national development into their natural and legal boundaries and embracing all nations in a unification of working collaboration. This unification will take shape precisely as the Federation of the Soviet Republics of Europe on the basis of the free self-determination of the peoples dwelling there. There can be no other solution. This alliance will be directed against England should the latter lag behind the continent in her revolutionary development. Together with Soviet England the European Federation will direct its blows against the imperialist dictatorship of North America so long as the trans-oceanic republic remains the Republic of the Dollar—so long as the triumphant snorting of Wall Street is not turned into its death rattle.

Bloody chaos still stands over Europe. The old is combining with the new. Events pile up on events; and blood accumulates on blood. But from this chaos, ever more resolutely and boldly emerges the idea of the Communist Order from which the bourgeoisie will be saved neither by its Versailles conspiracies, nor its hired gangs, nor its voluntary flunkies of class collaboration and social patriotism, nor by the great trans-oceanic patron of all the capitalist stranglers.

It is not longer the spectre of Communism that hovers over Europe as was the case seventy-two years ago when the Communist Manifesto was written—it is the ideas and hopes of the bourgeoisie that are being transformed into a spectre. Communism now strides over Europe in flesh and blood.

(1) Comrade Trotsky is referring to the January 1919 uprising of the Berlin workers and soldiers. It was provoked by the treacherous policy of the social democratic government of Ebert and Scheidemann. The government had issued an order removing the incumbent independent social democrat from his post of the Berlin chief of police. The workers replied by mass demonstrations. Within 24 hours a general strike was declared. The movement was headed by a revolutionary committee composed of Karl Liebknecht, Ledebour, and Scholtze. This committee had the support of the Spartacists and of the Berlin organization of the Independent Social-Democrats. The authorities began negotiations with the workers and at the same time mobilized military forces from bourgeois youth, White Guard students, and non-commissioned officers of the old Hohenzollern army. On January 11, under the leadership of Noske the bloody suppression of the workers' uprising began. On January 15, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered by the officers conveying them to prison.

(2) The landing of the French troops in Odessa took place early in January 1919, as part of the general Allied plan to aid Denikin against the Soviets.

(3) The Zimmerwald conference was held in Switzerland in September 1915 on the initiative of the Italian Socialists. The Left Wing at this Conference headed by Lenin issued a manifesto to the workers of the world calling upon the armies then fighting for imperialist aims to turn their guns against their own bourgeoisie.

(4) With the outbreak of the revolution in Germany, the German troops occupying Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, White Russia and the Ukraine rushed home; and the Red Army was able to advance without meeting any serious resistance.

(5) For the current version of this "dream" one need only refer to the bourgeois press, especially of the Allied camp.