

# The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe.

LOUIS C. FRAINA ..... Editor

EADMONN MACALPINE ..... Associate Editor

Contributing Editors

SCOTT NEARING

LUDWIG LORE

JOHN REED

SEN KATAYAMA

N. I. HOURWICH

G. WEINSTEIN

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## STARVING THE REVOLUTION!

**I**N A note to the Swiss Minister, acting for the German Government, Secretary of State Lansing on November 13, in answer to Chancellor Ebert's appeal for food-stuffs, declared that the American government "is ready to send food-stuffs into Germany without delay."

This is well; the fearful misery must be assuaged. But the note adds that President Wilson will "take up the matter immediately with the Allied Governments, provided he can be assured that public order is being and will continue to be maintained in Germany and that an equitable distribution of food can be clearly guaranteed."

Why the provision about "order" being maintained, and what is meant by "order"? Does it mean that if the German Revolution continues on its course relentlessly and to the complete overthrow of Capitalism, that this might be interpreted as "disorder" and the attempt be made to starve the Revolution into submission? This interpretation is being made: is it the conception of the government?

A Revolution necessarily means a certain amount of disorder, since it implies a complete change of society and arouses violent antagonisms. Every revolution—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and now the German Revolution—is characterized by disorder, a disorder out of which arises the order of a new society and a new life.

Shall the control of the food of the world be used to crush the German Revolution, which is now the hope of the world? We do not know if this is precisely the meaning of Secretary Lansing's words, but our fears are aroused by the systematic press campaign in favor of intervention in Germany should the revolution definitely develop into a Socialist Revolution. The Revolution is the test of the American pledge of "self-determination of peoples." Self-determination is for Socialist nations as well as Capitalist nations.

Moreover, at this time, we must remember that for one year the Allies have been starving the Russian people as a means of starving out the Russian Revolution and destroying the Soviet Government. Their policy has been based on the assumption that if the Russian people starved enough they might make a counter-revolution and annihilate the Soviet Government.

For one year Soviet Russia has been cut off from the world, blockaded and completely isolated. Communications, intellectual and commercial, have been broken. While Germany prevented egress by way of the Black Sea and Constantinople, the Allied soldiers and fleets prevented egress by way of Archangel and Vladivostok. Russia could not communicate with the world; Russia could not secure food or agricultural machinery from other nations, for which it was willing to pay in gold or raw materials, and which were indispensable in the great task of reconstruction. The Russian people have been starving and suffering and dying, but they have refused to run against their Revolution! All the sympathy they have received have been screeds in the newspapers describing terrible hunger in Russia and blaming the Bolsheviks! But this isolation and blockade of Russia is largely responsible for the scarcity of food.

In addition to this blockade, there was the Czecho-Slovak adventure. The Czecho-Slovaks were to become the centre of a counter-revolution; all they accomplished was to cause more misery and starvation in Russia, to demoralize the railways and the food supply system, with terrible consequences to the Russian people.

The blockade of Russia must immediately cease. The Soviet government must be allowed to purchase food. And there shall be no starving of the German Revolution!

## TWO STRUGGLES

**G**ERMANY is in the throes of a revolutionary convulsion—that is the one definite impression conveyed by the meagre and often contradictory news of events. Revolution and counter-revolution are struggling for supremacy. One must tread his way through the uncertain reports of events by means of Socialist theory, and the social and Socialist alignment of forces in Germany.

The correspondents are quite clearly hypnotized by the activity of the provisional governments, three or four of which have been organized since the Revolution marched on to action. Organizing provisional governments seems to be the favorite industry of the bourgeois liberals and the petty bourgeois Socialists in Germany, as in Russia. These provisional governments are apparently organized by cliques, the Reichstag having disappeared; what power they possess is due to the fact that things have not come to a head, and their only real power is the power of appeal to a people being revolutionized by events.

The news of the "All-Socialist" Provisional Government recently was greeted enthusiastically by the radical and gloomily by the conservative. But this government was Socialist only in name; it included the utterly reactionary Ebert, Scheidemann & Co., together with Haase, Ledebour and Dittman of the Independent Socialists, and the "Spartacus" revolutionary Socialist Barth, who for some reason accepted the portfolio of "social policy." Barth's status in the government was and still is uncertain. The "All-Socialist" government arose out of some obscure impulse of compromise, and was clearly a temporary shift. But the status of this government itself is still more uncertain, since the news of the appointment of the government's "department heads," including Dr. Dernburg and other unflinching representatives of the bourgeoisie. Is this an expression of a definite counter-revolutionary trend, or is it simply the stupidity and treason of Scheidemann & Co.? Socialists of revolutionary persuasion will not assume responsibility for such a government, all the more since the titular head of the government, "Socialist" Chancellor Ebert, is using the threat of "anarchy" to discourage the revolutionary masses. The revolutionary Socialist can only fight this government.

But these provisional governments represent the appearance of reality, and not reality itself. The actual destiny of the revolution is being decided by election of the masses, by the movement and tendency represented by Karl Liebknecht, Otto Ruhle, Rose Luxemburg and Franz Mehring. But scarcely any news is transmitted of these real events being made by the masses, of the tendency and movement of the revolutionary proletariat,—precisely as in Russia, during the period of Lvov, Kerensky & Co., scarcely any news came of the action of the masses, of the movement and tendency represented by Lenin and Trotzky, until they conquered power.

A revolution is made by the action of the masses. It is this elemental mass action, breaking loose against the opposition of the moderates and the government, that casts aside fears and hesitation, topples over the imposing enginery of authority, mobilizing the revolutionary energy and initiative of the people for the assault against the old order and the conquest of power. This tendency characterizes all revolutions. Another characteristic is that the immediate revolutionary task accomplished, bourgeois representatives and the old radical moderate opposition come into power and act against the revolutionary masses,—precisely as the "Socialist" Chancellor Ebert is now doing by discouraging the onward march of the revolution through cajolery and threats of "anarchy" and disaster should new revolutionary action develop. But this new revolutionary action is absolutely indispensable to accomplish the real task of the Revolution. The struggle of the masses now becomes a struggle against their own moderate representatives. These representatives try to disperse the masses, to discourage any new revolutionary action, to limit the revolution within the deadening bounds of the parliamentary bourgeois state as a purely political revolution and to prevent this political revolution from developing definitely into a social and economic revolution.

This alignment characterizes not only the proletarian revolution in Russia and Germany, but in lesser force characterized previous revolutions, the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The French Revolution, historically and in accomplishments a bourgeois revolution, was made by the dynamic mass action of the people: the bourgeoisie acted only under the impulse of the revolutionary energy and initiative of the masses. But the middle class came into power, through the National Assembly and the Constituent Assembly,—representing a purely political tendency, desiring no fundamental change in government, much less in society, temporizing with the monarchy and against a democratic republic. It was the action of the masses that compelled drastic political changes, that annihilated the monarchy; and the struggle between the masses and the middle class liberals was bitter, intense, fundamental. But there was another and more determining phase of this great struggle: the masses instinctively and

aggressively aimed to broaden and deepen the revolution, a powerful communist movement developing in favor of a social and economic revolution. This fundamental tendency aroused the violent and murderous opposition of the bourgeois class. The masses through the much-maligned Terror (which was the savior of the bourgeois democratic phase of the Revolution, even) conquered temporarily; but they could not retain power, being dispersed by the counter-revolution and crushed by Napoleon.

These two struggles were apparent, in a minor expression, during the abortive 1848 Revolution in Germany and the successful 1848 Revolution in Paris.

In a Socialist expression, these two struggles determined the destiny of the Russian Revolution, which developed definitely into a proletarian revolution initiating the reconstruction of society on a communist Socialist basis,—against the moderate, political and democratic tendency of the bourgeois liberals and the moderate petty bourgeois "Socialists."

These two struggles, these two irreconcilable conceptions of the Revolution, are for the moment engaged in a desperate grapple in Germany. The issue is clear, but the strength of the struggling forces is still obscure.

The political tendency, represented by the bourgeois liberals and the moderate Socialists, particularly by Scheidemann, Ebert & Co., aims to reconstruct the government, to transform the old autocracy into a democratic parliamentary republic. The old regime of Kaiserism has been shattered by the revolutionary action of the masses; this has created an opportunity for organizing a democratic republic, and this is the task of the "Provisional Government" and the moderate Socialists generally. But this democratic republic would be a bourgeois republic, with Capitalism retaining industrial and consequently political supremacy. It might be a "radical" republic, it might even continue for an indefinite period a republic graced—or disgraced—by the Socialist camouflage of Scheidemann, Ebert & Co., but it would still be a bourgeois republic, still the republic of the capitalist and the financier, of the sweater of labor.

The moderate Socialists, in Germany and in Russia, justify this attitude by declaring that conquest of political democracy is necessary before the definite struggle for Socialism may begin. But you had bourgeois democracy under the Russian Ebert, Kerensky; you have bourgeois democracy under the German, Kerensky, Ebert: the struggle may begin for the fundamental industrial democracy of Socialism, particularly as the revolutionary action against autocracy has created a breach in the old order through which the Socialist proletariat may emerge for revolutionary action and the conquest of power. Bourgeois democracy is a fetter upon the action of the revolutionary proletariat; it is not, under the conditions of Imperialism, any phase of the Socialist struggle. The slogans of democracy—of bourgeois democracy—are counter-revolutionary, in Germany as in Russia. The moderate Socialist policy in Germany abandons and betrays the great hopes aroused by the proletarian revolution in Germany.

The democratic republic is accomplished in Germany; therefore, on with the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism and for Socialism!—this is the general policy of the revolutionary Socialist, of the economic and social tendency of the proletarian masses. This tendency, instinctively in action during the French Revolution, the conqueror in Russia, is now in Germany mobilizing the masses for the revolutionary struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism. The Revolution must become definitely a proletarian revolution: upon that depends the destiny of Socialism in Europe. This revolutionary tendency struggles for a dictatorship of the proletariat, for a new state of the organized producers, for the expropriation of capital,—and once in power, this tendency would accomplish its Socialist task much more easily and swiftly, immediately proceed further in the direction of actual Socialism, than in Russia, because of the superiority of industrial and technological development. The policy of revolutionary Socialism builds upon the accomplishments of Russia, seeks to conserve and extend the conquest of the Russian revolutionary proletariat.

Every real revolution sets the masses in motion, loosens their energy and initiative. The masses must not only act initially, they must continue to act, to develop from instruments of revolutionary action into the masters of revolutionary government—of their own government. The Revolution must broaden and deepen itself in the action and the consciousness of the masses; the "provisional government," the policy of the moderate Socialists, deaden this necessary revolutionary action and consciousness, while the policy of the revolutionary Socialists in Germany broadens and vitalizes this action and consciousness. The expression of the revolutionary masses, in Germany as in Russia, are the Councils of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates. These exist in Germany; but the two struggles are proceeding within the Councils as in society at large. In the Councils, as in the government, the moderates at first control, the proletarian revolutionary tendency is still unclear: but clarity develops under the pressure of events and revolutionary propaganda. How far the Revolution has actually penetrated the masses, fundamentally and dynamically,—upon this depends the course of events in Germany. The Councils must be revolutionized.

The two tendencies, the two struggles, are there, actively counter-revolutionary and actively revolutionary. The one would establish a democratic republic, with Capitalism in authority and the threat of a restoration of autocracy; the other would annihilate Capitalism, start the process of introducing Socialism, and in that way climax the magnificent achievements of the proletarian revolution in Russia.