

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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Reconstructing Governments

THE Executive Committee of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils in Berlin has made a demand that the People's Commissaires dismiss Dr. Solf as Foreign Secretary. The recent "agreement" by which the Council usurped control of the Government as its "executive organ" evidently did not much alter things. The Spartacus Group and the Independent Socialists assert that Solf, Erzberger and associates are really blocking peace for Germany. These men are directly connected with the old regime, and justified the war. But to put these men out of the government and place in other representatives of their class would solve nothing, since the guilt of the war is not personal to a few individuals, but to the class that used war as an instrument of conquest and spoliation—the capitalist class. "Reconstructing" the government will still be a paltering with the revolutionary task, will still be retaining in power a bourgeois republic—hence the campaign of the Spartacus Socialists to annihilate the Provisional Government, and establish in its place a proletarian government—the dictatorship of the Soviets.

They Are Still There!

IN arguing that the Allies should refuse to negotiate peace with Germany if Bolshevism conquers and establishes a Socialist proletarian Government, the New York "Times" says editorially in its December 1 issue:

"President Wilson represents the American people, and the American people are not for the rule of any people by any one class. In Russia their troops are fighting against men who favor the government of the people by one class of the people for one class of the people, and they are fighting in alliance with Russian democrats."

When President Wilson made his declaration about "making the world safe for democracy," he had in mind the autocracy of Imperial Germany, "autocratic governments irresponsible to the will of the people." The Czar's government was just such an autocracy, and it was overthrown by the Russian people.

Is the Soviet government an autocracy? An autocracy is government by a ruling class holding in subjection and exploiting the majority of the people, government by a small clique either of the blood aristocracy or the money aristocracy, or a unity of both as in Germany and Great Britain. The Soviets are mass organizations of the workers and peasants; every useful producer participates and votes in the Soviets, and a majority may decide a new policy for the government. If a noble or bourgeois feels irresistibly the urge to be come a citizen and participate in the Soviet Government, the process is a very simple one: secure some socially useful employment, and the producer immediately becomes the citizen. Is this not superior to governments in which men "of blood" and of money, who perform no useful labor but sponge upon the producers, participate and control legislation?

The "autocracy" of the Soviet Government has accomplished something new and magnificent in history—it has introduced industrial democracy. The workers control their jobs, are dominant in industry, the proceeds of industry are used for the happiness of the people and not the corrupting pleasure of the leisured parasites upon the people. The Soviet Government is so autocratic that it introduces democracy in industry! Surely this is astonishing. But precisely because the Soviet Republic introduces industrial democracy and annihilates Capitalism, the capitalist press characterizes it as autocracy.

Democracy to the capitalist means the rule of capital, the supremacy of the principle of ownership of the means of life by a small class: anything else is autocracy.

"In Russia their [the American people's] troops are fighting against men who favor the government of the people by one class of the people for one class of the people," says the "Times."

"We have no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of the Russian people," President Wilson and the Government have declared.

Which is the American policy? ... Alien troops are still in Archangel and Vladivostok!

Love Your Enemy as Yourself

THE class struggle is international—that is the impressive teaching of recent events. The threat of Socialism unifies Capitalism. When the proletarian revolution conquered in Russia, the reactionary forces of Capitalism and Czarism eagerly invited the intervention of German troops, particularly in Finland and the Ukraine, as a means of crushing Socialism and the proletariat. Paul Milyukov, who was driven from the government because of his desire to fight Germany to the end and annex Constantinople and Galicia, concluded some months ago that Germany should be invited to intervene in Russia to crush Socialism. In Germany the forces of Imperialism are using the threat of Allied intervention to prevent a proletarian revolution, and they are willing that their former enemy, the Allies, should if necessary march into the country to restore "order." And now comes Dr. Constantin Theodor Dumba, the unspeakable Dumba, former Ambassador to the United States, who was given his passports by the American Government, advocating that Great Britain and the United States send one regiment each into Austria as "a symbol of order,"—and perhaps as a symbol of more to come? And all this is equally to protect the "enemy." Peculiarly, Socialism, which is considered as against religion, apparently produces a religious renaissance in the ruling class when in conquest. An essential doctrine of Christianity is "love your enemy as yourself." While Socialism was a thing of the future, Milyukov & Co. did not love their enemy, Germany; Dumba and the reactionaries did not love the enemy Allies; but with the coming of Socialism, the religious fervor seizes them: Love your enemy as yourself.

Proletarian Dictatorship

THE revolutionary Socialists in Germany insist upon a dictatorship of the proletariat as the means equally of converting the revolution definitely into a proletarian revolution and of introducing Socialism. What is a dictatorship of the proletariat, what is its function in the Revolution and the coming of Socialism in Germany?

The dictatorship of the proletariat, the problem of power, is the determining issue of the Social Revolution. In the New York "Times" of December 1, William English Walling, the American caricature of Scheidemann, Sudekum, Thomas, Hyndman & Co., violently protests and warns against the dictatorship of the proletariat. He says:

"There is a large amount of satisfactory evidence that Liebknecht is pro-Bolshevist. Not only does he share many of the Bolshevist views, but he has brought about a regular defensive and offensive alliance between the German Revolutionaries and the Russian Bolsheviks. Liebknecht, toward the end of October, made a number of important speeches in Berlin, which are reported as follows by the Vossische Zeitung:

"Liebknecht's speeches were all absolutely Bolshevist. 'Now the proletariat is conscious of its power,' he said, 'the watchword is world revolution or world destruction. The call to the national defense should be answered by the dictatorship of the proletariat and by the overthrow of capitalistic rule, thus establishing a Socialist Republic. If the Russian Soviet Republic be supported by the German Republic, then all countries will have to follow, and the world domination of the proletariat will begin.'"

It is clear, accordingly, that Liebknecht and the revolutionary Socialists insist upon a dictatorship of the proletariat. Walling continues:

"There are four distinct propositions in this speech: a German-Russian revolutionary alliance, a world revolution, a Socialist Republic for Germany, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is only the last doctrine that is purely Bolshevist. This doctrine, which spells Bolshevism in Russia, becomes something absolutely different, however, in Germany. The industrial proletariat constitutes a minority in Russia of not more than 10% of the nation. By including certain agricultural elements the figures might be raised somewhat, but in any case it is a dictatorship of a minority. In fact, this is the only sense in the use of the word dictatorship. A majority does

not need to establish a dictatorship but can be satisfied with a democratic Constitutional Assembly. In Germany, on the contrary, the industrial proletariat constitutes something like half the population. For fear he could not get a majority immediately, Liebknecht proposes a temporary 'dictatorship of the proletariat.' But his whole past proves that he is wedded to the principle of majority rule. His doctrine is that he would have the majority rule—though by an industrial rather than a parliamentary government. Lenin, on the contrary, absolutely repudiates industrial democracy as well as every form of democracy and loses no occasion to say so. Lenin also expects to have the mass of the Russian peasantry with him, but only after a considerable period of dictatorship of the proletariat, sustained by force. That is the essential difference between Liebknecht and Lenin. Liebknecht does not expect rule by force except for a very brief transition.

Walling draws simply an imaginary difference between Lenin and Liebknecht. Each proposes proletarian dictatorship for the transition period; the duration of this dictatorship depends largely upon the complexion of the international situation.

Nor is the theory of proletarian dictatorship a product of Bolshevism: it is a projection of Marxism. In his "Criticism of the Gotha Program" Marx said: The proletarian organizes itself, the ruling class, its state being the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. And in his introduction to Marx' "The Civil War in France," Engels points out to the bourgeoisie that the Paris Commune was a dictatorship of the proletariat. And the lesson of the Paris Commune, according to Marx, was that the proletariat cannot lay hold of the ready-made machinery of the bourgeois state and use it for its own purposes: a new state must be created. And this is the state of organized producers functioning through a temporary revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

"Lenin does not believe in industrial democracy"—then why the expropriation of capital by workers' control of industry, why the construction of an industrial state? These are measures of industrial democracy, of Communist Socialism; and it is precisely this task of introducing industrial democracy that must be performed by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

All revolutions are minority revolutions, performed by a minority of the people. The bourgeois revolution was of this character; but it promoted the interests of a minority class, the bourgeoisie. The proletarian revolution is a major revolution in the sense that it promotes the interests of a majority class, the proletariat; but it is not, however, a majority revolution in the sense that a conscious majority necessarily perform the revolutionary task. The problem of the Revolution is bourgeois or proletarian rule, not majority or minority rule: that is a petty bourgeois conception. The antagonism between "majority" and "minority" is a fact only in a society based on class divisions.

In Russia the actual revolution was accomplished by the proletariat and peasantry, but it was a conscious minority of proletariat and peasantry sweeping into action the more backward sections of the people. According to all the evidence, the Soviet Government is a majority government and still it is a dictatorship—against the counter-revolution, against the more backward sections of the people, against the bourgeoisie and capital. The bourgeois revolution ended in dictatorship; Cromwell, Napoleon; and even after the American Revolution—Washington was offered a crown, and Hamilton's party represented the tendency of dictatorship, the agrarian democracy alone preventing the realization of this dictatorship. The proletarian revolution ends in dictatorship—where the bourgeois dictatorship perpetuates class rule and dictatorship, the purpose of a proletarian dictatorship is to destroy the old social relations creating class rule and dictatorship, to establish new relations under which these will cease to exist.

Capitalism is itself a dictatorship. It is, in fact, a government of all the classes; in fact, a government of one class, the class that controls industry, the class that has wealth and power, and consequently power. Bourgeois democracy is the form of authority of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat; its forms are calculated to prevent proletarian action, to centre all government power in the representatives of the bourgeoisie. It does not have to function through armed dictatorship; but by means of its control of education, of the intellectuals, of the sources of information, of the factors for creating "f