

Chapters from My Diary

By Leon Trotzky

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The Swiss Social Democracy.—"Gruetli."—"Eintracht."—Fritz Platten.—My German Pamphlet: "The War and the International."—Socialist Appendages to the General Staff.

SWISS Socialism is bound by ties of language on the one hand to the Socialism of Germany and on the other to that of France. It was entirely natural that the crisis in these two powerful Socialist parties should at once express itself in Switzerland, enclosed as the country is on all sides by the fires of war. The struggle was mirrored all the more fiercely due to the fact that the Swiss social-patriots were naturally attracted by the contradictory centres of gravitation, the German side and the French side. In this connection the following case of political symmetry is rather characteristic. In the Swiss Parliament there sit two deputies with identical family names and identical Christian names; they are Johann Sieg, of Zurich, and Jean Sieg, of Geneva. Both are social-patriots, but Johann Sieg is an outright Germanophile, while Jean Sieg is a still more outright Frantophile. Under these circumstances the internationalist policy of the Socialist Party would seem to be the unified middle ground of self-preservation. The international position met with very general favor in the ranks of the party (and it was my privilege in those days to attend many party meetings), but this was not the case in the party leadership.

The support of the right national wing of the party was clearly the "Gruetli" organization, that well-known body out of which the Swiss Socialist Party sprang. The most warlike nationalist of this body was found to be the former pastor Pflueger, one of the party's representatives in the Federal Parliament. "If I were the German Emperor," he declared at one of the party meetings, in which the first dispute with respect to the war was being carried on, "I also should have stood by with drawn sword to oppose the Russian!" Months later, Pflueger repeated the same sentence at the Party Congress at Berne, but, unfortunately for him, his eloquent oratory did not produce the desired effect; there arose a great noise, laughter, whistling, hisses, and the unhappy candidate for the post of German Emperor found himself unable to finish his speech.

The focus of the left wing was the organization known as "Eintracht," which was recruited almost exclusively from among the foreigners: Germans, Austrians, Russians, etc. Of real Swiss Socialists in this organization, the most active was Fritz Platten, Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Party. He was of tall stature, with a frank, open face, an excellent popular orator, himself a proletarian by birth and by his mode of life, although he was married to a Russian student. Platten represents, in himself, one

of the doubtless most engaging personalities in the Swiss Social Democracy. "What a disgrace," he said at these first meetings, "that the workers should again have bent their backs in this critical moment. But I hope that they will yet show, before this war is over, that they know how to die, not only in the service of others, but also for themselves." And from Platten's lips these are not phrases. In 1905, when the Revolution broke out in Russia, Fritz, then a young man of twenty, decided to take active part in it, journeyed to Riga, fought in the first ranks, and acquired at first hand a thorough acquaintance with the inside of Russian jails. In 1912 he stood at the head of the general strike in Zurich, as one of its most determined and most influential leaders.

Already in September, 1914, the "Eintracht" Executive Committee worked out an aggressive internationalist manifesto, and invited the "leaders" of the party to a constituent meeting, at which I was to defend the manifesto in a lecture. But the "leaders" did not show up: they considered it too risky to take a definite position in such a delicate question, preferring a passive waiting attitude, and limiting themselves to an academic criticism of the patriotic "extravagances" of the German and French Socialists. This, by the way, is the political mentality that is most frequently found in all the Socialist circles of the neutral countries, the United States among them: in fact it is more outspoken here than anywhere else. [This was written about one month before America's entry into the war.]

The "Eintracht" association almost unanimously passed the adoption of the resolution, which was subsequently published in the Socialist press and served as a serious stimulus to the public opinion of the party.

At the Party Congress at Berne, to which reference had been already made, an address on the war was delivered by Judge Otto Lang. The tone of the lecture was that of a very moderate internationalism, approaching the present position of Kautsky. But the attitude of the majority of the Congress was incomparably more determined than that of the lecturer. In fact, in general, in the time of the war, the Swiss Party accomplished a swift maneuver to the left, with the result that a considerable section of the Gruetli people were left high and dry, and were thus obliged to form an independent reformist and social-patriotic party. In this fact, it may be mentioned by the way, is another plain illustration of the extremely profound gulf that separates social patriotism from internationalism.

My stay in Switzerland was, as far as I was concerned, taken up chiefly with my work on my pamphlet, written in German, entitled "The International and the War." The pamphlet arose out of my diary, into which I entered, during the first few weeks, at first only for my own use, an

attempt to elucidate the causes of the catastrophe of the Socialist parties, as well as the modes of escape from the catastrophe. Platten undertook the task of distributing the pamphlet, and saw to it that several thousand copies were forwarded to Germany and Austria. At this time, I was already in France, and read with astonishment in one of the French papers a telegram reporting that a German judge had sentenced me, in absentia, to a prison term for having written the pamphlet. I must confess that the Hohenzollern judge, in thus sentencing me to a term which I have not shown undue haste in serving, did me a favor that was quite valuable. To the social-patriotic fabricators and "ideological" sniffers of the Alexinsky type, this sentence by a German court, pronounced on me, will be a hard nut to crack when they turn their distinguished talents in the direction of proving that I am at bottom an agent of the German General Staff.

The French Customs, in their turn, held up the package of pamphlets that had been sent from Switzerland, and informed me that the pamphlets would be confiscated because of their German original (!). One of my Russian friends informed Gustave Herve about this, and Gustave Herve at that time still had his moments of oppositional spirit, and in "La Guerre Sociale," Herve's paper, there appeared a satirical note directed against the confiscation of this "anti-German" pamphlet. For this or for some other reason, the Customs delivered to me, a few days later, the package that they had held up.

It is hardly necessary to say that the German social-patriotic press attempted, on its part, to reveal the author of the pamphlet as a secret patriot and a defender of the interests of the Allies. What is the relative proportion of conscious misrepresentation and of chauvinistic fanaticism in accusations of this type? It would not be easy to determine. At any rate, so much is certain: Social patriotism debases men morally and mentally to such an extent that they are prevented from seeing in a Socialist simply a Socialist and nothing more. When two feudal serfs met on the road they would ask each other: "Whose man are you?"—"I belong to Sheremetyeff."—"And we belong to Bobrinsky."—Evidently the feudal notion of "belonging" to somebody is deeply anchored in the breasts of the social patriots. The interests of which general staff does he defend? The Romanoff master or the Hohenzollern master? These people are beginning to lose the ability to see that it is possible to be an enemy of all "masters" at once, to follow one's own flag, and to feel one's self.—to use Fritz Adler's beautiful expression—a soldier in "the eternal army of social revolution."

The latest number of the internationalist gazette, "Nachalo," arriving from Paris, brings the news that this former social-democrat of the Second Duma has been dismissed even from the personnel of the not over-fastidious social-patriotic paper "Prizyv".

Alien Democracy in Russia

By Gregory Weinstein

A few days ago reports reaching the United States told of two "coups d'etat" which took place almost simultaneously in two different parts of Russia—Kiev and Omsk. In the former case Hetman Skoropadsky's government was deposed, a government forced upon the Ukrainian people by the German imperialists; in the latter case the Social-Revolution-Cadet coalition, bearing the high-sounding name of a "directorate" and one time having apparently the "Allied sympathy" on its side, was put out of business.

The coups have certain common characteristics. In both cases the coups d'etat were led by the ex-Czar's generals: in Kiev—by General Denkine, in Omsk—by the former commander of the Black Fleet—Admiral Kolchak. Moreover, the two coups, if we are to judge from the newspaper comments, were approved by international imperialism.

Should the latter assumption prove to be correct—and there is little doubt that such is the case—we have before us a picture of a touching union between the western "democracies" and the servants of Russian Czarism. Indeed, there is nothing extraordinary in such a union. It would merely bring the Allied policy, as regards Russia, to its logical conclusion, and once more prove that the "exponents of democracy and self-determination of nationalities" are not very par-

ticular in their choice of means, while fighting Socialist Russia.

The Allied plan of "liberating" Russia by a simultaneous attack on her both from the north and the Far East, has evidently failed. Both expeditions have made very little progress.

The Archangel expedition, according to the latest war bulletins from the Murman front, has brought nothing but great sacrifices and want to the invading troops. While in the Far East differences have arisen among the Allies themselves. Besides, the Samara-Ufa-Omsk-Vladivostok "government" has not justified their expectations. Even the Czecho-Slovaks, who have been made so happy by being made a present of their "independence" by the Allies, even they have turned ingrate and want to return to their own country as soon as possible.

Thus the plan had to be altered somewhat, some "corrections" had to be made. Probably such "corrections" have been the coups d'etat of Kiev and Omsk.

Undoubtedly, with the seizure of the Dardanelles the Allies will not fail to utilize the way thus made open to the Black Sea ports, in order to attack Russia from the south. News of the landing of Allied troops in Odessa has already been reported, and the other

day a dispatch was published to the effect that the Allies are marching toward Kiev. The fact that this dispatch came on the heels of another dispatch telling about the coup d'etat in Kiev, shows that the coincidence of the two events was not merely accidental.

Generally speaking, the Allies need their own men in Kiev and also in Ukraina. But what are the elements with whom a contact should be effected in order to form an aggressive league to fight the Bolsheviks? Surely, it cannot be Hetman Skoropadsky who has so outrageously compromised himself by his union with the Prussian Junker. Hence, it has become necessary to make use of one of the former Czar's generals, who has been all the time operating in the south of Russia.

On the other hand, it has become necessary for the Allies to cut the complicated Siberian knot, at any cost. The Omsk directorate has become too complex, unworkable and what is more important, an impotent piece of machinery. It has become urgent to have a strong hand, a military dictator who could at least successfully grapple with the passive resistance offered by the Siberian population to intervention. And again the choice naturally falls on a military tool of Czarism.

Are the Allies becoming "practical" politicians? Are they turning into restorers of the old despotic regime?