

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe.

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ISSUED EVERY WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY

30 Local Boston, Socialist Party
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885 Washington St., Boston, Mass.

Wednesday, December 11, 1918

The Coming Era of Strikes

THE War Labor Board, through its joint chairmen, W. H. Taft and Basil Manly, have informed the Bethlehem Steel Company, which asked to have full freedom in dealing with employees, that the Board's power to make wage awards and its jurisdiction over disputes continue until a peace treaty is ratified. And then? With the end of the war and the peculiar industrial conditions it created, will come readjustment; and with readjustment will come an era of great industrial struggles, greater than any this country has ever seen. That will be the opportunity of Socialism. The characteristic of revolutionary Socialism is that it study the alienation of social forces, the characteristic of each period in social development, and adapt itself and these characteristics to the task of developing the final struggle. The characteristic of the situation in the United States during the coming two or three years will be great industrial strikes. This will test the Socialist Party. If we are simply to use these strikes to make political capital, we shall miss a great opportunity; but if we absorb ourselves in these strikes, appreciate that in industry lies the power of the proletariat, that it is the function of Socialism to use strikes to develop finer industrial organizations and general industrial action of the workers, out of which emerges the class power for the final struggle, then the Socialist Party will measure to the opportunity, and a new and more vital Socialism come into being.

Why This Reserve, Pray?

IN the New York "Call" of December 6, there is a letter from Joseph Shaplen, which defends the moderate Socialists and the Constituent Assembly in Russia against the Bolsheviks and the Soviets, saying that if defense of the Constituent Assembly is reactionary, then "the Social-Democratic and Social-Revolutionist parties of Russia are 'reactionist,' and likewise are Ebert, Haase, Bernstein, Kautsky, Ledebour and the entire host of German Socialists. And the only 'revolutionists' are the Bolsheviks and the Spartacus Group." On the Constituent Assembly, the "Call," in its reply, says: "We can not enter an argument on the relative merits of Constituent Assemblies and Soviets." But this is precisely the vital issue, the real argument, the dividing force of Socialism in Germany and Russia. Why does the "Call" dodge on this issue? Is it because its ideology and its Socialism are, after all, petty bourgeois? As to the Bolsheviks and the Spartacus Group—they are the only revolutionists, expressing the real tendency of revolutionary Socialism. The "Call" completely ignores this phase of Shaplen's challenge. Why this reserve? Shouting about Socialism and the Revolution, making concessions to party opinion, while suppressing or camouflaging fundamental issues is the policy of moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism, a policy against Socialism and that promotes disaster. It is a policy that, in the final test, becomes counter-revolutionary!

The Italian "Socialist" Mission

THE irresistible necessity of Socialism is now clearly apparent—necessary both to the capitalist masters of the world and to the proletarian masters of the coming world. Having plunged into the war, governments used "Socialism" as a decoy, as a means of reconciling the proletariat to the war, manufacturing an ideology for the war. When the proletarian revolution came, in Russia and in Germany, Capitalism desperately turned to a traitor "Socialism" to preserve the old order, precisely as the proletariat turned to revolutionary Socialism to create the new order. Governments have been sending "labor" and "Socialist" missions to other nations—all in the great

cause of reconciling the proletariat to the war. Surely a great Socialist task in an epoch when Capitalism was verging on collapse! When Lloyd George and Clemenceau became fearful of the awakening of the workers, they invited over a "labor" mission of the A. F. of L., which tried to prevent the awakening,—precisely the purpose of the "Social-Democratic League" mission of Simons, Spargo & Co. An Italian "Socialist" mission is now in our midst, approved, but not officially, by the Italian royal Government. These "Socialists" are discredited in their own country, and represent nothing except petty bourgeois aspirations and a small clique of renegade Socialists. They are men who have been corrupted by nationalism and social-Imperialism, betrayers of the proletariat. One of them, d'Ambris, was a former Syndicalist, who urged Italy to war before she made the decision. And it is characteristic that d'Ambris should now talk of the territorial squabbles between Italy and the Croats and Jugoslavs, insisting upon Italy's "full geographical, historical and ethnical rights in the Adriatic regions." Surely an inspiring activity, for one who formerly insisted that Revolution was the only concern of the proletariat! The proletariat will yet acquire full class consciousness, will yet annihilate its betrayers.

The Struggle Starts

THE decisive struggle of the Revolution is on in Germany—the struggle for state power. The converging attack upon the bourgeois—"Socialist" Provisional Government has started, assuming the preliminary form of an attack of the reactionary forces against the Soviets and particularly the Spartacus Socialists. The first phase of the struggle has ended in a victory for revolutionary Socialism.

The series of events ending in the first phase of the struggle reveal the counter-revolutionary trend of the Provisional Government, a counter-revolutionary trend determined by the fact that the bourgeois—"Socialist" government is a middle of the road affair, consequently developing counter-revolution and in the final test necessarily acting against the proletarian revolution.

In spite of the demand for the resignation of Dr. Solf and Dr. Erzberger, these two representatives of the old regime still remain in the government. Kurt Eisner, Premier of the Bavarian Republic, ceases his radical talk, accepts compromise and decides upon a "moderate program of socialization." A meeting at Cologne under the auspices of the Catholic Centre Party repudiates the "extremists" at Berlin, and decides upon the organization of an independent state of Rhineland and Westphalia, "under the German Empire." German officials who returned from the armistice conference at Spa intimate that the Entente would demand the dissolution of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils,—these officials, appointed by the "Socialist" government, being representatives of the old regime and the bourgeoisie, and probably having discussed with the Entente representatives action against the Revolution.

The counter-revolutionary movement assumes the form of "support" of the Provisional Government and action against the Soviets and the Spartacides. Everywhere the counter-revolution prepares itself behind the screen of the "Socialist" government of Ebert, Haase & Co., and the press reports declarations of the bourgeois representatives that they support the government because "Socialism" is necessary as a temporary instrument to use against the masses.

But, simultaneously with this counter-revolutionary trend, the Spartacides, revolutionary Socialism, acquires influence and power at terrific speed, and the attack centres upon them. In Dresden, the Spartacides secure control of the Soviet; in Rhineland and Westphalia their agitators are extraordinarily active, their domination in Cologne determining the bourgeois officials, it is reported, to call in the British troops of occupation before the stipulated time; while in Berlin they control absolutely certain strategic sections of the city. The immediate task of the Spartacides is propaganda, out of which will ultimately issue revolutionary action for the seizure of power. But the counter-revolution determines to provoke an immediate clash, apprehensive of the growing strength of revolutionary Socialism.

The means of provoking this clash, obviously, is the use of reactionary troops; and this is one consequence of the moderate Socialists' opposition to the arming of the proletariat, and the decision of the government not to demobilize certain troops which it had previously agreed to.

The opportunity for provoking this clash came on Friday. A detachment of reactionary troops appears at the building of the Soviet Executive Committee and arrests the members, the officer declaring the Provisional Government had issued these orders by telephone. Simultaneously, other reactionary troops appear in front of the Chancellor's palace and offer Ebert the presidency of the German Republic, which he graciously refuses, calling for "three cheers for our German country." A meeting is in session, organized by the Spartacides to demand immediate demobilization of the army and the arming of the proletariat, where it is announced that the Executive Committee of the Soviets is under arrest. With cries of "Let's hang Ebert, down with the counter-revolution, down with Hindenburg and all reactionary officers," the meeting forms a parade, proceeding from the Chaussee-Strasse to the corner of the Invalidenstrasse, where a furious machine-gun fire opens upon them. These reactionary troops were apparently "planted" at the strategic point—proof of a formidable counter-revolutionary conspiracy. A desperate street battle ensues and the marchers are dispersed, with sixteen killed and over fifty injured. The offices of Liebknecht's paper, "The Red Flag," are raided. Having heard of the arrest of the Soviets' officials, the Government denies having issued an order for their arrest; they are freed and the officer in charge of their captors is himself placed under arrest. (Is this a resemblance to Kerensky's repudiation of Kornilov in September, 1917?) Then—the masses rise in all their giant strength and crush the reactionary coup.

This counter-revolutionary coup has many significant features. It was an attack, not simply upon the Spartacides, but upon the Soviets—since the Soviets' existence are a guaranty that ultimately revolutionary ideas will secure control; this attack upon the Soviets coincides with an offer of the presidency to Ebert by the counter-revolution—proof of the reactionary character of the Ebert-Haase Government and that this government constitutes the bulwark of reaction; instead of the revolutionary masses being dispersed, they emerge stronger than ever, the Provisional Government, which alone would profit from the successful coup, being compelled to disown it and explain it away—while preparing itself by not demobilizing any more troops.

The answer of the revolutionary masses to the reaction was instant and aggressive. Instead of dispersing, the masses acted. Huge demonstrations were held on the following two or three days, at which Liebknecht spoke, urging the people to erect barricades and put down the counter-revolutionary government by force of arms, to depose the government and place all government power in the Soviets. "Down with Ebert and Scheidemann!" was the general cry of the demonstrators, "Down with the Government!" Realizing the desperate character of the counter-revolution, the proletariat is arming, preparing for battle at each of their meetings. The day after the counter-revolutionary attack, an enormous meeting of the Spartacides was held at the Tiergarten; mounted on a statue of the Hohenzollerns, Liebknecht urged action against the counter-revolution, stigmatized the government as counter-revolutionary, and urged the proletariat to seize all power. The semi-circle of the meeting was flanked on all sides by revolutionary troops with machine guns and armored trucks commanding all approaches, and prepared for any counter-revolutionary attacks.

The counter-revolutionary coup in Berlin on December 6, resembles, in a way, the July 16-17 "uprising" in Petrograd. The Russian masses determined upon a demonstration against the Provisional Government; counter-revolutionary gangs and reactionary government troops attack the marchers; street fighting for two days, the dispersal of the masses, the arrest of Bolsheviks, including Trotzky, and an order for the arrest of Lenin. The purpose was to annihilate the masses by means of a premature clash; and it was a temporary success. But the counter-revolutionary coup in Berlin immediately strengthens the masses; a fundamental difference; and it will accelerate enormously the march of revolutionary events.

What the bourgeois press, with deceptive intentions, rather than from stupidity, describes as "riots," "anarchy," etc., really constitutes an explosive expression of the struggle for power. The conscious purpose of the counter-revolutionary coup was to annihilate the masses by demoralizing the Soviets, place all power in the "Socialist" Provisional Government, restore "order," and then, having conquered the revolutionary masses,