

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of Events in Europe.

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French Syndicalism

ON another page we publish the program of the French Syndicalists. It is a program of petty bourgeois paltering. It faces none of the real issues arising out of the war and the march of the Socialist movement in Russia and Germany. It attempts to safeguard labor by all sorts and sizes of legislation; it throws phrases about like a liberal politician; it approaches the vital questions of the hour, makes a bow and then veers off again, leaving them as it found them.

After fighting for democracy, the best the French Syndicalist movement, the one-time red, revolutionary terror of the moderate Socialists, can do is solemnly meet through its Federal Committee and demand the eight-hour day, a living wage, compulsory education and old age pensions. No wonder the capitalists tremble in their shoes! No wonder the "Tiger" of France boldly declares his program of reaction!

All through its wordy pronouncement we find not one word that would give an inkling that any of the representatives of French Labor ever heard of Capitalism. On every issue it discusses it declares for co-operation between the workers and their masters. It presupposes that the French soldier returning from the suffering of the battlefield is worth nothing more than a life of eight hours daily toil in the mine, factory and the field for the benefit of the few who own industry, that his child shall be entitled to go to school until the age of fourteen and that it shall go to the factory when its brain is just reaching the best stage of development, that his womenkind shall work in the factory by day, but, in deference to his having won democracy, they will be prohibited from swelling the profits of the capitalists at night also!

The high cost of living shall be reduced, so that the French workers may not starve to death, sick benefits must be paid him when he falls a victim to some horrible disease contracted that his masters may live in luxury, old age pensions shall be dangled before his eyes, though he will never suffer long enough to receive them, and if through the graciousness of French imperialism a brother worker from another country shall be permitted to increase the wealth of the French capitalists, why that fortunate member of the human race will also work eight hours a day, get enough to live on, and be allowed to long for an old age pension!

It is an admirable program for the capitalists and they are indeed foolish and lacking in foresight if they do not immediately institute it all over the world. The French syndicalists are indeed the friends of their masters and they use their knowledge of the workers to the best interests of those masters. We wait with interest that day when they will be rewarded for their good offices.

The Situation in Ireland

WHATEVER else may be left in doubt by the result of the recent elections in Ireland, one thing stands out clearly: the Irish people by an overwhelming majority have declared for independence. The election was fought primarily on the issue of self-determination, the Irish Labor Party withdrawing their candidates at the eleventh hour in order to let the people declare themselves squarely on the question. Irish Labor stands for a republic, not merely for political independence, but for a Workers' Republic, and as in Ireland, as is unfortunately the case at the present moment in the majority of the nations of

the world, a large section of the people have not yet arrived at the stage where they are ready to embrace the real solution of the problems that trouble mankind, the labor party withdrew from the fight in order that the people might declare themselves on the question of political independence. Seventy per cent. of the voters have decided in favor of a republic.

Having been given such a clear mandate by the people it was only logical that the Sinn Fein party should immediately translate that mandate into action and call into being the republic created in Easter Week, 1916. The men who will assemble in Dublin as the representatives of the new republic have a tremendous task ahead of them, but, as McDonough said in his speech to the English court-martial after he had been sentenced to death, "There is always a chance for brave men who challenge fortune."

If these 72 men and one woman, with the example of Russia and Germany before them, are gifted with sufficient clearness of vision to see that the day of the workers has already dawned, and have the courage to act accordingly, then they will rally round them, not only the workers of the east, south and west, but also the victims of the sweatshops and factories of the industrialized north-east of Ulster and banish for all time the religious bigotry, based on lies and misunderstandings, that have kept asunder the workers of Ulster from their brothers in the rest of Ireland. Jim Larkin, with not one-tenth of the opportunity, united the two sections in the great industrial battle of Belfast in 1907 and on that foundation can be raised the structure of Irish working class unity.

But there is a still greater opportunity lying before the Sinn Feiners, if they adopt a fearless policy and institute the rule of the workers in Ireland they can swing behind them the broad masses of the industrial proletariat of England, Scotland and Wales and once this is accomplished the English government is powerless.

If, however, they adopt a policy of petty bourgeois republicanism, if they waste their efforts on reforms, if they pander to the property owners, the industrial masters, the slum landlords, the small landowners then they will fail and the struggle will continue until such time as either the Irish or British workers awake to the realities of the situation and, freeing themselves, help free the world.

They Are Still There!

AFTER the announcement, more or less unofficial, that the Allies would not send any more troops to Russia, the movement of French troops was reported near Odessa, and the British fleet, after bombarding the coast of the Baltic Provinces, landed troops in Riga.

Immediately upon the result of the British elections becoming known France announces her intentions of continuing the offensive against Russia. None of the allied countries have declared war on Russia, yet from all sides the troops of the Great Powers war on the people of Russia. From all sides they advance on the Soviet Republic of the workers and the people of the allied countries know nothing of their movements except from vague reports in the newspapers.

Are these people who fought to make the world safe for democracy not to have any voice in what their governments are doing in Russia? The common people of the world have no cause to fight with Russia; she is not menacing any country; she desires to send no armies into foreign territory to bring destitution in their wake. She is not looking for "a place in the sun"; she merely wishes to conduct her own affairs after the manner of the wishes of the majority of her people.

There can be no question that the Russian people, as a whole, are overwhelmingly behind the Soviets. The Bolsheviks have remained in power over a year in the face of tremendous opposition, both from within and without. Counter-revolution has employed every weapon it is capable of using against the government of the workers, foreign troops have supported Czaristic and reactionary dictators, but still the Russian workers support the Soviets, support them with their lives. It is absurd to suppose that the presence of the Allies in Russia is for the benefit of Russia. There

can be only one reason for intervention. The Soviet government menaces the rule of Capitalism everywhere; it is the personification of the new ideals of the workers. Are the peoples of the world willing that their brothers in Russia should be crushed because they stand for the emancipation of the world's disinherited? Are the common people going to allow themselves to be made the tools of the capitalist interests?

Since it has become clear that the Allies are not wanted by the majority of the Russian people, since the fall of the German autocracy it is plain that the Bolsheviks are not pro-Kaiser, and new excuses have to be manufactured to explain the presence of foreign troops. The press has started to wage a new campaign of misrepresentation in order to strengthen the interventionists: it now develops that the Allies have promised to aid the Czecho-Slovaks, that this aid has not been forthcoming and as a result the poor Czecho-Slovaks are in imminent danger of destruction, that they are trying to get out of Russia but are unable to move unless the Allies help them and that the Allies must fulfill their promise to these poor people.

This story is in line with all the stories that the bourgeois press has given to the people of the Allied countries. The Russians are and have been all along desirous that the Czecho-Slovaks leave Russia. The Soviet government has no desire to wage war on the Czecho-Slovaks, they have offered to allow them to depart in peace many times, but the Czecho-Slovaks have allowed themselves to be made the backbone of the counter-revolution. They fought against the Russians but if they wish to they may depart to their own country. Why don't they go? Why don't all the foreign troops leave Russia? Russia wants to be left in peace. The workers of the Allied countries have no quarrel with the Russians. But alien troops are still in Archangel and Vladivostok. . . .

The British Elections

THE result of the British elections is a clear victory for reaction. Disguise it under what sophistry it may, the British Labor Party was soundly thrashed. Lloyd-George supported by a tremendous tory majority has swept the country and the landed gentry and the industrial barons are in the saddle as a result of the recent victory for democracy. All the so-called leaders of the British working class went down to ignominious defeat. Arthur Henderson, the idol of the liberal bourgeoisie of the Allied countries, was beaten and the British Labor Party is left leaderless. Asquith, who declared war, also met defeat, and the official Liberal Party, that raised Lloyd-George to prominence, is leaderless. Even the coalition Liberals will have to eat humble pie; only the tories, the aristocrats of the aristocrats, have gained a victory and Lloyd-George must henceforth toe the mark, even in utterance, as he has so long toed it in action.

The result is a clear mandate for the crushing of Germany, the invasion of Russia and the stifling of Ireland. The Khaki election of the Boer war days was a liberal victory in comparison with the recent hallooting. But the result is not so discouraging as would appear at first sight. The election of a liberal parliament, with a strong Labor minority would have been a safety valve for the unrest that will develop in England as unemployment increases, wages drop and hours lengthen. Reaction is the scion of victory, but revolution is the daughter of defeat. And the defeat of the British workers is not yet apparent, but it will develop much more clearly under the present conditions than if the liberals had succeeded. The issue will become sharper as a result of the election. Lloyd-George and the tories have been swept into power on a false conception of the situation, and when the illusions of victory have passed the reaction will swing farther to the left as a result of the tory ascendancy.

There is, however, another aspect of the question. The fact that none of the liberal-labor leaders of the Henderson type were successful merely shows that the attempt to hold the middle of the road is futile. None of the so-called strong men of Britain adopted a fearless policy. They were continually compromising with both sides. Declaring for labor and acquiescing with the government that was jailing the fearless advocates of labor's cause, declaring for the International and at the same time refusing to accept