

A White New Year

By John Reed

RED is the color of the revolutionary working-class. White is the color of the capitalist class.

In Russia, Finland, and now in Germany, the Red Guards, composed of armed industrial workers, made and are making the Revolution. And in all those countries the White Guards, made up of volunteers from the capitalist class, sons of factory-owners, bankers, university students, took up arms to defend their property. And when, as in Finland, the White Guards beat the Red Guards, they slaughtered the workers by tens of thousands. This state of things is called the White Terror. It is much more terrible than the Red Terror. If anyone doubts that the Governments of the Allied nations are capitalist Governments, let him remember that the Government of the United States protested against the Red Terror, and not only did not protest against the White Terror in Finland, but allowed representatives of the Finnish White Guards freely to come to this country, while at the same time the Finnish White Guards were supported by German troops.

Not only are there White Terrors in Europe, however, but also in our own country. The suppression of free speech and press, the jailing of Socialists and champions of the working-class, the lynchings, the tar-and-featherings, the assaults of soldiers on Socialist meetings, the ban on the red flag in New York, all this is called in the European Socialist press—the French and Italian papers, among others—the White Terror in America. The whole manner of the conduct of the war at home revealed very clearly what kind of a war it was, and for whose interest. The killing of Frank Little in Montana, the deportation of the copper miners in Arizona, the continued persecution of Tom Mooney in San Francisco, the establishment with arbitrary powers, of White Guard organizations all over the United States—local Councils of National Defense, American Protective League—all these incidents ought clearly to have proven that, in the eyes of the capitalist class, this was anything but a “War for Democracy.”

Every working-man, no matter how patriotic or how much in sympathy with the war he might be, must have been irritated at the way he was forced to buy Liberty Bonds and subscribe to the Red Cross, with the alternative of losing his job. The people of the Middle West will not soon forget the reign of terror which was inaugurated there by the bankers, the factory-owners and newspaper-editors during the war. The cloud of Government and private spies which made every man, loyal or disloyal, foreigner or American, be careful what opinions he expressed. . . . Is this free America, fighting for liberty; or Czarist Russia, the Kaiser's Germany?

Many honest and conscientious workers, however, argued that all this was a necessary condition of war. Moreover, their wages were comparatively high, work was plenty, and the Government was fighting their battles for them. When the bosses refused to listen to their just grievances, couldn't the workers appeal to the War Labor Board, where Frank Walsh was their powerful friend? Was not the War Labor Board compelling the bosses to allow organization—and even organizing the workers itself, forming committees which were empowered by the Government to deal with the employers' committee? Weren't wage-scales and conditions officially fixed by the Government? And finally, the coming of that Democratic Peace for which the American working-class gave up

half its power, and allowed its unions to be shot to pieces—Peace would surely mean an end to all injustice for the working-class.

But now that Peace has come, and instead of some kind of Government arrangement, the working-class discovers to its astonishment that the United States Government *has no plan of reconstruction*. Government contracts are cancelled overnight, throwing thousands out of work. Union organizations are destroyed, and the employers of labor intend to see that they remain so. Labor itself, leaning on the promises of Sam Gompers and President Wilson and Frank Walsh, suddenly wakes up to find that it has no plan of reconstruction, and is in a worse condition than it was before the war. The only class of people who have a plan of reconstruction are the employers of labor, factory-owners, bankers—the active capitalists. And their plan is simple. The open shop—even the old Unions destroyed; and the breaking down of the slender frame-work built up by the War Labor Board.

The workers of Bridgeport, the workers of Bethlehem, are now witnessing the discharge, not only of all active Union men, but also of members of the workers' committees instituted by the United States Government's War Labor Board. In these days, and increasingly as the days go on, it is clearly seen that the patriotism of the capitalist class only lasts as far as its profits.

Out in Arizona the detectives and hangers-on of the Copper Mine owners who deported striking miners—a great majority of them A. F. of L. members—these rich men and their paid thugs, who deliberately broke the law and spat on the Constitution, have been acquitted. Does any American worker now doubt the innocence of Tom Mooney, or the filthy crookedness of the California court and District Attorney which convicted him? The President of the United States sent a commission to California to investigate the Mooney case, and this commission demanded a new trial for Mooney—and yet he is sent to prison for life. And the I. W. W. leaders, sent up for terrible terms because of their alleged pro-Germanism, when not a shred of evidence against them was ever brought into court. And Eugene Debs, sentenced to ten years, and Rose Pastor Stokes, and all the brave men and women who dared tell the truth when it was dangerous, and now suffer in prison. . . . Is it difficult to guess why they were punished? While at the same time the grafters who looted government contracts, the profiteers—how many of them can you think of who are now serving jail terms? With such clear demonstrations before them, how is it possible for American workers to believe that Labor could ever get a square deal after the war?

The old-fashioned individualistic American workman says: “Well, what about it? Debs and Rose Pastor Stokes are Socialists; the I. W. W.'s are anarchists. Mooney—well, Gompers and President Wilson will see that he gets treated right. And besides, he isn't a member of my Union. All that isn't any of my business.”

But the capitalist doesn't talk that way. He says: “I don't care what they call themselves. They're members of the working-class, and they've got dangerous ideas. I can't let them corrupt the contented workers.” Capitalists stick together. And they treat the working-class as one class. In the Pittsburgh district the steel workers are forbidden to organize. When they want to hold a meeting for the workers it is al-

most impossible for them to get a hall. And when they succeed in getting a hall, the company detectives and the police line the street for a block in every direction, and take down the names of the men who are going to the meeting; and next morning, those men are fired. . . .

The capitalist class controls the American Government. Even Woodrow Wilson pointed that out in *The New Freedom*. The working-class supports them in power by voting for the Republican and the Democratic parties. Controlling the Government, naturally the capitalist class makes the laws, and makes the laws for itself. But even then the capitalists do not obey these laws, when it goes against their interest. Only the working-class obeys laws; it has to, for the police and the army are on the other side.

And yet the working-class not only composes the army and the police, but also turns every wheel and swings every tool in the country. If the working-class were to stop work, altogether, for even a few days, the control of the capitalist class in America could be shaken to its roots. If they voted their own candidates into public office, and passed their own laws, and then threatened to lay down their tools unless those laws were obeyed, America would belong to the workers, as it ought to belong to them.

Not only, however, does Organized Labor in America fight all other organizations, but the different craft Unions fight each other, pay little attention to each other's grievances, and sometimes even scab on each other. This is what is desired by the capitalist class, who, when the craft Unions become too strong for them, secretly support them against Industrial Union propaganda; it must not be forgotten that the capitalists are always struggling to get back to the Open Shop. . . .

In international affairs, today, the issue is beautifully clear. Soviet Russia is a Union on strike—a dangerous kind of Union, an industrial Union. The Governments of the Allied countries are trying, by every means possible, to break that strike. Armies of French, British, Japanese and American soldiers are in Archangel and Vladivostok. The Labor movements of the Allied countries feel sympathy with the great Russian strike—but, after all, Russia “doesn't belong to our Union”—or else, “Those Russians are just a bunch of anarchists.”

They like the German Revolution a good deal better. It is more “orderly.” Of course this Ebert and Scheidemann are Socialists, but, at the same time, they seem to be pretty “sensible” guys. So runs the thought of the old-fashioned Union man.

But the Capitalists also like the German Revolution. Their newspapers show every day how anxious they are that the Ebert-Scheidemann Government shall continue in power. The reason is clear; the Ebert-Scheidemann Government promises that “all the people” shall be represented. It stands for “democracy”—that same “democracy” we have, under which Tom Mooney goes to jail for life, and the Arizona copper kings get off without any punishment; under which the steel kings in Pittsburgh won't permit their men even to attend a Labor meeting, and the machinists of Bridgeport are re-classified.

There is but one alternative to this: Industrial Unions, the Socialist Party, the general strike and Labor Democracy, in which those who do all the work shall have all the power.

Then it will be a Red New Year. . . .