

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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War Legends

MR. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW is writing a series of articles for the Hearst papers in which he makes some very interesting disclosures. It will doubtless come as a surprise to many of those worthy persons who have so often indicted Germany and particularly those so-called Socialists who saw the end of civilization if Germany was not crushed to know that Mr. Shaw is now publicly stating that Belgium was caught "Between the pass and points of mighty opposites," that she had no choice in the matter at all and that the Allies told her, in effect, "that in the event of a German invasion England would defend the soil of Belgium, invited or uninvited, and the Belgians resigned themselves to their fate accordingly." He further states that "General French and other officers were instructed to prepare themselves for the command of the expeditionary force by studying the ground of Flanders. . . . The result was when the war broke out England was, up to the limit of her engagements, by far the best prepared of all the belligerents."

In other words, Shaw proves that Belgium was merely filling her usual role the role in fact for which she is maintained, of supplying the battleground for Europe. Any student of government of course knows that nations do not go to war for heroic purposes, but for material reasons, just as every student of history knows that the great powers of Europe frequently picked out Belgium as the scene of battle, but as Shaw points out it is necessary to have some high idealistic legends to talk about in order to force the common people into fighting and paying for the war. Socialists invariably pride themselves on the fact that they are concerned only with the realities of the situation and not at all with the camouflage that invariably covers the real motives of government; and the excuses, both written and spoken, of the various social-patriots now reveal them as either liars or impostors.

Shaw does not attempt to prove that Germany is not guilty of most of the things charged against her, any more than the Socialists who opposed the war in all countries attempted to prove it, but what he does prove is that the whole affair was a conflict between two sets of imperialists, that under the present system of society it was unavoidable, that both groups of belligerents recognized that it was unavoidable, and that it was only narrowly averted on a number of previous occasions.

He goes on to show that in each of the groups of belligerents there were exactly the same main elements: those who wanted the war immediately and those who wished to put it off as long as possible. Haldane and Asquith, according to Shaw, belonged to the latter element, while the jingoes were for war immediately. "The jingoes, on the other hand, were eager for a fight with Germany. Many of them advocated a surprise attack on the German fleet about a year before the war." Among those who wished to avoid plunging into the war, he classes the "commercial non-interventionists . . . who objected to meddling in continental quarrels, and knew that huge profits could be made out of a war by neutrals supplying the combatants with war materials. On their position I need not

expatiate, as it prevailed in the United States during the first years of the war."

The Hearst papers refer to the article as putting the "ban on war legends at the peace table," but although the main substance of the articles deal with actual facts and could doubtless be supported by documentary evidence, they will not put the ban on war legends, nor will they even stop the circulation of peace legends. Every war brings similar revelations when it is over, but just the same when governments decide to go to war again they will use the same methods and the people will believe them so long as Capitalism exists. A people who allow themselves to be exploited in the workshops and factories, who submit to continual want in their daily lives, who swallow the legends of their masters with regard to the things of life with which they are familiar will not cease to believe legends about those things which they do not understand. If people can be made to believe that Capitalism with its attendant unemployment, starvation, crime and black hideousness is something that they themselves desire, they can easily be made to believe any fable told them about the people of some other part of the globe.

There is only one way to put the ban on war legends, or peace legends; the establishment of a system of society wherein it will be unnecessary to spin these legends. Shaw shows clearly that as long as we have conflicting groups of interests so long we will have war. The only way to avoid war is to abolish these conflicting groups and this can only be accomplished by the intervention of the revolutionary proletariat and the introduction of Socialism.

They Are Still There!

WITH a flourish of trumpets the press announces that the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference has decided to recognize the Russian Revolution, but a perusal of the official text wirelessly to Russia reveals the fact that the only recognition accorded to the Revolution is that the Allies have decided that a revolution actually has taken place in Russia. That the Great Powers recognize the Revolution in the sense that the term *recognition* is usually understood in international affairs is by no means clear. All the recognition accorded to Russia is the grudging recognition that Manufacturers' Associations accord to strikers that they are unable to beat or starve into submission.

The note to Russia is teeming with the fine phrases of diplomatic language:

The single object the representatives of the associated powers have had in mind in their discussions of the course they should pursue with regard to Russia has been to help the Russian people, not to hinder them or to interfere in any manner with their right to settle their own affairs in their own way.

They regard the Russian people as their friends, not their enemies. . . .

They recognize the absolute right of the Russian people to direct their own affairs without dictation or direction of any kind from outside. They do not wish to exploit or make use of Russia in any way.

They recognize the revolution without reservation and will in no way and in no circumstances aid or give countenance to any attempt at a counter-revolution.

It is not their wish or purpose to favor or assist any one of the organized groups now contending for the leadership and guidance of Russia as against the others. Their sole and sincere purpose is to do what they can to bring

Russia peace and an opportunity to find her way out of her present troubles.

. . . They invite every organized group that is now exercising or attempting to exercise political authority or military control anywhere. . . . in Siberia, or within the boundaries of European Russia as they stood before the war just concluded, except in Finland, to send representatives, not exceeding three for each group, to Princes' Island, Sea of Marmora, where they will be met by representatives of the associated powers, provided in the meantime there is a truce of arms amongst the parties invited and that all armed forces anywhere sent or directed against any people or territory inside the boundaries of European Russia as they stood before the war, of against Finland, or against any people or territory whose autonomous action is in contemplation in the fourteen articles upon which the present negotiations are based, shall be meanwhile withdrawn and aggressive military actions cease. . . .

Beneath these fine phrases lies, what? When the associated powers decided on intervention in Russia their declarations were filled with honeyed words and behind those honeyed words were the guns and bayonets of invading armies.

"They regard the Russian people as their friends, not their enemies." Was it on account of this regard that the people of Vladivostok marched with the red coffins of their dead, their dead who died defending the Soviet against the Czecho-Slovak and Japanese troops? Is it on account of this regard that the Russian peasant said: "We listen and strain to hear the sound of the peasants and workers of other lands coming to the rescue. But it is in vain. All we can hear is the sound of the guns in the north." Are they the friends of Russia who bring "the sound of the guns" to the Russian workers and peasants?

"They recognize the absolute right of the Russian people to direct their own affairs without dictation or direction of any kind from outside." Was it because they recognized this right that the great powers of the world shipped their soldiers across the wintry seas to Northern Russia, that England attempted to force the peaceful young men of Canada to sail with arms in their hands for Russian ports, that the associated powers supported the Czecho-Slovaks when they attacked the local Soviets on their supposed peaceful march through Russia?

"They recognize the revolution without reservation and will in no way and in no circumstances aid or give countenance to any attempt at a counter-revolution." Is it because of this that the associated powers have supported every makeshift government that was formed behind their bayonets? Is it because they will not aid counter-revolution that the press of the Allied countries have lauded to the skies every Czarist adventurer who set up a dictatorship, that the associated powers have treated with every counter-revolutionary group in the country?

"It is not their wish or purpose to favor or assist any one of the organized groups now contending for the leadership and guidance of Russia against the others." Is it because of this wish that the armies of the associated nations have waged war almost exclusively against the Bolsheviks and the Soviets, that the powers invite every little group that has organized itself in some isolated spot, with the help of Chinese mercenaries and Cossack bandits, to attend this conference on equal terms with those who made the revolution and who during the weary months have consolidated and defended the revolution with their lives? Is it because of this wish that throughout the press of the associated nations the Bolsheviks have been slandered and vilified while the Czar and his junkers are the heroes of countless sentimental stories?

Is it because of all these fine sentiments that the associated powers demand a truce wherever the Bolsheviks are suppressing the counter-revolution and do not speak about a truce in Siberia where their armies are operating against the Soviets. Why is Siberia specifically mentioned when speaking of the representation and ignored when speaking about the territory where the truce and withdrawal of troops shall be effective?

There is only one way in which the associated powers can prove their oft-expressed friendliness towards the Russian people: they can withdraw their troops from Russia. It is only by such withdrawal that they

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