

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of International Events

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We need to have the clear party note sounded now and our position sharply defined as an uncompromising revolutionary party if we are to take and hold our rightful place in the international movement. We have got to plant our party upon the rock if it is not to be swept away in the oncoming tempest.—EUGENE V. DEBS, February 15, 1919.

The Torrent of Words

IT was a beautiful day in Boston, upon Woodrow Wilson's arrival; and it was a beautiful address. A cynic has said that words were made to conceal thought; in the President's case, words are used in a masterly way to conceal lack of thought. America and the world expected something definite; but there was nothing but indefinite phraseology. America is the hope of the world; a new era is in birth; all civilization must guarantee peace; a eulogy of the Peace Conference—all this and more was in the President's address; and all this means nothing. What is the League of Nations? How is peace to be preserved? What of the economic problems and antagonisms that split the nations under Capitalism? Mr. Wilson evades these serious problems, and instead of ideas, offers words. The one tangible thing in his address was that "I have not come to report the proceedings or the results of the proceedings of the Peace Conference; that would be premature." In other words, we are to know nothing—trust all to Woodrow Wilson! . . . "To make the world safe for democracy." . . . "Open covenants of peace openly arrived at—diplomacy shall always proceed openly and in the public view."

Governments and Peoples

THERE was a very interesting passage in the President's address: "When I speak of the nations of the world I do not speak of the Governments of the world. I speak of the peoples who constitute the nations of the world. They are in the saddle and they are going to see to it that if their present Governments do not do their will, some other Governments shall." Splendid, but inept. Does Clemenceau represent the people of France—this reactionary and imperialistic politician? Lloyd George's mandate represents only a small portion of the British people. The American delegation at the Peace Conference represents Woodrow Wilson alone. It is simply a clique of the people of the world—an imperialistic clique—that is assembled at Paris. There is just one government that really represents the people, in fact and in policy, and that is the Soviet Government of Russia. The proletariat's task is to see to it that "some other Government shall" make peace—their own Soviet Governments.

Deporting Civil Rights

THE Government seems determined to deport "alien agitators." The President returns home and speaks eloquently of liberty and civilization; but deportations proceed, and these deeds of reaction are the answer to his words of democracy. Some have already been deported; others are being deprived of elementary civil rights—it is not alien agitators who are really being deported, but what remnants of civil liberty remained in this country. And these deportations are carried on secretly and brutally. The American Government was the most repressive during the war; since the armistice other Governments have relaxed their repression, but ours has not—a supine proletariat invites repression. Among these to be deported are some Russians; will these be sent to

Archangel and Vladivostok, to be executed by the counter-revolutionary "governments" there maintained in power by the bayonets of the Allies? Labor—speak!

Lloyd-George—Wilson

THE most important aspect of the war was the conscious use governments made of democracy and petty bourgeois "Socialism" in the prosecution of an imperialistic war. It was a "democratic war" in this sense, that the belligerent governments used the ideology of democracy and even Socialism to get their peoples to "carry on."

Simultaneously with the development of a brutal Imperialism, there develops the instinctive revolt of the working class against its repression and torments. The capitalist class must reckon with this. There develops, accordingly, a deceptive democracy in the ruling class and in the governments' policy. Bourgeois democracy is absorbed by Imperialism, and becomes the instrument for the promotion of Imperialism.

This development is typical in Great Britain, and almost as typical in the United States.

Lloyd-George was the director of the war, the man who seduced the masses and whose prestige gave the war an appearance of democracy. Lloyd-George was originally an insurgent democrat, an enemy of the Tories and the aristocratic and moneyed democracy. He opposed the Boer War: he plumed himself upon representing the poor and the oppressed; he was bitterly denounced by the reactionary powers as an "enemy of society." Then came the imperialistic war; and Lloyd-George became the centre of it all, the idol of the plutocracy, to whom he offered the people up as a sacrifice. This development of Lloyd-George is not a personal matter, but represents the surrender of bourgeois democracy to Imperialism, its amalgamation with Imperialism.

Woodrow Wilson was elected to office as an insurgent democrat. He denounced corporate wealth, and corporate wealth denounced him. He spoke glowingly and captivately of the New Freedom, of the rights of the people, of democracy and the predatory character of Big Business. His denunciation of the "Six-Power Loan" to China was acclaimed as a repudiation of imperialistic diplomacy and as opening a new era in international politics. Wilson was re-elected President on the platform, "He kept us out of war," against the candidate of Big Business, Charles Evans Hughes. And then the country went to war: Mr. Wilson used democracy in the service of the war and Imperialism; and recently, his Government approved of an imperialistic loan to China by American financiers.

These two "democrats" dominate the Peace Conference and direct its policy against the peoples, against democracy, against Socialism.

This is the universal tendency in imperialistic nations; bourgeois democracy is corrupt, reactionary; it is the miserable agent of Imperialism. The proletariat must not be seduced by this fraudulent democracy. As against it, the militant proletariat must develop the conscious, revolutionary struggle for Communist Socialism.

The Terror of Revolt

INSTEAD of being allayed, the apprehensions of international Capitalism are being increased by events. Everywhere unrest and revolt are developing acutely, in Russia the masses are still in control, and becoming a formidable enemy of the bourgeois League of Nations; in France potential revolution has thrust forth its dread hand through the attempted assassination of Premier Clemenceau; in Hungary and Rumania Communist revolts are in action; in Great Britain, Lloyd George warns the people that "civil war" impends, while labor marshals its iron battalions for the great struggle; and in Germany the assassination of the Premier of Bavaria, Kurt Eisner, has unloosed the revolutionary energy and indignation of the masses.

Bourgeois society, which complacently accepted the terror of four and a half years of brutal war, is aghast at these dread acts of revolt. The London Daily Express recently said:

"The attempt upon Premier Clemenceau's life and the actual assassination of Premier Kurt Eisner of Bavaria makes one think that whole world is crazy, what with revolution and anarchy in eastern Europe, the renewed menace from Germany and the threats of a vast strike in England. The world seems to be turning upside down. Either citizens two years hence will say we were all mad or on the other hand man will be gripping a steel hammer and peering out for any enemy that might be approaching his cave, without any knowledge that the great war took place. It is a time when all men should rally to the cause of sanity and order."

But the "cause of sanity and order" is the thing that provoked the war, since it means Capitalism; it is the same thing that is provoking universal revolution,

since its oppression and torments of the proletariat are unendurable. What did they expect? That after unloosing the most terrible instruments of destruction, the masses should scruple to use these instruments for the spoliation of the people against the masters? Capitalism has itself armed the proletariat—now the proletariat raises its arms against Capitalism.

The assassination of Premier Eisner, as well as of other officials of the "Socialist" Government, was a conspiracy of monarchial forces. In the reaction that followed, the masses again attempted to seize control; the Munich Soviet proclaimed a proletarian dictatorship; and a new and implacable struggle developed. Again the Independent Socialists acted against the proletarian revolution by uniting with the petty bourgeois "majority" Socialists in the organization of a coalition cabinet, — repudiating proletarian dictatorship.

But the proletarian revolutionary struggle has again flared up in violent intensity. An appeal has been issued by the Spartacans and left Independent Socialists to overthrow the Government of Saxony; a general railway strike has been proclaimed, and railway communications are being cut. Plauen and other industrial centres are reported under Spartacan control. Left Independents in Leipsic have issued a manifesto against the Government organized by the Constituent Assembly, and demanding its overthrow. Even Haase has bitterly attacked the new Government, which is preparing a "loyal" army under Hindenburg, to crush the proletarian revolution.

The civil war in Germany rages. Scheidemann says: "The ground is shaking under our feet." The "Socialist" Noske is being laudably praised by the bourgeois press for his "excellent" methods of "restoring order." But the Spartacans renew their activity, more general and more intense.

In Bavaria itself, a struggle has broken out between the Soviet and the Government. The Soviet is arming the proletariat and although the government refuses to arm the unemployed, this is being done by the Spartacans. The Munich Soviet still persists in its declaration of a proletarian dictatorship.

The Constituent Assembly marked a distinct swing to the right. It was dominated by reactionaries; the attitude of Ebert, Scheidemann & Co., of the Social Democrats was directly counter-revolutionary — in comparison, the policy of Kerensky was ultra-revolutionary. This, together with reactionary plots and the social and economic crisis, produced a new spirit of revolt among the masses.

One thing was clear: allow the Constituent Assembly to control and the Soviets would have to be abandoned. The Soviets and the Constituent Assembly cannot exist together: one or the other must go. But the masses feel that the Soviets are their own, their own peculiar instruments of action: they feel that the move to dissolve the Soviets is a reactionary coup; and as this feeling develops and becomes clear, the Soviets will be compelled to swing more and more to the left, until they will have to usurp power. The existence of the Soviets is a guarantee that, sooner or later, the Spartacan policy will control.

The situation is still potential of proletarian revolution. Capitalism trembles at the spectre of revolutionary Communism. The struggle is not over: it is just starting.

Imperial America

IN his Boston address, President Wilson played many variations upon the theme of an idealistic and disinterested America. The United States, according to him, has no aggressive purposes and no selfish plans to promote; it is the harbinger of a new order; it was the United States that showed Europe what the war was really about, and our country has the task of using its influence to bring about a world where there shall be no war and no aggression. Said the President:

"In the midst of it all, every interest seeks out, first of all, when it reaches Paris, the representatives of the United States. Why? Because—and I think I am stating the most wonderful fact in history—because there is no nation in Europe that suspects the motives of the United States."

Perhaps; but Russia is a nation, and Soviet Russia suspects, and suspects justly, the motives of the United States—of our Capitalism. Among the "interests" that seek out the representatives of the United States are the agents of Czarism and Capitalism in Russia; and these are heard and dealt with; among the "interests" are Capitalism in Germany, which appeals to the American representatives to help them crush Bolshevism in Germany. In its attitude toward Russian and German Capitalism, America is not "unselfish," since the retention of Capitalism in those two nations means a new lease of life for Capitalism in the United States. The motives of the United States are not suspect in this sense: that it has no territorial ambitions in Europe; but it has another ambition—