

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.

Lenin on Imperialism

IN this issue *The Revolutionary Age* starts the publication of *Imperialism—the Final Stage of Capitalism*, by N. Lenin. This great study, which will be completed in about twelve instalments, is an important contribution to Socialist economic theory. It is a clear, unassailable analysis of the economic basis of Imperialism, of its character and purposes. On the basis of economics, of the facts of production, Lenin proves that Capitalism has become parasitic and is verging on collapse, that Imperialism is the final stage of Capitalism. In other words, Imperialism has brought the objective conditions for the Social Revolution, for the final struggle against the capitalist class. Lenin's study clinches the point, and, together with his pamphlet on *The State and the Revolution* (just published by *The Class Struggle*) contains the whole content of the position of revolutionary Socialism. They require serious study by the Socialist who wishes to adapt theory and practice to the requirements of the revolutionary epoch into which the proletariat has now emerged.

Reaction Prepares

THE American proletariat is in a state of awakening, of general unrest. Peace has loosed serious economic problems which Capitalism appears incompetent to solve, Congress impotent to understand. Disastrous economic conditions are ahead. Revolutionary ideas and concepts of revolutionary action are making their impress upon the minds of the American workers. Strikes assume a more menacing character. Revolutionary agitation is active. The answer of the government and Capitalism is—repression, as usual. The Espionage Laws, more repressive than the Alien and Sedition Laws of the early days of our Republic, are still in force, in spite of the fact that after the signing of the Armistice President Wilson told Congress, "Thus the war comes to an end." The government has released some political prisoners and lowered the sentences of others, but the majority are still in prison; while those who have secured "clemency" are not the ones of revolutionary convictions. The campaign for drastic laws against agitators is developing large scope, and Congress will pass these laws; in some states, as in Oregon, laws have been passed that prevent agitation, compel it to become secret. A period of severe repression is coming, is here. Reaction prepares; we must prepare the proletariat and Socialism.

The Mooney Strike

THE preparations for the general strike on July 4 to demand the release of Tom Mooney are not very apparent. Somewhere, somehow the whole thing is being sabotaged. It was stupid, in the first place, to designate July 4, a national holiday. But it was done, in ways that are dark and mysterious. It is up to the radical elements in the labor movement and the Socialist Party to assume control of this movement, to see to it that there are large demonstrations on July 4 and a general strike on July 5. The locals of the Socialist Party, unless they are yellow, must develop a campaign to get the unions to strike, to get unorganized workers to strike. This is one of our most important issues at this moment. And we must broaden the scope of the strike to include the release of all pol-

itical prisoners. This protest strike, if it is general in action and in demands, will mark a new chapter in American labor history—the first American political strike. The political strike is a necessary instrument of the proletarian struggle: the workers must use their economic power for political purposes.

Fear Chastens Them

THE Allies threatened all sorts of reprisals against Germany. Ebert, Scheidemann & Co. warned the proletariat that if it didn't behave, if it became Bolshevik, the Allies would crush Germany. But, while the Bolshevik menace in Germany was still largely potential, the Allies were rigorous and implacable. But now that Bolshevism in Germany is developing new power, the Allies are more considerate, are making concessions, are abandoning their threats of terrible reprisals. They dread Bolshevism as the devil dreads holy water, and fear chastens them. Capitalism respects power alone, a threat to its supremacy will immediately alter its policy. The proletariat must recognize this fact; it must develop that class power which alone can wring concessions from Capitalism and ultimately annihilate the accursed system.

A Bourgeois League

THE League of Nations, mythical bringer of a mythical universal peace, is promoting a sort of civil war in each nation. The belligerent groups disagree about the League—but they agree on one thing: the promotion of bourgeois supremacy. How this is to be accomplished is the basis of the disagreements.

The proposed Constitution of The League of Nations is suffering more at the hands of its friends than at the hands of its enemies. This alone would indicate its inherent defects.

Does an opponent charge that too much power is given the other nations?—the friends of the League answer: the Executive Council controls, and of the nine members five will represent Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and the United States. This being so, it is not a League of Nations, but an imperialistic alliance against the nations.

Does an opponent of the League charge that it invades national sovereignty?—the friends of the League answer: not at all, each nation is still sovereign. But national sovereignty must necessarily wreck a League of Nations: Capitalism cannot relinquish national sovereignty, hence any real League is impossible while Capitalism endures.

Does an opponent of the League charge that it compels disarmament?—its friends answer that disarmament is to a point "consistent with national safety." The interpretation of this could allow for large armaments.

The *New York World*, in its March 6 issue, declares that the arguments used against the proposed Constitution of the League of Nations are in substance identical with the arguments used against the Federal Constitution, and infers that inasmuch as the Federal Constitution "worked," the League Constitution will "work." Precisely—work to promote the bourgeois supremacy.

The Constitutional Convention, which adopted what is now the Constitution of the United States, was a reaction against the ideals of the American Revolution. The men with real revolutionary spirit violently opposed the Constitution, which was the expression of a counter-revolutionary movement to repress the masses and democracy. The protection of property rights was the dominant idea of the Convention, the general opinion being that "property is the main object of government." This opinion was crystallized in the Federal Constitution and Government, which have worked—to promote bourgeois supremacy and property rights.

Let us cite "authority." Woodrow Wilson, now President of the United States, says in *Division and Reunion*:

The federal government was not by intention a democratic government. In plan and structure it had been meant to check the sweep and power of popular majorities. . . . The government had, in fact, the interest of the mercantile and wealthy classes. Originally conceived in an effort to accommodate commercial disputes between the states, it had been urged to adoption by a minority, under the concerted and aggressive leadership of able men representing a ruling class.

The *World's* comparison, while maladroit for its own purposes, is very appropriate. It indicates, unconsciously, the bourgeois motives of the proposed League of Nations. The Peace Conference is a counter-revolutionary body; it abandons even the ordinary bourgeois liberal ideals that provided the war its ideology. The League of Nations "is meant to check the sweep and power of popular majorities" (in action through actual or potential proletarian revolution). It has "been originated and organized upon the initiative and primarily in the interest of the mercantile and wealthy classes . . . urged to adoption by a minority, under the concerted and aggressive leadership of able men representing a ruling class."

The League of Nations, under Capitalism, is necessarily bourgeois. It is a tragic deception, a cynical betrayal of the aspirations of the masses. A League of Socialist nations—that is the purpose and the struggle of the revolutionary proletariat.

Tragic Lessons

THE conscious German proletariat, marshalled by the Spartacan communists, is engaged in a tragic struggle against the bourgeois—"Socialist" reaction. Acquiring new energy and initiative out of its previous defeats, the revolutionary proletariat of Germany has for two weeks been fighting a desperate fight in the general civil war that has flared up in all districts, and particularly in Berlin.

It is an implacable struggle. The Government of the People's Butchery, the gangsters of Ebert, Scheidemann & Co., have organized efficiently the massacre of the Revolution. They have disarmed all the revolutionary troops; they have placed the "loyal" troops under control of the brutal officers of the old regime; and, under the direction of the "Socialist" Noske, these troops are crushing the revolutionary masses. And this government, which is massacring the Revolution, which was responsible for the assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, which has issued the order "Shoot on sight" and is murdering prisoners, has the impudence to accuse the Spartacans of "savagery." In its massacre of the revolutionary forces, the Ebert-Scheidemann government has the support of Junkerism and Capitalism in Germany, of the Allies, of reaction in all the world. This is their Socialism!

The struggle which is now raging in Germany has universal consequences; and it has particular consequences for Soviet Russia. The Allies are afraid to send sufficient troops to crush the proletarian Socialist republic; but they are developing a new policy against Russia: to use the bourgeois—"Socialist" government of Germany in an offensive against Soviet Russia. Open avowal of this new policy has been made in certain quarters. Food is being rushed to Germany. Secretary Lansing the other day delivered an address in Paris which the *Boston Globe* thus summarizes: "We have won. German militarism is smashed. Germany is suffering. When we look at devastated France we see how Germany deserves to suffer. But now we find ourselves in a unique dilemma. Germany has no money to pay damages, and, unless we lift her out of the mire, we shall have a second Russia on our hands." The German Government must be used and aided to crush Bolshevism in Germany; then, it is being declared, it will be used to crush Bolshevism in Russia: Marshall Hindenburg is reported as organizing an army for the job. After the Ebert-Scheidemann gangsters finish the dirty work, they will be discarded by the imperialistic reaction, which will take control; after Germany has done the job of crushing Socialist Russia, she will feel the weight of impositions by the imperialistic League of Nations. That is the plan. The revolutionary struggle of Socialism is international. . . .

It won't work, we feel confident. The revolutionary masses in Germany have not spoken their final word, by any means; Socialist Russia can take care of herself; and the struggle has not yet started in other nations. . . .

But the situation is tragic, and instructive. The "Socialism" of the social-patriots is being used to crush Socialism, to do the hangman's job for the imperialistic bourgeoisie. These "Socialist" hangmen use means and a savagery that the bourgeois would not dare use: the camouflage of Socialism deceives the masses. Is it clear that the "Socialism" of the social-patriots, of majority Socialism in Russia and Germany—everywhere—is the worst enemy of the proletariat in action?

That is not all. The "centre" Socialists, the Independents captained by Haase, Kautsky & Co., are equally betraying the proletarian revolution. They hesitate and compromise. They attack the Ebert Government, but they refuse to direct the action of the proletarian masses. They use revolutionary phrases but avoid revolutionary deeds; and this demoralizes the masses. They swing to the left, and at the crucial moment of action they hesitate and swing back to indecision and compromise. The Independents are masters of words; they are petty bourgeois in spirit and action.

The lessons of the German Revolution are tragic, but useful. Clearly, emphatically, they indicate that "right" and "centre" Socialism are equally unfit to direct the proletariat to the conquest of power, are the betrayers of the proletariat. Revolutionary Socialism must wage uncompromising war upon this "Socialism" as an indispensable preliminary to the emancipation of the proletariat.