

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of International Events

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The Reaction in Germany

THE majority Socialists in Germany, speaking through the Prussian War Minister, Colonel Reinhardt, are unblushingly defending their policy of mercenary suppression. These are the gentlemen who are condemning the "terror" in Russia! The majority Socialists, through the Ebert-Scheidemann Government of the People's Butchery, have concluded an alliance with the most sinister elements of the old regime against the Spartacan Communists and the Revolution. The recent battles in the civil war have ended in a temporary victory for the Government. But a new revolution is developing; crushed, the Spartacan Communists garner new energy and resources from their defeat. There is a new revolutionary movement preparing to establish a Soviet Republic. The Government, accordingly, is still considering incorporating the Soviet Congress as the lower chamber of the parliament. But this compromise must accelerate the demand for a real Soviet Government. And, while the Ebert-Scheidemann Government uses murder and terror to crush the German Bolsheviks, they are trying to impress upon the Allies the idea that, unless Germany gets "good" terms, the Bolsheviks will conquer. It is characteristic of the Ebert gangsters to thus play the game of the old regime in all sorts of dark and unscrupulous ways. The revolutionary proletariat in Germany will yet act against this infamy.

Berne and the League

THE Berne Congress of the Great Betrayal, of the social-patriots and petty bourgeois Socialists, approved of the League of Nations on the basis of Capitalism. They, of course, wanted the League to be "democratic," a "League of peoples, and not of governments,"—as if that aspiration meant anything or could be realized while Capitalism controls the world socially, economically and politically. These social-patriots imagine they can influence events by words, instead of by means of the class power of the revolutionary proletariat. They will not influence the actual structure of the proposed League; but they will mobilize the unconscious masses in favor of a League that is a betrayal of the masses, a means of preventing the masses from engaging in the struggle for the conquest of power by the proletariat. The bourgeois League of Nations must necessarily be a counter-revolutionary instrument,—as is proven by the attitude toward Soviet Russia of the "Big Five" nations organizing it. There is a real need for a League of Nations; but it must be a League of Nations and not a League against the Nations,—and a real League can be nothing else than a League of Socialist Soviet Nations. The moderate Socialist, in this as in all great issues, is petty bourgeois, pacifist and reformist, and directly counter-revolutionary.

Unkind and Stupid

THE Berne Congress of counter-revolution elected a "commission" to go to Russia to "investigate" Bolshevism. But the French Government has just refused passports to this "commission of three." This is not only really unkind, but stupid. Here are men willing to do the dirty work of Capitalism; here are men representing a Congress which, through Kaustky, Eisner, Henderson, Branting, Ramsay MacDonald and Renandel, denounced Bolshevism as the ruin of Russia and the enemy of Socialism; here are men who are willing to stultify Socialism and mobilize the masses against the Bolsheviks,—and the French Government refuses them passports! The majority at the Berne Congress, which was solid in its denunciation of the Bolsheviks, declared that there was no need of an investigation—precisely the attitude of the bourgeois reactionary; but they appointed the commission as a sop to the wavering; and then, after all, the report of this commission might be a means of fighting the Bol-

sheviki not alone in Russia, but, more important, in the nations and movements represented by these betrayers of Socialism. But then bourgeois governments are proverbially stupid; they often don't recognize their real friends, which in this case are the moderate Socialists. The answer of the Soviet Government to this "Socialist" investigation commission was blistering: *we will allow you to come to Russia and accord you the same courtesy that we would accord a commission representing any bourgeois government.* This should rouse a sense of shame; but the "Socialist" counter-revolutionary moderate is dead to shame.

The Wrong Campaign

IT is being realized that the bourgeois campaign in this country against Bolshevism adopted wrong methods and has proven a miserable fizzle. Says the New York Evening Post of March 18: "People have learned to shrug their shoulders about the Red Terror because newspapers that should have known better have poured crimson and vermillion over the original red. Insistence on the imbecile story of a 'communal ownership of women'—the product possibly of half a dozen disordered anarchist minds in a single district in Russia—has driven many people to regard everything printed against the Bolsheviks as lies." (In the same editorial the Post makes this excellent point: "Insistence must not be on the facts of the Red Terror, but the question whether the Red Terror is being used to build a new life or chaos.") But if the bourgeois campaign does not consist of lies and exaggerations, of what can it consist? The facts and the truth are with the Soviet Republic and the Bolsheviks; but the facts and the truth would arouse the sympathy and acceptance of the American proletariat: the bourgeois campaign must be one of lies and slanders, or else collapse. But it must collapse anyway, since lies and slanders are bound to bring their own refutation. It's a terrible dilemma for the ruling class.

In the Shops

THE campaign against American Bolshevism has curious and interesting developments. That there is a mighty Bolshevik upsurge among the masses is evident. The campaign clearly shows that the ruling class is impotent, ultimately, to tackle the Bolshevik problem, and will be crushed by it. The developments of this campaign reveal, not so much the material for immediate action perhaps, as the material out of which can be organized the iron battalions of the proletariat, by means of interpretation and clarification.

The problem is, how to direct and organize this Bolshevik upsurge in the masses? An indication is provided by a letter to the Boston Herald of March 18, written evidently by a reactionary workman in the shop. The correspondent says:

We in the factories feel the Bolshevism menace in the very air. It isn't hazy or indefinite or academic. It's real, organized and practical. The men are reading *The Revolutionary Age* as they eat their luncheon; they sing revolutionary songs at their work; they hoot and jeer as employers and visitors walk through the buildings; they circulate notices calling for a nation-wide strike to free Mooney; they post on their benches circulars calling for freeing of the "political prisoners;" they have let it be known by underground methods that labor will not take the fifth Liberty loan; they have endorsed and financially supported the Lawrence strike, in defiance of its repudiation by organized labor in Lawrence and by the secretary of labor; they openly announce their intention of forcing a revolution and taking over control of industry.

The correspondent then proceeds to offer suggestions for action against these agitators. But these are unimportant—and stupid. The important thing is: *Agitation is proceeding in the shops, in the plants, where the workers think as workers.*

We know of groups of comrades in mills and shops who form small groups to finance agitation among their fellow workers. One group has distributed ten thousand copies of *The Revolutionary Age* twice in their plant, and two thousand Bolshevik pamphlets. This is being done in scores of places, and constitutes a splendid means of agitation.

Our agitation must converge on the mills and shops where the workers are employed. They may not come to meetings; they may not read leaflets distributed to them on street corners or at their homes; but literature distributed in the shop interests them, arouses discussion, is effective. The workers must be taught to think in terms of the industry where they are employed, think as proletarians. The power of the proletariat lies in its control of industry; our agitation will never develop into action until we can get the workers to down tools, march out of the plants, get other workers to come out, go out into the streets, and develop the political mass strike of the proletariat.

Our Bolshevik policy must, while emphasizing the ultimate implications, adjust itself to the requirements of immediate action: out of this immediate action, if it is in accord with the revolutionary tendency of the proletariat, will develop the larger action. At this moment, one of our immediate tasks is to arouse in

the proletariat the concept and the action of the political strike—a strike in which the workers use their industrial mass action for political purposes. The proposed general strike to demand the release of Tom Mooney would be of a partial political character; it must be converted into a real political strike to release all political prisoners. We must get the industrial masses into action; we must concentrate our energy upon the mills, shops and mine—preparing the final struggle.

Cottin's Defence

THE Anarchist who tried to kill Clemenceau, and wounded him—Emile Cottin—has been condemned to death by the French Government. The condemnation is universally approved by those who equally approve of the government assassins in Germany, but who protest violently against the "Red Terror" in Russia.

The summary condemnation of Cottin is a clear act of class justice. He did not kill Clemenceau—but he is immediately condemned to death. The assassin of Jean Jaures—Vilain—did kill Jaures; but he was not condemned to death; indeed, Vilain has not even been brought to trial. Almost simultaneously with the news that Cottin had been condemned to death comes the news that Vilain may be brought to trial soon. Is the French Government afraid of revelations, afraid that proof might be produced of the complicity of government agents in Jaures's assassination?...

Cottin's act was an act of terror. The French Government has answered terror with terror. So be it. We do not object: it is the social war, the corrosive corruption of bourgeois society. But we do object to the vile hypocrisy of using and approving the white terror of the bourgeoisie and condemning the red terror of the revolutionary proletariat. We do object to the smug moral attitudes bourgeois society assumes in the matter of terror. It is true, terror is terror; but it makes all the difference in the world whether the terror is used to preserve a corrupt and corrupting social system, or whether it is used as a brutal but necessary factor in destroying the old order and creating the new.

The first statement of Cottin, printed elsewhere in this issue of *The Revolutionary Age*, is a valuable document in two aspects: the light it throws upon conditions in France, and the light it throws upon the psychology of the Anarchist.

Cottin's recital of the French Government's treatment of the Russian soldiers in France is terrible. It is a scathing indictment, a recital of the infamy that characterizes bourgeois reaction. We had suspected much, and heard a little, about the Russian soldiers in France; but the actual facts are more terrible than the rumors. The arrest of the Soldiers' Soviet formed immediately after the March Revolution; the secrecy concerning the fate of these men, probably condemned to torture and death: the arrests and executions of individual revolutionary soldiers; the massacre of detachments of Russian soldiers who refused to fight; the campaign to induce them to go to Russia to fight their own people and their own comrades, for the counter-revolution; the attacks made upon these soldiers by French troops to the strains of the Marseillaise; the imprisonment at hard labor of the members of the Soviet for refusal to accept the proposal to send the soldiers to Russia to aid the Czecho-Slovaks after Brest-Litovsk; and, most infamous of all, the exile of 40,000 of these Russian soldiers to Africa as slaves—all this, and more, is an immemorial indictment of class brutality, of the cold, merciless reaction that controls France. This is the government that refuses to associate with the Soviet Government, which it stigmatizes as "assassins" and "barbarians"!

These are terrible facts. And they must arouse protest and action in the class conscious proletarian. To the Socialist, they are a call to awaken and organize the proletariat, to develop that mass action out of which revolutions arise, and which alone is an answer to the bourgeois terror. To Cottin, the Anarchist, however, they were a call to individual action. And, as his own statement indicates, not revolution but revenge was the ideological impulse of his deed. There was in his mind, of course, the idea of revolution; but revolution under emotional impulse had merged into revenge. The feeling is emotionally conceivable, considering the infamous acts of the government of Clemenceau; but it is not a revolutionary feeling, it is the feeling of a man emotionally broken down by the stress of oppression.

Individual action may appear violently revolutionary; but when the actual test of the revolution comes, when mass action is the order of the day, then the man of individual action becomes reactionary, cannot adapt himself, since his milieu is completely different from that of the revolutionary proletariat in action. It is significant that, in Russia, virtually all the former terrorists, led by Savinkov and Burtsev, were and are still against the Bolsheviks; they are using the tactic of assassination against the members of the Soviet Government—are implacably counter-revolutionary.