

The Revolutionary Age

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The International Revolutionary Epoch

IN July 1914 the world was jogging "peacefully" along. Poverty, misery, mass murder in the form of small or colonial wars, breadlines, police brutality, unemployment, pogroms and all the accompaniments of capitalist society were ever present it is true, but as they were isolated, seemingly disconnected and did not interfere with the general routine of society, the world was considered to be at peace. Here and there individuals and small groups reacted to the misery pregnant in Capitalism and set to work to reform the system through liberalism, laborism and parliamentary Socialism. Here and there revolutionary Socialists called for the abolition of the system and the establishment of a new order of society but for the most part they were looked upon as extremists, theorists and impossibilists. . . .

Then the storm clouds gathered and ere the masses had realized that the sky was darkening the clouds burst, deluging the earth in the blood of world war. Europe resounded with the battle call of trumpets, mobilization swept over the lands like a plague, leaving the wail of forsaken women and children in its wake. Parliamentary Socialism, caught in the trap of its own reform platforms, made a weak gesture of dissent and succumbed to the general hysteria almost over night. After the first shock of disaster the masses quietened their fears with the hope of sudden victories and the early cessation of hostilities. But the victories did not materialize and gradually the realization of a sustained and overwhelming disaster permeated the minds of the people.

Instead of the passing days bringing hope of a decisive battle the people saw new nations become involved and the conflict spread over Europe and over the world. The magnitude of the disaster stunned the peoples and through their age long training they instinctively turned to destroy each other and to preserve that with which they had previously been dissatisfied—the capitalist structure within their own countries. But as the fighting continued, as the misery accumulated, and as the hopelessness of relief through victory increased the masses turned from the misery of the front line trenches to the misery within their own countries and dissatisfaction with that which they continued fighting to preserve increased. . . .

Louder and louder grew the clamour for the end of the war—but as yet it was for an end through victory. Governments rose and fell in quick succession but the war continued and victory seemed as far off as ever. Gradually the masses began to ponder, to ask why. Why did not victory crown their efforts and then why was the war being fought and then why did the war begin?—The governments answered—victory could only come through renewed sacrifices, civilization was threatened, the enemy started the war. . . . And the masses fell back grumbling, convinced against their wills, only to again ask why. More and more the idea grew that the war was born out of the system of society and that when the war ceased other wars would begin.

And then Russia sickened of the war and of the Czar. The masses rose against the Czar and in a night he and all the power he represented crumbled into dust. The workers and peasants dazed at their own power were content to believe that they had accomplished their task, that now their misery would

end, that they were at last free. But nothing changed except in name, the war continued, the land was not theirs, the slavery in the factories was not ended. Liberals and parliamentary Socialists took control but the masses remained in bondage. Then revolutionary Socialism intervened and pointed the way to the new society.

Conscious of their power by their victory over Czarism and awakened to a realization of the fundamental causes of their misery by the intervening months of bourgeois government, the workers, the soldiers and peasants of Russia marched to the assault on Capitalism, conquered, and proclaimed their victory to their brothers throughout the world.

With the rise to power of the Russian proletariat Capitalism was shaken to its foundations. All over the world the class conscious workers pointed the way to their fellows and the war took on a new aspect. Russia proposed peace only to meet with summary rejection by her erstwhile allies and a lying acceptance by her military opponents. Then followed the Brest-Litovsk negotiations and the workers of all lands received an answer to their questions. But they were unable to understand and Capitalism continued the war.

Russia declared peace. But Germany continued to fight against her and gradually the Allies also advanced upon her. From within reaction created a new front and out of the confusion developed a new phase of the war—war between the Russian workers and the governments of the world, aided by the deposed government within Russia. Alone the workers, peasants and soldiers prepared to defend their victory. To the workers, peasants and soldiers of all lands they appealed, pointing to the reasons for the misery of war and the misery of peace. Against Germany in particular did the Russian masses oppose their ideas, and the German workers listened and grasping the purport of the masses in its immediate application they moved against their masters and the Kaiser was swept away on the wrath of the people's masses.

The war ended. The peoples of the world rejoiced but before the echo of their shouts had died away the sound of guns was heard in Russia. . . .

The war was over but fighting continued and the workers were amazed. Peace was to bring relief from all their burdens, but peace was here and the fighting continued, the burdens were still heavy on their shoulders. In Germany the war gave place to a new war; a war between the workers and the bourgeoisie. Throughout the other countries the workers began to feel the real weight of the burdens they carried—and strikes developed. From all the victorious countries the statesmen assembled to conclude the terms of peace. The peoples of Europe greeted the arrival of the peace delegates with joy—the war was to be definitely ended, peace was to be restored to a stricken world. But as the Peace Conference met and the days passed it became apparent that peace was still afar off. Instead of settling the war, plans were laid for combatting the rise of the masses, armies remained mobilized and Europe instead of being divided on a gigantic battle front between two contending armies became divided into a series of internal and external fronts with armies divided against themselves.

Out of the new situation it gradually developed that a new battle line was forming, not on national lines of nation against nation, but on class lines of class against class. And then the Hungarian workers, peasants and soldiers rose against the bourgeoisie and seized all power.

With the success of the proletarian revolution in Hungary the new lines of antagonism emerged in bolder relief. The great powers assumed a new offensive for the express purpose of crushing the revolution and restoring the bourgeoisie to power, and the Hungarian workers turned to Russia for aid.

The struggle against Russia, which had been waged under a hundred forms, became the struggle against Hungary and definitely emerged as a struggle against the insurgent masses everywhere. From out of the old war waged by nation against nation developed the new war waged by Imperialism against revolution.

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The era of the Social Revolution is here. When Russia threw off her chains, only to find herself within a ring of steel, the revolutionary epoch was born. So long as the Russian workers maintained their victory so long they menaced Capitalism but while the fight was continued within the borders of Russia, Capitalism hoped to crush revolution and once more entrench itself in its old position. Revolutionary Russia recognized that while she alone defied Capitalism the revolution might prove to be still born.

But the revolution has spread and each day brings new developments. . . . Capitalism masses its forces to crush the workers but its forces are already opposed to the task that lies ahead and the cost of crushing the revolution in Russia and Hungary will be the outbreak of the revolution within the forces sent to crush it. Spurred on to new efforts by the developments in Hungary the proletariat of Germany are preparing to once more advance against the German bourgeoisie. Within Serbia the fight is on. . . . The period of the final struggle of the workers against Capitalism is here. . . .

Russia has waited sixteen months, defending the revolution with her life, and now the struggle begins to bring results. The revolution is on but it is not a matter of weeks or even months but of years. In this, the final struggle, there will be an ebb and flow—now sinking down to the dark depths of defeat, now rising up to the shining peaks of victory, but always in action.

The struggle is on and must be fought to a finish, the cleavage is clear; bourgeois reaction triumphant and the working masses crushed to earth for generations to come, or victory for the workers and the establishment of Socialism throughout the world. But the fact of the struggle shows the failure of Capitalism to satisfy the masses, no longer by cajolery and trickery can it be maintained, force is its only safeguard. But the people are weary of force and the waging of the war necessary to crush the revolution will itself inevitably bring revolution.

The struggle is on and in its very nature it must be a prolonged struggle but the result is certain. Out of the fight must emerge the triumph of the workers and the establishment of the Socialist federation of the world.