

Left Wing and I. W. W.

THE world is in crisis, which needs the most resolute energy and flaming initiative of the conscious proletariat, imposes the imperative necessity of a concentration of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat for action and the conquest of power. This revolutionary unity is the order of the day. How accomplish this unity, this concentration of the real revolutionary forces of the proletariat? Our Russian comrades answer, in their proposal for an International Communist Congress and the New International of revolutionary Communist Socialism. The unity and concentration of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat must proceed upon the basis of general Bolsheviki theory and tactics, in accord with the experience of the proletarian revolution in Russia and in Germany. The old concepts of petty bourgeois Socialism and Anarcho-Syndicalism have been consumed, while incomplete concepts of the Revolution have been completed, tempered by the revolutionary fires into the irresistible, flaming sword of the proletariat in action.

The conscious rebel has learned from the experience of the proletarian revolution in Russia and in Germany,—including the Bolsheviki themselves. The concepts of mass action and proletarian dictatorship in theory assume definite form in their realization as life itself. Theoretically, Marxism is in action in the proletarian revolution; partly, I. W. W.-ism; but each in a developed form, in definite expression, compelling an adaptation and revision of the old by the compulsion of experience. Marx projected the necessity of a new proletarian state and the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat; the proletarian revolution has developed this by organizing the form of this state,—the transitional state of the organized producers, the federated Soviets, implicit in Marxism and the Paris Commune, but in its final, definite form. The Soviet Government (which is itself temporary, serving the political function of suppressing the counter-revolution and crushing the old order) is developing a new "government" side by side with itself, the industrial administration of communist Socialism,—as projected in the concepts of industrial unionism. This, say the I. W. W.'s, confirms our theory; it does, but only partly, since the decisive thing is the character of the transition period, the means by which the proletariat constructs the industrial state of Socialism. And the experience of the proletarian revolution demonstrates (and is confirmed in theory) that the construction of this industrial "state" proceeds after the conquest of the power of the state by the revolutionary proletariat, under the control of proletarian dictatorship. And this vital phase of the revolution is not included in the old I. W. W. concepts,—although, perhaps, implicit; but there are I. W. W.'s who refuse to draw or emphasize this implication. . . .

There has been no revolutionary group in America who possessed the whole of the theory and practice of the Bolsheviki-Spartacan revolution. And most of these groups still cling to their old concepts. There is now only one revolutionary group in complete accord, in its Manifesto and Program, with Bolshevism, and that is the Left Wing of the American Socialist Party. And our task is the unity and concentration of the revolutionary forces of the American proletariat on a Bolsheviki-Spartacan basis.

Our contributor, Harold Varney, regrets "the growing coolness between our revolutionists of the Left Wing and our revolutionists of the I. W. W." But it is not the Left Wing that is cool to the I. W. W.—it is the I. W. W. that is cool to the Left Wing. Varney accuses us of "with deliberate evasiveness" having "endorsed 'revolutionary unionism'" and not specifically named the I. W. W. This is unjust. There is but one revolutionary industrial unionism in action, and that is the I. W. W.—a fact clear to all except the fool and the hypocrite. The Left Wing makes it clear that the I. W. W. is a vital phase of our revolutionary movement; but in the measure that the I. W. W. clings simply to its old concepts and refuses to supplement them with the concepts of the proletarian revolution in action, in that measure must the Left Wing assume a critical attitude toward the I. W. W., in the interest of the concentration of the revolutionary forces of the American proletariat on the basis of the proletarian revolution itself.

It is not the Left Wing, but the I. W. W. (that is to say, certain of the "leaders" of the I. W. W.) who repudiate the experience of Bolsheviki-Spartacan practice. . . .

Varney himself makes this clear. Speaking of the disputes between the Parliamentarians and the Industrialists (and the Bolsheviki Left Wing in the Socialist Party is a development of the old Industrialist Left Wing of the Party) Varney concludes:

Then came Bolshevism. With immortal letters of blood and iron, it wrote the answer to the problem. With the ruthlessness of destiny, it closed the doors of an epoch. Socialism was no longer hypothetical.

It came. And when it came, it was not Parliamentary. Victorious Bolshevism scrapped the State and proclaimed itself Industrialist. The controversy was no longer debatable. Russia gave to the American Industrialists the unanswerable argument of fact.

It did—but only in one sense: that the revolutionary proletariat must destroy the political state and establish an industrial "state." But this was not accomplished as the I. W. W. proposed (organize the majority of the workers industrially and then seize industry) but by means of revolutionary mass action, the conquest of the power of the state, proletarian dictatorship, and the organization of a partly political (proletarian) government under whose protection the new industrial state proposed by industrial unionism is being organized.

In this we see a confirmation and a supplementary of the I. W. W. concepts. But Varney says:

Possibly, the I. W. W., of all the world's movements, was shaken least by Bolshevism. . . . The final link in I. W. W. theory had been forged at last. But there was nought in the new happenings to compel a revision of belief. The I. W. W. had always been anti-parliamentary. The I. W. W. had always sought Industrialism. The I. W. W. had always preached Bolshevism while the Bolsheviki were themselves groping. [Surely this is vividly imaginative.] . . . The I. W. W. knew that Bolshevism was but the Russian name for I. W. W.

This arrogant assumption of having always possessed the "final truth," this refusal to admit that revolutionary experience has introduced a vital supplementary to the I. W. W. (an attitude equally characteristic of the moribund remnants of the S. L. P.) is wrong in fact and dangerous in practice. Bolshevism is not the Russian name for I. W. W.—and I. W. W.-ism is simply potential Bolshevism. Bolshevism does not require an I. W. W. "revision of belief," but it does impose a supplementary. That which was never adequately clear has been demonstrated by Bolsheviki experience—the means for the conquest of power, the character of the transition period to Socialism. This is decisive.

"That movement will win America which reflects American economic conditions," says Varney, and proceeds to show an apparent contrast between Russia and the United States economically: precisely what the yellow Socialist did in Germany and is doing in our country. . . . "In Russia," says Varney, "the psychology of the situation indicated mass political action as the means of proletarian expression. In America and Britain, mass political action is unprecedented: mass unionism is the traditional proletarian weapon." But when unionism becomes revolutionary, it attacks Capitalism; it must use its power to conquer the state; its action then becomes political and develops into revolutionary mass action. Unionism is simply a phase of the proletarian revolution: mass action unites and concentrates the organized and unorganized masses for the conquest of power. Varney is still confused on the means: not the seizure of industry by the industrial unions (how utopian to imagine you can ever organize the overwhelming majority of the workers under Capitalism in industrial unions!) but the seizure of the power of the state by means of revolutionary mass action—that constitutes the tactic of the militant proletariat. The proletarian movement must be political in the revolutionary sense (parliamentarism being simply a phase.) It is not a problem of differences in the emphasis of industrial development, but of Capitalism and the proletarian struggle. The tactics of the international revolutionary proletariat are identical, with minor changes in emphasis determined by minor local conditions.

Let the I. W. W. align itself with the Communist International, with the policy of the Bolsheviki-Spartacan revolution. Left Wing and I. W. W.! There must be unity and concentration of the revolutionary forces on a communist basis: will the I. W. W. reject this unity and concentration?

The Tactics of the Right

A National Executive Committee motion, made by N. E. C. member L. E. Katterfeld:

The "Amnesty" Conference

"That we instruct the Executive Secretary to cancel immediately all arrangements for the proposed 'Amnesty' Conference."

Comment: The proposal for an "Amnesty" Conference has fallen flat. The revolutionary elements both within and without our Party repudiate it.

They realize the foolishness of flirting with "liberal" and "reform" organizations that support Capitalism and deny the class struggle, to free the victims of the class war.

A Socialist Party Convention can accomplish far more for our imprisoned comrades than any "Amnesty" Conference that has not even power to act.

Our own membership look upon the proposal as a clumsy attempt to side-track the Party Convention for which there is a real need.

Under these circumstances an Amnesty Conference would be a miserable fizzle.

Waste no more of the Party's funds on it. Concentrate on the task of building our own organization to gain power for the working class. Then will the prison doors open and our comrades go free.

Levien — Bavarian Bolsheviki

THE dominating personality in the proletarian dictatorship recently proclaimed in Munich, Bavaria, which is now engaged in a desperate civil war, is the Spartacan-Communist Dr. Levien. An interesting picture is given of Comrade Levien in *The Nation* by Oswald Garrison Villard (who is a bourgeois liberal, for which allowances must be made.) Mr. Villard is writing of a session of the Bavarian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, held February 28, two days after the assassination of Kurt Eisner:

The session today of the Councils-Congress, composed of delegates from the Soldiers', Workmen's, and Peasants' Councils through the country, which was to have yielded its revolutionary control to the dispersed Landtag, was quite exciting in itself. Suddenly from the left there burst in armed men, yelling "Haende hoch!" For a moment we journalists failed to take it all in, until we were covered from the dais below and told to be quick about it. Some of these invading gentry had a revolver in each hand, and as everybody recalled the tragic events in this room just a week ago there were shouts of "Don't shoot, don't shoot!" The spectators had all been searched for arms, but we wondered, none the less, as it soon appeared that the object of the raid was the seizure of Bolsheviki leaders, whether shots would not be fired, especially by the guard behind us. There are usually about eight guards to keep us in order, but when it occurred to me to look for them they had absolutely vanished. Dr. Levien and Kurt Muhsam, the two chief radicals, were seized at once. Levien was roughly thrown from his chair and beaten. The members of the Government present were as much in the dark as everybody else until the leaders of the party announced that the garrison of Munich, headed by my friend, the Minister of War, and by the commander of the city and the chief of police, had decided that the Councils-Congress should be no longer kept from doing its work by any group of Bolsheviki. The blunder was apparent at once. It certainly ends the career of the Minister of War. Fortunately, one of the youngest leaders was quick to see that if this Congress was to survive it must at once right the wrong against its parliamentary immunity. On his motion a committee was sent to demand the return of the seized members. In half an hour they were back, with Dr. Levien there—his head bound up, one hand rather swollen cheered and applauded as he entered, even the extreme right. "But, gentlemen," he said, very earnestly, "one does not applaud a man who has just been beaten as I have been beaten. I hope we shall now go on with the order of the day." It was a magnificent exhibition of calmness and coolness. It is commonly said that he could proclaim himself dictator of Bavaria tonight if he wished.

March 1—Calling upon a young physician last night, I found Dr. Levien there—his head bound up, one hand rather swollen—and heard from his own lips what happened. They took him out into the hall, held revolvers to his breast and forehead, and told him to prepare for his end. By his coolness he probably saved his life. From others it appears that in twenty minutes he had talked his captors into lowering weapons and that by the time he was reached by the committee from the Landtag he had been freed by his guards, whom he had so thoroughly convinced of being misled that they pointed their revolvers at their own leader. Thus this *coup d'etat* came to naught.

Levien is the first real Bolsheviki I have seen at close range. He is coarse, but obviously extremely able. He wears high Russian boots, and a torn and battered uniform (he served in the German army during the war), and has no income save his pay as a member of a soldiers' council. With his stained bandages he looks a pirate chief. Yet, unattractive as his personality is, his power attracts and fascinates. There was a typical young Russian woman-student literally kneeling at his feet. Levien was educated at two universities, has his Kant and Hegel at his fingers' ends, is master of three languages and three German dialects, at least, and has a splendid library (his sole possession, he says) in Switzerland, where he was studying when the war began. He knows exactly how to speak to the masses. "Why do you not make yourself dictator?" one of those present asked him. "I should need four strong men to see me through," was the reply, "and they are not to be had." He put his finger on the sore spot. There are no strong men standing at the front here; that is the great difficulty. I had already come to the belief that Levien's is the strongest personality here, unpleasant as it is. He can well afford to sit back and wait.

"France to get Syria" say the headlines; and underneath is a little paragraph explaining the word "get". We hear that the Syrians believe that the word is used in the American slang sense.