

# The Revolutionary Age

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## They Incite to Murder and Riot

**T**HERE are great actions coming in our social struggle. A general and implacable clash will flare up, in which victory will come to that class which has prepared most adequately.

Two developments now characterize American Capitalism—the development of an aggressive Imperialism, and the development of an aggressive struggle of labor against capital.

American Capitalism has conquered in the great war. American Capitalism is now a world power—“our” Imperialism shares with Great Britain the dominion of the world. The United States has not only made billions of dollars profit out of the war and secured a position of economic dominance, it has equally secured great military prestige and the appetite for more military conquests. The beast of American Capitalism is being convulsed with military hysteria. It has felt its strength, and it wants to use that strength again and more completely.

The industrial transformation wrought by the war in the United States is unparalleled in economic history. Prior to the war, American capital owed the world three billion dollars; to-day, the world owes American capital about five billion dollars. This country has become, thanks to the war, the chief money market of the world; and its finance-capital is now very much of a world dictator. Moreover, the requirements of the war have produced a new efficiency in American industry, larger capacity for production; and this means either that America will have to conquer new markets, or that industry will not absorb all the available workers, and a terrific unemployment crisis arise. But capital requires profits; and American capital must secure new markets, must find the means for absorbing its surplus capital and surplus products. This means militarism and aggression against undeveloped nations—a tendency already apparent in the campaign for “intervention” in Mexico. This tendency is all the more dangerous, since the Peace Conference in Paris, which re-divided the world among the conquerors, has recognized the priority of interest of United States Capitalism in Central and South America.

But, simultaneously, a new spirit is developing in American labor. The great revolutionary events in Europe have left their impress on the minds of our workers, an impress as yet vague in expression, but bound to assume a more definite character under the influence of events. But, even more important, a general unrest is developing out of definite American conditions. The workers did not share the “war prosperity” which created hundreds of new millionaires out of the bones and blood of the dead in Europe; and, moreover, the adjustment to peace conditions is such that millions are unemployed while the future is fraught with danger. The workers are losing their jobs, while the employed are being given cuts in wages, at a time when the cost of living, instead of declining, is actually soaring again. This condition of economic crisis is bound to become worse as Europe resumes normal production, and competes in the world markets which during the war were practically monopolized by the United States.

The new spirit in the American labor movement is expressed in many ways. It was apparent in the great general strike in Seattle, in the Butte strike, in the large number of strikes in which more aggressive tactics are being adopted. It is apparent in the upsurge of a more radical spirit in large unions of the A. F. of L., in the revolt of these unions against the bureaucracy and in their agitation for a general strike to compel the release of class war prisoners. And it is apparent, again, in the Left Wing movement in the Socialist Party, which is about to conquer the party for revolutionary Socialism.

But this aggressive class spirit in the American labor movement is most clearly apparent in the violent campaign of the hirelings of Capitalism against Bolshevism and Socialism, against the conscious proletariat.

A large and intensive campaign is being carried on against revolutionary ideas. Money and talent are be-

ing mobilized in this campaign, the government and the individual thugs of the “Loyalty” leagues uniting in this glorious work of reaction.

But the reaction senses the fact that this is not simply a matter of words, or of propaganda; but that vital economic forces are bringing a crisis. They are desperate. They feel that much more drastic means must be resorted to to crush the proletarian menace. *And they are consciously organizing a campaign of terrorism in order to crush the militant proletariat in blood.* This campaign has three aspects:

1. Provocation—the hirelings of Capitalism are trying to provoke an “uprising” of the workers which will provide them with a pretext for violent and bloody suppressions.

2. Terrorism against Socialists—the law and the thug are uniting to suppress Socialist meetings and

terrorism used against Socialists on May Day. In this, again, the purpose is obvious: to provoke a clash by means of which a real reign of terror may be organized by the Government.

Now comes another great plot, this time in Chicago. Federal agents and police there have “discovered” a “plot” for “an anarchist uprising, a campaign of terrorism and a series of bomb outrages” scheduled for July 4. Five arrests have been made—one of them a girl characterized as “Queen of the Anarchists.” Sergeant McDonough of the Chicago police says: “We regard this as an exceptionally important arrest.” But the whole thing simmers down to agitation for a demonstration and strike for the release of our political prisoners. . . .

Is there a conscious policy in all this? There is. Capitalism is apprehensive; it feels that the crisis is coming, and that with every day that passes the revolutionary forces will acquire more power and influence. *Capitalism is trying to provoke a test of strength at a time when it is strong and its enemy weak.* It is trying to provoke a revolt that would be suicidal for the militant proletariat. And the reasoning of Capitalism is diabolical: either our terrorism will produce a revolt, which we can easily crush; or our terrorism will not produce this revolt, in which event our terrorism will wipe out the revolutionary movement. Playing both ends against the middle!

This provocative movement proceeds to a chorus from the gutter and the palace of “hang the Bolshevik,” “break their heads,” “wipe them out in blood.” . . .

The law of this country provides that incitation to riot and murder is a crime punishable by imprisonment. Perfectly innocent comrades of our’s have been imprisoned for alleged violation of this law. But not one of the bourgeois inciters to murder and riot have been punished. These bourgeois inciters to violence started a murder-riot in Cleveland; but it is the victimized Socialists who are being imprisoned. A brutal police and a degenerate Sergeant of Police deliberately shoot down our comrades in Boston; but it is the Socialists who are being imprisoned. That vile thing that once was a soldier, Sergeant Guy Empey, publishes a magazine *Treat ‘Em Rough*, in which he consistently urges violence against the Socialists; but the War Department protects him. Mayor Ole Hanson of Seattle publicly urges “hanging places” and “cemeteries” for the Bolsheviks and I. W. W.’s, but Mayor Ole is acclaimed as a hero.

No! The law is class law, used against the proletariat and for the capitalists. These inciters to murder and riot are doing excellent work for Capitalism, and Capitalism protects them.

The revolutionary Socialist is a realist. Revolutionary propaganda to him is not an immediate revolution, but waging the class struggle in accord with the particular requirements of the moment.

The times are critical. They require action that is at the same time critical and aggressive. We shall meet Capitalism in the open, and give blow for blow. But we shall not allow Capitalism to determine our tactics, we shall determine our own tactics in our own way, in accord with the actual strength of the revolutionary proletariat.

The vital thing is that this terrorism is used against labor, not simply against the revolutionary Socialists, who are the conscious representatives of labor. Terrorism is used against strikes which are not at all revolutionary in character; but Capitalism knows that labor must sooner or later acquire the consciousness of revolutionary Socialism.

We shall neither advance precipitately, nor hesitate, nor retreat. We shall wage the revolutionary struggle in our own way and in our own time, come what may. The bourgeois terror is a factor that we can use to awaken the workers, to organize them for the great struggle.

Capitalism can neither provoke nor frighten militant Socialism. Our answer is to intensify our revolutionary agitation, to marshal the iron battalions of the proletariat for action and the conquest of power.

They cannot provoke us. But we shall prepare.

*The “fourteen points”  
have become fourteen  
daggers thrust at the  
heart of the peace and  
liberty of the world, —  
thrust directly at the  
heart of the colonial  
peoples and of the proletarian revolution in Germany.*

demonstrations, to assault our comrades, to provoke riots.

3. Strikes—the conscious use of terrorism in strikes is being resorted to by the hirelings of Capitalism; in Seattle and Butte the soldiers were mobilized against the strikers, in Lawrence the police are using a machine gun while they and their hirelings practice violence against the strikers and their representatives.

Consider the events of the past three months. “Plot” after “plot” has been “discovered” in which “radicals” were to start an “immediate” revolution. There was the great “plot” in New York City; scores were arrested; “blue-print” plans were produced by the police of an alleged plan of seizure of the Government—and the whole thing fizzled out. The “discovery” was given great publicity in the press, the fizzle was not.

Then there was the “great bomb plot” directed at prominent men. Dark were the hints of a “nation wide” conspiracy, dire were the threats against the radicals. Arrests were promised—“prominent Reds to be caught in net,” but so far one arrest alone has been made, and that of an innocent bourgeois gentleman. This “plot” was obviously a “plant,” the work of *agents provocateur*; but it provided an opportunity to inflame the populace to produce and justify the