

A Call to the American Workers

By N. Lenin

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COMRADES: At the end of my letter of the 20th of August, 1918, addressed to the American workers, I wrote that we shall find ourselves a beleaguered fortress as long as the rest of the armies of the international Socialist revolution do not come to our aid. I added that the workers will have to break with Gompers and Renner. Slowly but surely the workers are approaching Communist or Bolshevik tactics.

Less than five months have passed since I wrote these words. It can be said that during this time the world revolution of the proletariat has matured with tremendous rapidity, and the workers in various countries have gone over to Communism and Bolshevism.

At the time of my writing the above mentioned letter, on the 20th of August, 1918, our Bolshevik party was the only one which determinedly fought the old Second International, which lasted from 1889 to 1914, and which was shamefully bankrupted during the imperialistic war of 1914-18. Our party was the only one which unqualifiedly took the new road, which leads away from Socialism and Social Democracy, contaminated by an alliance with the brigand bourgeoisie, and toward Communism—the road which leads away from petty bourgeois reformism and opportunism, which had completely permeated and still permeates the official Social Democracy and Socialist parties, and toward real proletarian and revolutionary tactics.

Now, on the 12th of January, 1919, we find a great number of Communist proletarian parties, not only within the confines of the former empire of the Czar, as in Lettonia, Finland, Poland, but also in Western Europe—in Austria, Hungary, Holland, and finally in Germany. When the German Spartacus League—led by its well renowned and celebrated leaders, by such real supporters of the cause of the laboring class as Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin and Franz Mehring—finally broke with the Socialist traitors of the Scheidemann and Suedekum stamp, these social patriots (Socialist in words but patriotic in action), who forever contaminated themselves by their alliance with the imperialistic brigand bourgeoisie of Germany and with Wilhelm II.; when the Spartacus League took the name of the Communist Party of Germany, then the foundation was laid for the real proletarian, the real international, the real revolutionary Third International. The Communist International became a reality. Its formation has not yet been formally established, yet, in fact, the Third International is already acting. [It has since been organized, at Moscow, March 2-6, 1919.]

Now, no conscious workingman, and no sincere Socialist, can fail to see what shameful treason against Socialism was perpetrated by those who, in line with the Mensheviks and "Social Revolutionists" of Russia, with the Scheidemanns of Germany, with the Renaudels of France and Vanderveldes in Belgium, with the Hendersons and Webbs in England and with Gompers & Co. in America, supported "their" bourgeoisie in the war of 1914-18. This war has completely revealed itself as an imperialistic and reactionary war of plunder on the part of Germany, as well as on the part of the English, French, Italian and American capitalists. They now begin to quarrel among themselves about the division of the captured spoils, about the division of Turkey, Russia, of the African and Polynesian colonies, of the Balkans, etc. The hypocrisy of phrases about democracy and the "League of Nations" is being vividly exposed when we see that the left bank of the Rhine is being taken by the French bourgeoisie, when we see that Turkey and parts of Russia (Siberia, Archangel, Baku, Krasnovodsk, Ashabad, etc.) are being captured by French, British and American capitalists, when we see that the division of the spoils of brigandage makes for increased hostility between Italy and France, between France and England, between England and America, between America and Japan.

Side by side with these cowardly penny-wise mongers who are stuffed with the prejudices of bourgeois democracy, side by side with these "Socialists," who yesterday defended "their" imperialistic governments, and who today connive themselves to platonic "protests" against "military intervention in Russia"—side by side with them we see in the Allied countries an increase in the number of those who have chosen the Communist road, or the road of MacLean, Debs, Lorot, Lazzari, Serrati—the number of those who understand that only the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the annihilation of bourgeois parliamentary government, only Soviet rule and proletarian dictatorship can put an end to Imperialism and safeguard the victory of Socialism, insure a permanent peace.

Then, on the 20th of August, 1918, the social revolution was still confined within the borders of Russia, and the power of the Soviets, i. e., the whole state power, in the hands of the Council of the representatives of the workers, soldiers and peasants, seemed to be (and in fact was) a purely Russian institution. Now, on the 12th of January, 1919, we may notice the

powerful Soviet movement, not only in parts of the former Czar's empire, as Lettonia, Poland and Ukraine, but also in Western European countries; in neutrals: Switzerland, Holland, Norway (of those that have suffered from war), Austria, Germany. The German revolution, which is particularly important and characteristic, as it takes place in one of the most developed capitalistic countries, at once took the Soviet form. The whole trend of the development of the German revolution, and, especially, the struggle of the Spartacides, the sincere and only representatives of the proletariat against the alliance of the Scheidemannist and Suedekumist elements, with the bourgeoisie; all this clearly shows the historic aspect of the conditions in Germany.

It is a question of either Soviet power or bourgeois parliamentarism, under whatever name (as a national or constitutional convention) it may appear.

This is the world-historic formulation of the question. Now it can be said, and it must be said, without any exaggeration: the "Soviet power" is the second world-historic step, or stage, in the development of proletarian dictatorship. The first step was the Paris Commune. Marx's analysis of the meaning and importance of this Commune in his brochure, *"The Civil War in France,"* shows that the Commune gave birth to a new type of state, the proletarian state. Every state at this time, even the most democratic republic, is nothing but an apparatus of one class for the purpose of suppressing the other classes. The proletarian state is the apparatus whereby the proletariat suppresses the bourgeoisie. Such suppression is unavoidable because of the savage, desperate and unscrupulous opposition which is evinced by the land owners and capitalists, the whole bourgeoisie and all its supporters, all exploiters, when their downfall begins, when the exploiting of the exploiters begins.

As long as the property of the capitalists and their power is being protected the bourgeois parliament, even the most democratic parliament in the most democratic republic, is an apparatus for the suppression of millions of toilers through small groups of exploiters. Socialists who are fighting for the deliverance of the toilers from exploitation must use the bourgeois parliaments as a tribunal, as one of their bases of propaganda, agitation and organization, as long as our struggle confines itself within the boundaries of the bourgeois social order. Now, when world history has placed on the order of the day the question of the destruction of this whole system, the question of the crushing and suppression of the exploiters and the transition from Capitalism to Socialism—to confine ourselves now to bourgeois parliamentarism, to bourgeois democracy, to picture it as "democracy" in general, to cloak its bourgeois character, to forget that universal suffrage, as long as capitalist property is being protected, is merely acting for the bourgeois state—means shamefully to betray the proletariat, to go over to its class enemies, the bourgeoisie, to become a traitor and a renegade.

These two currents within world Socialism, of which the Bolshevik press was already tirelessly speaking as early as 1915, appears before us with particular clarity when illustrated by the bloody struggle and civil war in Germany.

Karl Liebknecht—his name is known by workers in all countries, everywhere, but especially in the Allied countries, for it stands as a symbol for the fidelity of a leader to the interest of the proletariat, and for fidelity to the Socialist revolution; this name is a symbol for the real convinced, devoted, self-sacrificing, pitiless struggle against Capitalism; this name is a symbol for the ruthless war against Imperialism—not in words but in action, a struggle ready for sacrifice, even when one's own country is in the grip of the hysteria of imperialistic victories. Together with Liebknecht and the Spartacides stands everything that has remained pure and really revolutionary among the German Socialists, all that is the most conscious within the proletariat, the exploited, in whose heart the spirit of rebellion is rising and giving birth to revolution.

Against Liebknecht stand the satellites of Scheidemann and Suedekum and the whole gang of despicable servants of the Kaiser and bourgeoisie. They are traitors to Socialism, such as Samuel Gompers, Webb, Renaudel and Vandervelde. Here we have that upper stratum of the working class which has been bought by the bourgeoisie, and which we, the Bolsheviks, addressing ourselves to the Russian Suedekums, the Mensheviks, used to call "the agents of the bourgeoisie

within the labor movement," and which in America is more appropriately designated by an expression that is magnificent in its expressiveness and striking truthfulness, "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." The newest and most modern form of Socialist treason has found expression in this feature: In all the civilized countries the bourgeoisie, either by colonial exploitation, or by pressing financial profits from formally independent weaker nations, is plundering a population many times as numerous as the population in their own country. Here we have the economic possibility of the "super-profit" for the imperialistic bourgeoisie. And the fact that this bourgeoisie, to some extent, can use this "super-profit" in order to bribe that upper stratum of the proletariat and change it into a reformistic, opportunistic, revolution-scared petty bourgeoisie. Between the Spartacides and the Scheidemanns are fluctuating the Kautskians, the soulmates of Kautsky—in name independent, in action the most dependent in everything and in all connections dependent today upon the bourgeoisie and the Scheidemanns and tomorrow on the Spartacides. Sometimes following the first mentioned, sometimes the other ones. People without ideas, without character, without politics, without honor . . . a living embodiment of Philistine confusion. In words they recognize the social revolution, but in fact they cannot grasp it when it begins, instead of which, in their renegade manner, they advocate "democracy" in general, whereas, as a matter of fact, they are advocates of bourgeois democracy.

In all capitalistic countries, any thinking worker can recognize in this treasonable position, which is analogous conditions of national and historical nature, just these three fundamental tendencies, both among Socialists and Syndicalists; for the imperialistic war and the beginning of the world revolution of the proletariat, has revealed with the utmost clearness these ideological-political tendencies.

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The above lines were written before the base and bestial murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg was accomplished by the Ebert-Scheidemann government. These lackeys of the bourgeoisie entrusted the German White Guards, who were defending the sacred possessions of capital, with the task of lynching Rosa Luxemburg and shooting Karl Liebknecht in the back, under the manifestly fraudulent pretext that he had sought to "escape." (Russian Czarism, which choked the revolution of 1905 in blood, frequently found it a useful pretext, in shooting down offenders, to accuse them of having attempted to "escape.") Simultaneously these lackeys vested the White Guards with authority, as if they had been guilty of nothing, since their government, of course, stood above all Parties. One cannot find words to express all the vile, contemptible devices resorted to by these creatures who pretend to be Socialists. Evidently history has chosen a course which is to compel the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" to "run the whole gamut" of low-down, bestial, vile actions. The stupid Kautskians, in their paper *Die Freiheit*, may talk about a judgment seat to consist of representatives of "all the Socialist Parties" for they continue to call the Scheidemanns, those beadles, and serflike lackeys "Socialists." These heroes of Philistine obtuseness and petty bourgeois timidity do not even understand that "a court" is an organ of state power; but the struggle and the civil war in Germany are precisely concerned with the question of who is to hold this power, either the bourgeoisie whom the Scheidemanns will "serve" as lackeys and instigators of pogroms, or the Kautskians, the jurists of "pure democracy," or the proletariat, which will overthrow the exploiting capitalists and break down their opposition.

The best representatives of the proletarian world international, the unforgettable leaders of the proletarian Socialist revolution, have fallen, but their blood admonishes new and ever new masses of workers to desperate struggle, if not for life then for death. This struggle will lead to victory. In the summer of 1917, we in Russia passed through the "July days," in which the Russian Scheidemanns, Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionists, were also cloaking the victories of the White Guards over the Bolsheviks, by calling them victories of the "state power," when the Cossacks in the cities of Perograd lynched the worker Veinoff for circulating Bolshevik proclamations. We know from experience, how quickly such "victories" of the bourgeoisie and their slaves cured the masses of their illusions as to bourgeois democracy, as to "universal suffrage," and other such things.

Within the bourgeois governing classes of the Entente we can now observe a certain hesitation. One section of these circles recognizes that the process of dissolution of the Entente troops in Russia, where they are aiding the White Guards by advancing the blackest monarchism and feudal landlordism, has already be-

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