

The Revolutionary Age

A Chronicle and Interpretation of International Events

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Another Peace of Aggression

THE terms imposed upon Austria by the Allies are terms of a victorious Imperialism, bent upon aggrandizing itself and maintaining its supremacy. The Austrians are bellowing in protest; but to what avail? They accept Capitalism and reject the Revolution: Capitalism must exploit and oppress them. Dr. Renner, the "Socialist" head of the Austrian Peace Delegation, was all urbanity at Paris, making a "favorable" impression upon the diplomats. But urbanity does not accomplish results for the proletariat. Dr. Renner is the Austrian Scheidemann, who during the war used all means to uphold the war and the government. He is a social-patriot, and the evils of his policy are now becoming apparent to the Austrian proletariat. The Peace Conference in Paris, while it reveals the malignity and incompetence of Capitalism, equally reveals the degenerate character of the dominant moderate Socialism. In the revolutionary class struggle alone lies the hope of the proletariat and of Socialism.

But the revolutionary class struggle is flaring up in Europe. Peace—"progressive" or reactionary—cannot still it. The Junker government of Poland is mobilization against the Communist—trying to disguise its utterly reactionary character. In Germany, a new Spartacan revolt is in preparation. Austria itself may break loose in a new revolution. In France, in Italy, in England, the proletariat is awakening, seething with an unrest that may soon become conscious revolutionary action. The Socialist Party of Norway has affiliated with the Communist International.

Peace is aggression, since Capitalism is aggression. Communism is the proletarian answer to predatory Capitalism. Moderate Socialism and Capitalism must make way for the revolutionary conquest of power by the proletariat.

Mass Action in the Unions

IT is becoming characteristic of the large strikes now in action that they are not only a revolt against the employers, but equally a revolt against the old unions, and the reactionary officials in control of these unions.

These strikes are mass movements, developing out of the upsurge of the membership itself, imposing its will upon the unions. Invariably, the old unions and the labor lieutenants of the capitalists in these unions act against the strike, practicing sabotage.

The great strikes in England were revolts against the old unions and their officials. Indeed, so marked was this particular characteristic of the strikes that the British government seriously considered proposals for strengthening the "prestige" of the union officials among the masses,—the "labor lieutenants" had become a recognized bulwark of Capitalism.

The Seattle general strike was equally a mass movement, opposed by the old union bureaucracy. The American Federation of Labor officials even boasted of the fact that the strike was largely broken because the international unions refused moral or financial support.

In Winnipeg and Toronto, and other cities of Canada, the great general strike is as much a revolt against the old unionism as it is against the employers. Charters are being revoked; union officials, in Canada and the United States, are actively sabotaging the strike. The mass movement behind this general strike, which is unified about industrial unionism, started as a bolt from the regular convention of the unions, and an agitation to re-organize into industrial unions.

This development is most important. It deserves

the consideration and study of every militant in the movement. Out of it may come a revolutionary labor movement.

The old unions, dominantly, are reactionary, their officials corrupt. But there is unrest in these unions; a membership, often betrayed, is becoming aware that things are wrong, and is acting. We must direct and organize this mass movement in the old unions. The old unions must be split, precisely as they have been split in Canada; and a new labor movement forged out of those elements in the A. F. of L. which are unskilled and potentially revolutionary.

The problem of unionism is a crucial problem. The reconstruction of the unions is a necessary task of revolutionary Socialism, in accord with mass action and proletarian dictatorship.

Industrial Democracy

THE convention of the American Federation of Labor is, if possible, still more reactionary than usual. The Stone Age minds of the delegates, who represent the bureaucracy much more than the membership, are perpetrating a series of reactionary acts that make one stagger.

Accepting *in toto* the infamous peace treaty, rejected even by conservative labor in Europe; repudiating "industrial amalgamation" of the crafts, the A. F. of L. degeneration of industrial unionism; dodging the government suppression of "civil rights," sabotaging the Mooney strike, and suggesting "memorializing" Congress for more "labor laws,"—these constitute the spirit and the acts of the convention. Reactionary and petrified, is it any wonder that President Wilson fulsomely greets the convention?

Gompers, as usual, performs the task of indulging in progressive camouflage. In his opening address, this Old Man of the Sea said: "The day of autocracy, both industrial and political, is gone. The day for readjustment and reconstruction is at hand. Those who oppose the new order are reckoning without their host. We are making no unjust demands, but we are going to insist on an opportunity to live full, rounded lives, worthy of the civilization of our times."

Having applauded these pious wishes, the convention then proceeded to wreak its reactionary will upon labor and the unions.

Gompers proposes reconstruction—in words. Capitalism equally proposes reconstruction—in words. What are the deeds that Gompers proposes? Nothing but making labor an appendage of the predatory democracy of Capitalism.

Reconstruction implies limiting, at least, the prerogatives and power of the capitalists. But the A. F. of L., as expressed in its officials, is actually strengthening Capitalism by mobilizing the workers against the class struggle and accepting the Wilsonian program. The A. F. of L. is not even accepting the "reconstruction" program of the British Labor Party,—which is surely moderate. These Stone Age minds are still wrapt in the past; they still consider craft disputes more important than the mass struggle of the workers against Capitalism. They are protectors of Capitalism and betrayers of the proletariat.

Industrial democracy under Capitalism is a fraud. Gompers may use the term, but in his mouth its only meaning is reactionary. Recognition of the unions, collective bargaining, labor laws, being fawned upon by a treacherous government,—all this does not constitute industrial democracy, but its opposite.

Industrial autocracy must be broken. How? Gompers offers no real answer. The A. F. of L. has no answer, since officially it is part and parcel of the system of industrial autocracy, and serves the autocracy of Capitalism.

Industrial autocracy is based upon the private ownership of the means of production and distribution. Industrial autocracy means capitalist control of industry; industrial democracy means workers' control of industry. The realization of industrial democracy, accordingly, implies breaking the power of the capitalists, ending private ownership of industry, and placing industry in the control of the workers, organized industrially and communistically. All else is visionary, treachery to the ideals of the militant workers.

The A. F. of L. bureaucracy is still reactionary. It will persist in its reactionary policy,—these labor lieutenants of the capitalist class must promote the supremacy of Capitalism. These betrayers of labor have learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. But the world is developing. New forces and new ideas are coming to the front, producing a more conscious class struggle against Capitalism. These forces and ideas are becoming expressed in a mass movement to either transform the A. F. of L. or secede from it. Socialism must assist in the development of this new, aggressive movement of labor.

Strangling Russia

THE most contemptible thing about the war waged by the Allies against Russia is the deceit and the hypocrisy that accompany it. It is a counter-revolutionary war,—against the Russian masses, against democracy, against civilization and humanity. Nor is this war against Russia accidental or incidental. It is to the Allies much more important than the war against Germany, since Soviet Russia menaces the whole system of international Capitalism. In other words, it is a class war between the reactionary capitalists of the world and the revolutionary workers of Russia. This class character of the war against Russia is now becoming apparent to all, events being conclusive. The *New York Times* of May 29 admits the class bias of the war against Soviet Russia:

It is becoming increasingly difficult not to take sides, at least passively, in the Russian civil war. In the world war against Bolshevism, just as in the world war against Germany, there is neither satisfaction nor profit for those who stay out until the issue is decided.

The war against Germany was a class war between the capitalists of two imperialistic belligerents for the financial control of the world. The victory of Germany would have proven very disastrous to the Allies. German Imperialism would have become dominant in the markets of the world, the Imperialism of the Allies being weakened accordingly. The issue was vital, and the original European war developed into a world war.

But the victory of Soviet Russia has infinitely more serious consequences than the victory of Germany. A German victory would have not destroyed the Capitalism of the Allies, however much it might have weakened it; the "rights of property" would still prevail. But Soviet Russia symbolizes the purpose of the militant proletariat to end Capitalism, to convert private property into communal property. The world of Capitalism, accordingly, attacks Soviet Russia in order to preserve its very existence. The war of the Allies against Soviet Russia is a class war of the capitalists of the world against the workers of Russia.

It is, moreover, a war against the workers of the world, since the social ideals of the Russian Revolution are universal ideals; and in this war the Russian masses are waging the struggle of the workers of the world for emancipation.

What becomes, then, of the alleged reasons for the war against Russia? Lies, all lies. Every single argument against Soviet Russia is a fraud. Capitalism cannot admit openly that it fights the Russian Bolshevik Republic in order to maintain the ascendancy of Capitalism; so it manufactures lies concerning tyranny, the community of women, etc., all in an effort to mobilize public opinion against the Soviet Republic.

The most frequent accusation is that anarchy and chaos prevail in Russia. Let a non-Bolshevik answer. Isaac Don Levine, adherent of Kerensky, recently went to Russia to study conditions. In a dispatch to the *New York Globe*, from Moscow, May 19, Levine says:

"There is no anarchy either in Petrograd or Moscow, and there is no chaos in Soviet Russia. Never since its inauguration has the Soviet Government been more powerful than it is today. . . . When one penetrates Soviet Russia one is struck by the fact that whatever Bolshevism may be it is not anarchy. After having passed some time within the frontiers of the Communist Republic one is surprised at the situation here, for it is absolutely the opposite of what the American people imagine it to be." There are no policemen in Moscow and no lights at night, yet the streets are safer than New York or Chicago. "Before coming to Russia I was informed that the Soviet government was tottering and would soon fall. The newspapers here publish the wireless dispatches sent from Paris to America. These are absolutely contrary to the facts, and even people most violently opposed to Bolshevism cannot find anything to support such assertions. On the contrary, numerous signs show that the Soviet government has grown considerably in the last few months."

That very effectively disposes of the "chaos" in Russia. In fact, a new social system is being constructed in Russia; the masses are in control, and a new life, a new civilization, a new humanity, are in process of becoming. The proletarian dictatorship, the Soviet Republic, is not breaking down, but building up. That is precisely why the Capitalism of the Allies is eager to strangle Russia, since if Socialism there proves successful, it would inspire the worker of the world to set for their own Socialism.

There is a terrible scarcity of food in Russia, truly. But, in the first place, this characterizes every European country—a result of the war; and, in the second place, while other European countries may purchase food in the markets of the world, Soviet Russia may not. The Allies blockade Russia, deliberately trying to starve it into submission.

The war against Russia is brutal, reactionary, vile, an attempt to strangle the Russian Revolution and Socialism.