

The "14 Points"

IT is indisputable that the peace imposed upon Germany is not in accord with the "14 points" formulated by President Wilson. The projected terms, which Germany accepted as a basis for peace in concluding the armistice, have been violated in practically every particular. This fact has aroused the scorn and invective of even ordinary bourgeois liberals, who lament bitterly Wilson's "treason to his ideals." But the invective and the sarcasm invoked by the collapse of the "14 points", while justifiable, by no means touch the heart of the problem.

The liberal petty bourgeois democracy, while compelled to accept Imperialism, struggles in a tragi-comic way against the consequences and "excesses" of Imperialism. It willingly acquiesces in the waging of a predatory war, comforting itself with illusions; and then it protests against a predatory peace, confronting itself with the illusion that a "just peace" is realizable under the conditions of Imperialism. The petty bourgeois democracy protests against these "excesses" of Imperialism, while rejecting the revolutionary struggle against Imperialism. The consequences are unavoidable reaction.

The collapse of the "14 points" is not a study in the malignancy of an individual, but a study in the malignancy of social conditions under Capitalism.

Under Imperialism, governments are necessarily imperialistic,—that is to say, organized for international conquest and spoliation. An imperialistic government waging a victorious war must necessarily conclude an imperialistic peace,—unless the Socialist proletariat intervenes.

The fact that Imperialism necessarily threatens the independence of nations provides an excellent opportunity for developing a "liberal" ideology for an imperialistic war. This fact was used to the utmost by the European belligerents. The position of the United States made it particularly easy to develop the ideology of a war for democracy, since this country had no territorial interests at stake, making it difficult to connect Imperialism with out entry into war. Out of this circumstance arose the conception of the United States as a disinterested factor in the war and the fraudulent ideology of the "14 points."

But the United States *did have* a direct Imperialistic interest in the war, although this interest was not territorial aggrandizement.

Imperialism is a struggle for world power, a struggle as to which particular national finance-capital shall control the world. The issue in the war was world power. In the case of the European nations this issue assumed an immediately territorial character. But in the case of the United States it did not; it assumed a completely financial character. The war had aggrandized American Capital, until it practically dominated the trade and the investment markets of the world; it had ceased being a debtor nation and become a creditor nation, possessing enormous resources of surplus capital. American Capitalism had invested heavily in a prospective victory for the Allies. A German victory would have practically wiped out this investment and smashed the power of American finance-capital to secure world domination.

At the Peace Conference, it was necessary, in order to protect the investments and the potential world power of the United States, to conserve the financial and territorial interests of the Allies in order that the Allies

might pay. Moreover, the world was divided financially and territorially among the victors, the United States securing financial recognition and recognition of the Monroe Doctrine. The "14 points" accordingly necessarily had to be thrust into that garbage can of diplomacy which contains so many "ideals."

Then there was democracy. Democracy was conceived as the basis of the "14 points"; indeed, the "14 points" were "to make the world safe for democracy." In this again was involved the whole character of the war and the political tendency of Imperialism.

Democracy and Imperialism exclude each other. It excludes bourgeois democracy, that traditional democracy which is the carrier of the bourgeois struggle against feudalism and the political expression of the competitive epoch of Capitalism. The centralization of industry and capital produces a centralization of the power of government; Imperialism transforms political democracy into a factor promoting Imperialism and a government centralization that negates the old democracy of bourgeois society.

Under these conditions the old liberal slogans of democracy come to possess a new meaning. The older democracy implied national independence; the democracy of Imperialism annihilates the independence of nations. The older democracy implied an actual functioning of the parliamentary system; Imperialistic democracy breaks down the system and places practically all power in an executive autocracy. Democracy having been perverted by Imperialism, it becomes a part of Imperialism and the necessary factor in waging a predatory war. This circumstance alone would necessarily produce a collapse of the "14 points," since their basis (in the minds of those seduced by their ideology) lies in a conception of democracy which no longer functions in the Imperialistic epoch of Capitalism.

Another assumption of the "14 points" in contradiction with the actual forces prevailing in the world of Capitalism consists in the concept of realizing national independence for the small peoples of Europe.

The war was not a war for national independence,—except in the case of Serbia. But the moment the war actually started, Serbia's independence disappeared as a factor, and Imperialism dominated, with the small nations as pawns. Belgium itself (as Holland) is rampantly imperialistic.

Oppressed nationalities, such as Poland, have secured "independence." But they are not independent, being vassals of international finance-capital.

Moreover, the real struggle in these nationalities is a social struggle—the struggle of the masses to end Capitalism and class rule. This was true before the war—the political revolutions in Mexico and China developed economic aspects, assumed the character of social revolution. This social revolutionary tendency conquered in Russia, and is trying to conquer in other nations.

National independence breaks down—either under the domination of Imperialism, or under the impact of the international proletarian revolution. The ideology of the "14 points" necessarily promote Imperialism and reaction.

The final futility of the "14 points" is the alliance between France, Great Britain and Italy—which is the final proof of the futility of the League of Nations.

As against the corrupt ideology of the "14 points" and bourgeois democracy, the proletariat must oppose the aggressive struggle for Socialism.

The Communist Party

THE development of the American movement is directly toward the organization of a Communist Party. The tactical aspect—whether it shall emerge out of a transformation of the Socialist Party, or as a completely new party—is determined by events; the important thing is that there *must* and *will be* an American Communist Party.

The adoption of the name "Communist Party" is not determined by sentiment, but by objective facts.

Socialism, the dominant Socialism, has broken down miserably under the test of the war and the proletarian revolution. It has, in fact, become the last bulwark of defense of Capitalism. We must break away from this movement and its stigma.

Lenin says:

"The term 'Social Democracy' is unscientific, as Marx explained in 1875, and Engels in a more popular form in 1894. Mankind can only pass from Capitalism into Socialism, that is, public ownership of the means of production and the distribution of products according to individual work. Our party looks farther ahead than that: Socialism is bound sooner or later to ripen into Communism, whose banner bears the motto: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.

"That is the first reason. Here is my second:

"The second part of the term 'Social Democracy' is scientifically wrong. Democracy is only a form of authority. We Marxists are opposed to every form of authority. . . .

"The word democracy cannot be scientifically applied to the Communist Party . . . democracy is simply a shackle fastened upon the revolutionary nation."

In answering the objection that the workers are accustomed to the old name, Lenin says: "This reason is based solely on laziness and love of routine. We want to recast the world. And here we are hesitating. Here we are keeping on our backs the same old dirty shirt! It is high time we should cast off the dirty shirt and put on a new, clean one."

The American Socialist Party has familiarized the masses with certain phrases of Socialism. But it has equally familiarized the masses with a false conception of Socialism.

The Socialist Party means, to the workers, parliamentary action as the means to realize Socialism; it means government ownership of industry; it means co-operation with the middle class; it means bolstering trades unionism and sabotaging revolutionary industrial unionism; it means, fundamentally, a non-proletarian program and policy.

Names may mean much, or nothing—according to circumstances. In this case, the name "Communist Party" means much, since our prime task is to familiarize the masses with a revolutionary conception of Socialism totally antagonistic to the official Socialist Party. To use the old name is to confuse the issue and hamper our task.

The name "Communist Party" would fire the imagination and develop new energy in the revolutionary comrades. It would come to the masses new, clean, virile, with a proletarian message necessarily evoking a proletarian response.

More—the name Communist Party is necessary to make clear the issue. There must be no compromise. There must be no opportunity to mix Laborism with Socialism. There must be an implacable determination to rally revolutionary elements alone in our party.