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the Cause
of the
Left Wing
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Workers of the
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You have
a World
to Gain!

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Our Action Against Conscription

By S. J. RUTGERS

THE St. Louis convention of the Socialist Party declared in favor of "unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription" and for the support of "all mass movements in opposition to conscription."

If we do not wish to stop at mere words, we must organize action in accordance with this resolution.

First of all, we must encourage and support all strikes during war, particularly in important industries, such as transportation and mining. This will not only help to keep the workers from starvation and enslavement, but it will at the same time be the most efficient weapon against the reaction of conscription. The capitalist government seeks to make each struggle on the economic field a political issue. In fact, we have had in New York a strike of truckmen, who asked that a new arrangement made by their masters, and to their disadvantage, should be repealed. This was merely an economic conflict and the bosses were the aggressors, but still the workers were told to drop the strike on account of

the fact that it was a political issue. Its power of resistance, and is reduced to serfdom. If it does not, it comes into serious conflict with the organization of the Capitalist State and an intensified class struggle will be the result. Gompers, as a faithful servant of Capitalism and a traitor to his class, grasped the situation exactly when he declared his willingness to prevent any and all strikes during war, because he knows that any serious strike under the circumstances may develop into a political strike, into a general conflict between the two classes.

Our task lies not so much in an effort to start or to proclaim a general strike, as some of our opponents seem to believe; our task is to support any tendency towards strikes, which under present conditions and when waged uncompromisingly, may develop into more general movements.

The English miners, as well as the railroad workers and the metal workers, did strike during the war against the orders of their capitalist government, and they gained results.

The government actually had to implore the workers to stop their fight, on the presumption that the future of the country was at stake. Labor "leaders" had to be rushed to the danger zones, and once more succeeded in fooling the workers into submission. But it shows the power of the workers and their opportunities.

The Russian revolution started with partial strikes, combined with street demonstrations, gradually growing into more general mass actions, and the American workers should take to heart the lessons of recent history.

The St. Louis resolution demands support of mass actions against conscription. But this cannot mean that we have to wait until some mysterious general action against conscription falls from heaven. A general action has to develop out of smaller local actions, as soon as conditions become favorable. Our first duty is to organize meetings and demonstrations against conscription in all districts all over the country. Get a meeting together, even if it is a small one, try to arrange for a demonstration in combination with that meeting, and you will do more towards the support of mass ac-

tion than in declaring your willingness to support "mass action" if "others" (who the devil are those others if not we!) will be kind enough to start something. Our opposition to conscription voiced at these meetings, small or large, should be uncompromising, should be a part of our fight against militarism, and against Imperialism.

It is true that the police have already prevented some of the Socialist meetings, but this should not discourage you. Other districts have held meetings since; we should try every district, every hall, every street corner; we can change our subject, if only not our spirit, and if we are driven by force out of every corner, we will have accomplished at least something. This would help greatly to show the workers the kind of "democracy" and "freedom" they are supposed to go to war for, and they will ask why this is a fight against "foreign" autocracy.

And even when driven from the last hall, even when denied the right to hold street corner meetings, we need not give up the fight. We can print and distribute leaflets, and we can come together in streets and squares for propaganda and protest until dispersed by the police. If the hundred thousand Socialists, together with their six hundred thousand "voters" and that part of organized labor that did not surrender to its exploiters, organize this form of protest all over the country, it will mean some problem for the ruling class.

No doubt, one of the topics at such informal gatherings would be the refusal to be conscripted. We may be assured that many will refuse, as was done in England, where several thousand conscientious objectors are still in jail. But it would be more effective if those prepared to refuse would get in touch with each other, could organize in a certain way to carry their action and their sacrifices in one and the same direction.

This concerted action should start with the taking of the military census, with the registration for the prospective conscription. Among the questions as issued by Governor Whitman of New York, there are two which enable us at least to make some form of protest; and no doubt other registration forms will contain similar questions. Question 50 asks: "Do you claim exemption from military service?" Everybody should answer "Yes." The Socialist Propaganda League of Brooklyn adopted a motion, subsequently adopted at the Borough Meeting of Local Kings County of the Socialist Party to answer question 51, asking why you claim exemption, with: "Because I am a conscientious objector." No matter what other reasons you may have for exemption, first of all state that you are a "conscientious objector." This may give us an opportunity to get a public hearing on our objections as in England, and to make propaganda and muster our forces. And because the census most likely will include all the inhabitants of the United States up to 45 years of age, the grown up people will have an opportunity to join their protest with that of the younger generation. There is no use stating on the registration form what these conscientious objections are, because this will not be given publicity and may cause your exemption to be rejected without any further hearing.

We may expect different kinds of conscientious objectors: religious humanitarian, non-resistance advocates and class-conscious workers. Each group will have its own arguments, but there can be no objection to co-operating in the effort to get a public hearing and an efficient action.



"The Messes" IN EUROPE—AND AMERICA?
"NOW will you enlist?"
"No! It's against my God and my conscience."
"To hell with your God and conscience. This is a war for civilization."

By ARTURO GIOVANNITTI

I HEAR frightful shrieks of joy and agony amidst the crashing fugue of thundering guns. History is lying again on her childbed and again the whole world attends her tremendous accouchement. For the third time since the resurrection of Demos she is going to bring forth the Impossible: the Gigantesque, the Terrible. Every seventy years, every life of man, she harrows the earth and winnows mankind. 1776-1848-1917. Mark these dates,—the gods have selected them as winners in the great handicap of kings and peoples. The first was the Advent; the second the Crucifixion; the third will be the Resurrection. It is to be. The auguries are read; the omens propitious; the signs are all here, the same as then: war and famine and insanity and dread of the to-morrow.

I smell something burning in these perfidious spring winds and it is not only the dead grass of last year. Beware of the Ides of March; eschew the breaking thaws and the prickly suns of Aprils if you are not the one who is going to plow and to sow. But if you are, rejoice, for you shall reap a rich harvest of proud heads when the red Julies come again with the scythe.

I smell again the torchlight of the Tribunal Revolutionaire, fuming, sizzling, splurting late at night, first daughter of the sun. I smell the smudgy pitch rainbowing down the attics of papal Rome; the Devil, blond and red-shirted fighting the holy father in the holier raim of freedom. I smell charcoal and saltpeter in the mountains of Silesia; the dog-eaters of the Black Forest mixing a new incense for the thrubles of Liberty. I smell something milky and rich and warm, something *qui sent comme l'amour*, and it is no longer the blood of plebeians. I see again peasants biting dry flax and filling their gourds with a black flowing thing that is not wine and is not liquid. I see women braiding hemp into lean and viscid ropes, all twelve feet long. A strange hymn is being chanted in the churches; the anthem of the Antichrist, the Te Deum of change, the Marseillaise. People get together everywhere. They no longer speak aloud. They whisper and look

around. When people whisper and look around, beware, for it bodes ill to those who speak very loud and look down. An air of madness blows from the East; kings feel suddenly sober, or mamoners get suddenly intoxicated. d stops yawning and looks interested. Spring is everywhere, and everywhere is the other youth of the Mid—the Revolution.

It is coming, it is coming. Who is to blind in the eyes and in the soul that cannot see it advancing, fierce and shrieking and irresistible, with the torch and with the axe? Is there any one so deaf to the mighty detonations of this immense apocalypse who cannot hear the same song wafted across the trenches by the cannon smoke, by the deadly gas, by the breath of fire? Is mankind to be utterly destroyed and no living seed of thought and love is to germinate in its ruins and debris? Are ideals, held more sacred than life, to be dragged like carrion across the red ooze; and the souls of one thousand million men to be polluted, violated, raped with steel-gauntleted hands, bought and sold like chattels and wares, without any one raising a voice or without that voice being heard? And if not men, is not Life at least going to protest against Death?

She is. Already the program of that protest, at thunder with anger, has been heard. A greater one will soon take place. And what form do you think it will take, O lords, O masters, O rulers? Will they supplicate to kings and potentates? Will they petition parliaments? Will they pray to gods? Fools, fools! For three years you have taught people to talk and demand things through the muzzle of the gun. Fools! You have changed the jargon of the tribune into the explosion of the shrapnel and the torpedo. You have told them that democracy, liberty, their daily bread, the sacredness of human life, the very right to be depend no longer on peace and reason and co-operation, but on their readiness to die for these things, which means their readiness to kill. And now do you expect them to turn back and unlearn all you taught them and discard all you forced them to try and

they found serviceable and perfect? Fools, fools! They are going to keep on, yea, but they are going to turn about and look behind their shoulders for the target.

All around you old systems are crumbling and new orders are arising. But you don't see. New forces are bursting into being. New weapons. New understandings. New tools of destruction. But you don't see. Because you have a few jails you think you are safe. You have forgotten that children romp where the Bastille stood and that the Czar babbles his rosary in the tower of Peter and Paul. Because you still have lumber for a few scaffolds you think your tranquillity is assured. Idiots! Not all the spindles of hell are enough to spin nooses for the numberless traitors and rebels you'd have to hang. Because you are forcing every man to drop the hammer and shoulder the gun, you feel amply protected and safeguarded. Poor fools! But what about Hunger that calls like a weary beggar at the cold and silent homes of those men, and throws the bible off the table, and jerks up women and old men from their knees and whispers wrath and disobedience in their ears? Know you not the omnipotent magic of this wondrous alchemist, who, when potatoes rise to fifteen cents a pound can transubstantiate every ounce of them into a ton of balestite? Have you not learned from the past the terrible cabala of starvation which can raise every loaf of bread to the proportion of a bomb? You have seen it, haven't you? Who is behind them? Who is before them? Caution have wheels. They can be turned around. They were going to be turned around in Dark Russia, had it been necessary. And, Gentlemen, these rotatory motions are characteristic of all sorts of cannon, regardless of geographical positions and climatic influences. You had better think and beware!

Neither is Russia alone. Spain is seething with rebellion. They have suppressed another general strike there. Every year they suppress one, every twelve-month they have a new one to suppress. Some day there will be no one to suppress strikes and nineteen millions to suppress a king. In Sweden starved men with crazy glares in their eyes hailed to the Republic under the towers of their monarch. In Greece the war that was dammed at the borders is going to burst within, redder and madder and more glorious. In Ireland priests preach the resurrection and youths and maidens cultivate red flowers of passion over the graves of men that were hanged and shot! In Italy, in Germany, in Austria, in France, throughout the world May Day is returning acclaimed and praised, the Red Easter of martyred humankind. Beware!

And in America? Because two hundred sleek and fat men in frocks and top hats have declared that universal butchery is the supreme avocation of the manhood of the land, think you that they who plowed and built will turn back from their meek and joyful tasks and whet cutlasses for the throats of their brothers at your bid? Think you that America can really become Russia now that Russia has become America? And is it possible to go back when bread and peace and love and the dawn lie forward on the highroad of progress? Never. Someone will say "No!" Someone will shout, "Enough!" In a few days. Perhaps to-morrow. Perhaps even to-day. Then they will be thousand. Then they will become millions. Then they will be the whole population of the earth. It will be the hurricane. The typhoon. The avalanche. The Resurrection. The Second Advent of Man. The Palingenesis. The Revolution! "Words, words; cheap rhetoric, the demagoguerie of the agitator," you say. "You say that is harmless utopia

The Seizure of Trotsky

By CHARLES LOUIS

THE physical power of Czarism was dethroned in Russia, but its spirit seems to have survived and reigns supreme in the British government.

Leon Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary exile, left New York City recently with a party of eight to return to Russia. The provisional government at Petrograd was compelled, by the Socialists, to issue a general amnesty, and ask all exiles to return to their country. Trotsky answered the call. But at Halifax the military minions of the British government seized Trotsky and his party, deprived them of their possessions, and imprisoned them in a detention camp at Amherst.

The action is outrageous, and worse than that, it is stupid. Here is a man returning to the country of his birth upon the explicit general request of that country's government; his passport was issued by the Russian Consul in this city; and then an ally of that country, fighting for "civilization and democracy," refuses to allow the man to proceed on his journey, and adds insult to injury by imprisoning him and separating him from his wife and children.

The infamy must not be allowed to pass without protest and action. The

Canada and England must act. And we may depend upon it that revolutionary Russia will act, unless the British government succeeds in suppressing news of the outrage—in which practice, by the way, it is peculiarly adept.

Why does Great Britain fear Trotsky and his party of revolutionary Socialists? The answer is simple. The revolutionary forces of Russia are clarifying their aims and organizing their power. They are a majority. The provisional government is pro-war, the Working Class is against the war. The pacific tendency of Russian labor has already compelled the provisional government to declare officially against conquest and annexation—only a few days after Miluykov had made a demand for Constantinople and other imperialistic objectives! It is the fear of these revolutionary forces that induces the provisional government to hold off the elections for a Constituent Assembly, in which the majority might very possibly be revolutionary.

Great Britain fears these forces and their action against the war and conquest. Trotsky is a thorough and uncompromising revolutionist, and he must therefore be kept out of Russia!

The hope of Russia lies precisely in the programme of men of the character of Trotsky. Their programme declares for a real revolution and a Social Republic. And unless it succeeds, we shall see a repetition of Germany's experience—the compromise of Capitalism with autocracy against the Working Class and for war and conquest.

Protest and act! Release Trotsky for the revolution in Russia!

The Janus of Capital

IMPERIALISM needs words as much as it needs soldiers, money and munitions. Without words to conceal their real purposes, to deceive the workers about their real interests, no modern war would be possible. The silent Bethmann-Hollweg becomes eloquent, the eloquent Lloyd George becomes dictator, and Woodrow Wilson adds speeches and resolutions for home consumption to his notes for export.

It is part of our task to tear off the masks, to expose the real forces behind the words.

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