

The Class Struggle During War

By ROSA LUXEMBURG

(Before she could finish this article, Rosa Luxemburg was sent to prison to serve a sentence for anti-militarist agitation. It appeared in *The International*, a magazine started by Franz Mehring and Rosa Luxemburg, and suppressed by the censor upon the appearance of the first issue.)

THE German Social Democracy handed in its political resignation on August 4, 1914. On the same day the Socialist International collapsed. All attempts to deny this fact or to conceal it merely serve to perpetuate the conditions which brought it about.

This collapse is without a parallel in history. Socialism or Imperialism—this is the alternative which summed up the political life of the various labor parties of the world during the past decade. In Germany especially it has formed the basis of countless programs, discussions and publications. One of the chief purposes of the Social Democracy has been the correct formulation of thought and sentiment with regard to this alternative.

With the outbreak of the war the word became flesh; the alternative changed from a historical tendency to a political situation. Face to face with this alternative as a fact the Social Democracy, which had been the first to recognize it and bring it to the consciousness of the working class, struck its sails and without a struggle conceded the victory to Imperialism. Never before, since there have been a class struggle and political parties, has there existed a party which, after fifty years of uninterrupted growth, after the attainment of a pre-eminent position of power, has thus by its own act within twenty-four hours wiped itself off the map.

The apologists for this act, Kautsky among them, maintain that the whole duty of Socialists in time of war is to remain silent. Socialism, they say in effect, is a power for peace, not against war. But there is a logic of events none can elude. The moment Socialists ceased to oppose war they became, by the stern logic of events, its supporters. The labor unionists who have discontinued their agitation, the women who have withdrawn from Socialist agitation in order to help minimize the horrors of war, and the Socialist party leaders who spend their time in the press and on the platform securing support for the government and suppressing every effort at criticism—all of these are not merely maintaining silence. They are supporting the war as heartily as any Conservative or Centrist. When and where was there ever a war which could exhibit a similar spectacle?

Where and when was the disregard of all constitutional rights accorded with such submissiveness? Where was there ever such glorification by an opposition party of the strictest censorship of the press? Never before did a political party sacrifice its all to a cause against which it had sworn again and again to sacrifice its last drop of blood. The mighty organization of the Social Democracy, its much praised discipline, gave the best proof of themselves in the fact that four millions of human beings allowed themselves to be hitched to the war chariot at the command of a handful of parliamentarians. The half century of preparation on the part of the Socialist party comes to fruition now in this war. All our education of the masses make them now the obedient and effective servants of the imperialist state. Marx, Engels and Lassalle, Liebknecht, Bebel and Singer trained the German proletariat in order that Hindenburg might lead it.

Our official theorists are not without an explanation of this phenomenon. They are perfectly willing to explain the slight disagreement between their actions of to-day and their words of yesterday. Their apology is that "although the Social Democracy has concerned itself much with the question as to what should be done to prevent war it has never concerned itself with the problem as to what should be done after the beginning of hostilities." Ready to do everybody's bidding, this theory assures us that the present practice of our party is in the most beautiful harmony with our past theories. The delightfully adaptable theory is likewise ready and willing to justify the present position of International Socialism in reference to its past. The International treated only the question of the prevention of war. But now, "war is a fact," and, as it turns out, after the outbreak of war Socialists are to be

guided by entirely new principles. After war has actually begun the great question for each proletariat is: Victory or defeat? Or, as an "Austro-Marxist" explains, a nation, like any other organism, must preserve its existence. In plain language this means: The proletariat has not one fundamental principle as scientific Socialism heretofore maintained, but two, one for peace and another for war. In time of peace, we are to suppose, the workers are to take cognizance of the class struggle within the nation and of international solidarity in relation to other countries; in time of war, on the other hand, class solidarity becomes the dominant feature of internal affairs and the struggle against the workers of other countries dominates the proletarian view of foreign relations. To the great historic appeal of the Communist Manifesto is added an important amendment and it reads now, according to this revision: "Workers of all lands unite in peace and cut one another's throats in war!" To-day, "Down with the Russians and French!" to-morrow, "We are brothers all!"

This convenient theory introduces an entirely novel revision of the economic interpretation of history. Proletarian tactics before the outbreak of war and after must be based on exactly opposite principles. This presupposes that social conditions, the bases of our tactics, are fundamentally different in war from what they are in peace. According to the economic interpretation of history as Marx established it, all history is the history of class struggles. According to the new revision, we must add: except in times of war. Now human development has been periodically marked by wars. Therefore, according to this new theory, social development has gone on according to the following formula: a period of class struggles, marked by class solidarity and conflicts within the nations; then a period of national solidarity and international conflicts—and so on indefinitely. Periodically the foundations of social life are shaken and a change in time of war. And again at the moment of the signing of a treaty of peace, they are restored. This is not, evidently, progress by means of successive "catastrophes"; it is rather progress by means of a series of somersaults. Society develops, we are to suppose, like an iceberg floating down a warm current; its lower portion is melted away, it turns over, and continues this process indefinitely.

Now all the known facts of human history run straight counter to this new theory. They show that there is a necessary and dialectic relation between the class struggle and war. The class struggle develops into war and war develops into the class struggle; and thus their essential unity is proved. It was so in the medieval cities, in the wars of the Reformation, in the Flemish wars of liberation, in the French Revolution, in the American Rebellion, in the Paris Commune, and in the Russian uprising in 1905. [And now in 1917, in Russia, again.]

Moreover, theoretically this new idea leaves not one stone of the Marxian doctrine on another. If, as Marx supposes, neither war nor the class struggle falls from heaven, but both arise from deep social-economic causes, then they cannot disappear periodically unless their causes also go up in vapor. Now the proletarian class struggle is a necessary aspect of the wage system. But during the war the wage system does not tend to disappear. On the contrary, the aspects of it which give rise to the struggle of the class become especially prominent. Speculation, the founding of new companies to carry on war industries, military dictatorship—all these influences tend to increase the class differences during time of war. And likewise the class rule of the bourgeoisie is not suspended; on the contrary, with the suspension of constitutional rights it becomes sheer class dictatorship. If, then, the causes of the class struggle are multiplied, strengthened, during war how can their inevitable result be supposed to go out of existence? Conversely, wars are at the present time a result of the competition of various capitalist groups and of the necessity for capitalist expansion. Now, these two forces are not operative only while the cannon are booming; they are active in peace as well, and it is precisely in time of peace that they influence our life in such a way as to make the out-

break of war inevitable. For war, as Kautsky loves to quote from Clausewitz, "the continuation of politics by other means." And the imperialist phase of capitalist rule, through competition, building of armaments, has made compulsory, for it has placed us regularly under military dictatorship and thereby made war permanent.

Therefore our revised economic interpretation of history leads to a dilemma. Our new revisionists are between the devil and the sea. Either the class struggle persists in war as the chief condition of the proletariat and the destruction of class harmony by Socialists is a crime against the working class or carrying on the class struggle in time of peace is a crime against the security of the nation and the "security of

The International Movement

In spite of the suppression and distortion of news and an abundance of errors that contradict each other, it is clear that in Russia the revolution is slowly but relentlessly getting the upper hand. Agrarian revolts are spreading, and in some sections the peasantry is forcibly dividing the land and taking possession. The Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates is virtually giving the *d'ordre* to the Provisional Government; and this revolutionary pressure has compelled the government officially to declare against conquest and annexations. It is a heartening thing—this dependence of the Russian workers upon their own action. They are waging the class struggle energetically, relying upon their mass power and not upon prospective parliamentary decisions. The Constituent Assembly that is soon to convene will register the decision now being made in the struggle. And it is precisely in this revolutionary activity that the hope of Russia lies.

THE great majority of the French Party not only supports the Government, but takes an active part in its organization. The Socialist opposition is small and inconsistent, and has no real basis. The *Communistes* are still a group against Imperialistic Capitalism.

At the Zimmerwald Conference, Bordaberry and Merrheim were the French delegates. They denounced the "union sacrée," or civil truce, without, however, breaking completely with the social patriots.

In Kienthal, the French opposition was represented by Blanc, Raffin Dupres and Brizon. They were the first to vote against the war credits, although their motives were not based on the principle of an uncompromising fight against the imperialistic government under all circumstances.

As a matter of fact, this Zimmerwald group, although writing sharp articles against the leaders of the centre group, Longuet and Pressmane, combined with them in supporting a resolution at the last Christmas Congress in favor of an International Conference through the old International Bureau and to modify the policy of the civil peace, but not to give up their support in defense of the country.

Only a hundred votes were cast in favor of the resolution of Loriot and Brizon, and even this resolution bases its action against defense upon the fact that the French Government cannot claim to fight a defensive war, as long as it does not offer definite peace proposals and arbitration.

THE *Young People's International of March* (No. 7) takes an uncompromising and firm stand throughout its columns against defensive wars. An open letter is published to protest against the inactivity of the Zimmerwald International Committee in Bern, concerning the expulsion from the party of members of the *Young People's Organization* in Sweden. The letter directs itself particularly against Robert Grimm, who demands the rejection of all war credits by French and German Socialists, but does not actually oppose military credits to continue the mobilization of the Swiss army.

In the issue of March 18 of the *Left Wing Daily "de Tribune"* (Holland), we find an article on the Propaganda League of America by Comrade A. Kollontay. She gives a summary of the principles in our Manifesto and calls the League the centre of opposition which is developing in the Socialist Party.

fatherland." Either class struggle or class harmony is the fundamental factor in our social life, both in peace and war.

Either the International must remain a heap of ruins after the war or its resurrection will take place on the basis of the class struggle from which it took its rise in the first place. It will not reappear by magic at the playing over of the old tunes which hypnotized the world before August 4. Only by definitely recognizing and downing our own weaknesses and failures since August 4, by giving up the tactics introduced since that time, can we begin the rebuilding of the International. The first step in this direction is agitation for the ending of the war and the securing of peace on the basis of the common interests of the international proletariat.

On the Firing Line Against Capitalism

THERE is a strike of 500 workers in the railroad shops at Hagerstown, Md. This is what the *New York Evening Sun* says, editorially: "Any serious attempt to cripple or paralyze the industry of the country in the interest of some minor group or groups of its workers will cause general resentment and damage the reputation of union labor." We should worry about our reputation!

A STRIKE is developing in the Lumber Trust district of Montana where a complete tie-up is expected. Indians from Minnesota refused to scab. Organizers from the I. W. W. have enthusiastic audiences.

Tax bakers in Chicago, out on strike, are compelling the mayor to seriously consider federal intervention. The bosses are able to supply less than ten per cent of the normal demand, according to news reports. The union bakers, who are striking for more wages and better conditions, assert they will stay out until their demands are granted.

In the official column of the Y. P. S. L. the *New York Call* we read: "The task of the Socialists now is to organize the young people of their own city, village or town in such leagues."

The sentiment throughout the land is against conscription and it is left to the Yipsels to crystallize that sentiment in countless groups pledged to oppose conscription when it comes. Already news from many quarters reports the organization of Anti-Conscription Leagues. The Y. P. S. L. members should conscript the young people of their own city, village or town in such leagues.

In its headquarter notes *Solidarity* says: "All class-conscious members of the I. W. W. are conscientiously opposed to spilling the life blood of human beings, not for religious reasons, as are the Quakers and Friendly Societies, but because we believe that the interests and welfare of the working class in all countries are identical. While we are bitterly opposed to the Imperial Capitalistic Government of Germany, we are against slaughtering and maiming the workers of any country. In many lands our members are suffering imprisonment, death and abuse of all kinds in the class war, which we are waging for social and industrial justice."

BRANCH BROOKLYN of the S. P. I. A. adopted a resolution to answer questions 50 and 51 of the military census form in New York State as follows:

Question 50: "Do you claim exemption from military service?" to be answered with "Yes."

This resolution was also presented at the borough meeting of the Socialist Party of Local King's County and carried by an overwhelming vote. It will be sent to all the branches of the Socialist Party of New York State, and our members should become active in organizing the "Conscientious Objectors."

LET our flag run out straight to the wind! The old red shall be floated again When the ranks that are thin shall be thinned, When the names that were twenty are ten. —*Strindberg*.

THE patriotic fervor and idealism of the American citizen is immeasurable and beyond reproach. As soon as General Joffre arrived in this country the price of French flags went up about fifty per cent.

Conscientious Objectors in England

TWENTY thousand Englishmen have made their protest against compulsory military service in the past half year, by claiming exemption based on conscientious objections. The majority of them accepted "alternative service," many were finally exempted for some other reason, and about five thousand thrown into jail.

The majority of the conscientious objectors are workers and a great number of them are Socialists. The anti-conscription propaganda has been carried on with such vigor and conviction, that the general temper gradually has improved. The brutal outrages against the objectors has caused so much protest, as to stop some of the most ferocious manifestations.

In the earlier period fifty objectors were forcibly transported to the war zone in France and after again refusing military orders were court martialed and condemned to death. Strong protests in England, however, changed these sentences into ten years' penal servitude. Others were beaten and tortured by military authorities in so-called "special rooms," and denied trial. Gradually, however, there developed a more systematic treatment, combined of course with special offenses and ill-treatment, differing, according to local authorities and local conditions. The system works out as follows:

The C. O. (conscientious objector) is turned over to the military authorities and with few exceptions is court martialed and sentenced to imprisonment, generally for 112 days in a civil prison. During this period the Central Tribunal decides whether the objector is "genuine," and if found so, he is offered "alternative service" of "national importance" under the so-called "Home Office" scheme. If he refuses to accept this, he is sentenced to a longer term in prison, and so on.

Gilbert Canaan, who claimed to have been for many years a conscientious objector to the whole state of modern society and therefore was a conscientious objector against war, was ruled out of order as being a political and not a conscientious objector. The *General Secretary* of the I. L. F. was accepted on a statement that he objected as a Socialist to whom Socialism is a religion, based upon a belief in International Brotherhood. One of the judges called this "political," but the majority agreed that: "Though the objections are rather based upon moral than upon religious grounds, they are acceptable as conscientious objections," which, however, did not keep our comrade out of jail, because he refused to do "alternative service."

Lately the proceedings have been systematized by decisions of the "Central Tribunal," as follows:

1. Absolute exemption is ruled out entirely, although this is clearly against the spirit of the law.

2. It is denied that men who are opposed to this particular war, or who are prepared to take human life under certain circumstances, are C. O.'s at all.

3. It is declared that to young people exemption should be refused, because their views cannot be regarded as "deliberate and settled." Membership in a Socialist organization is in itself considered no evidence of a conscientious objection to military service.

Against these rulings, although not binding for the local judges, the No-Conscription Fellowship carries an intensive propaganda. It certainly requires audacity to demand that young people shall kill and be killed, and at the same time deny them judgment because of being too young!

The chief argument presented by the Socialists is their International conception of a general brotherhood. Clifford Allen argued: "I am a Socialist and so hold in all sincerity that the life and personality of every man is sacred, and that there is something of divinity in every human being, irrespective of the nation to which he belongs. I cannot betray my belief in the brotherhood of all men. To me war is murder."

Particularly striking and interesting, for this country, is the following argument:

"I am a Negro, born in Jamaica. My parents were sent in bondage to Jamaica. They were torn from their home. My country is divided up among the European powers, who in turn have oppressed and tyrannized over my fellowmen. The Allies of Great Britain, i. e., Portugal and Belgium, have been among the

worst oppressors, and now that Belgium is invaded I am about to be compelled to defend her. . . . Even Germans or any aliens who are white men are preferred to us. I have been buffeted from one labor exchange to another. . . . In view of these circumstances, and also the fact that I have a moral objection to all wars, I would sacrifice my rights rather than fight."

There is no doubt that extensive arguing before the different courts and the courage of conviction shown by a great number of Socialists will bear results, if not at once, then in the near future.

No-Conscription Groups

BESIDES of the Socialist parties and the Industrial Workers of the World, a campaign against militarism and conscription is being carried on by several other organizations, among which the American Union Against Militarism and the Emergency Peace Federation are well known.

A special organization for the purpose of resisting conscription is the *No Conscription Fellowship*, with a platform as follows: "We believe that all men are brothers, that liberty of conscience is a fundamental purpose of true democracy, and that the highest service to our country and our fellowmen calls us to uphold these ideals; therefore we are opposed to war and must resist any compulsory service in actual war."

The *No Conscription Alliance* is a similar organization, with the following pledge: "We are unalterably opposed to war and we affirm the duty of the individual to follow the dictates of his own conscience; therefore we can't accept any military or other compulsory service, which is in conflict with these ideals."

These organizations do not carry on an actual propaganda, but enroll and support persons who are willing to sign the pledge.

A more active and aggressive organization is that of the *World's Patriots*.

On a large scale, the slogan, "I will not kill nor help kill my fellowmen." A few thousand men have signed this pledge.

In the Bronx, New York, an Anti-Military Training Parents' Association has been formed, with headquarters at 1167 Boston Road.

In addition to these organizations there are a large number of local groups pledged to refuse military service in any form.

Revolution!

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and that it will never be because reason is against it. You are wrong, Gentlemen. Utopia is the most terrible reality on earth. It has destroyed empires and executed kings and torn down temples and obliterated gods. Utopia is nonsense when it is the mere crystal-gazing of a dreamer or a philosopher; but it is more potent than an earthquake when it becomes the sunlit horizon of the people. Nor has reason any power against its unarrestable march. But where is reason now? For three long years it has been dead, this great reactionary, this enemy of all change, this servant of all indolence, this assassin of all heroism. You yourselves have slain and offered it on an altar of roaring guns to propitiate the Dream, when you broke down all the dykes of restraint and flooded the world with this ocean of molten lava. Let it stay dead now, Gentlemen, for the Dream is really going to come true. The dream of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the Folly that has survived the ages and has now encircled all the world in the swirl of its mad and merry saraband. Joy and victory to Folly. Let us get out the caps and jingles of the fool. Let us laugh to the end the shrill cackling of the Absurd. Let us enshrine Folly, the great mother of the New, the turpid-breasted nurse of Genius, the midwife of Freedom and Revolution!

Dansons la Carmagole! Vive le son du canon! Gentlemen, Her Majesty the Mob is knocking at the door. You need not get up and open this time. Just sit still and pray, for the only thing you are going to save now, Gentlemen, is your soul!