

## The New Party in Germany

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taken in favor of uncompromisingly rejecting defensive wars. A general statement of relentless opposition against the Majority Party does not make a big impression after you have tried hard to stay in that party as long as possible, and have been thrown out against your will. A relentless opposition against the government lacks force as long as you do not explain by what means this fight has to be carried on. Even the Majority Party now votes against war credits and the Center group did absolutely nothing to encourage the strike movement and develop it into a more general class action.

The two main arguments given for a united party at this moment are as follows: The revolutionary Left Wing puts its hope in mass action and expects to reach greater masses of workers through the new party, because a great part even of those workers who are in opposition to the old methods still look upon the Center as their spiritual leader. This argument may as well be used for any affiliation with even the most reactionary groups of labor, and overlooks the fact that under the present conditions of readjustment clarity of purpose and sharpness of demarcation are most needed.

The second argument is, that mass action will develop only under certain historical conditions. As long as these conditions do not arise, the radical Left Wing is bound to remain a rather small group, criticizing and educating without a fair chance for action. As soon, however, as mass actions develop, the Left Wing will become the natural leader anyway, no matter what the form of organization. The form of organization, therefore, is considered of minor importance and we might as well join the "swamp" to get a broader hearing. This argument seems not very strong, because if the organization of our present forces is not considered very important, we might as well form a clear-cut revolutionary group, unhampered by the poisonous gas emanating from every "swamp." But the whole reasoning is utterly false, because you cannot make this sharp distinction between periods in which mass-movements develop and periods of relative calmness. It may be perfectly relevant that more revolutionary periods sometimes break out with elemental force; this does not do away with the fact that such periods to a certain extent are the outbreak of accumulated influences gathered during a period seemingly barren in developments. In certain revolutionary periods the leadership may fall automatically to the Left Wing, but the results of this leadership greatly depend upon the achievements during the previous period. Results will be influenced by the self-consciousness of the Left Wingers and by whether they are considered reliable, and both of these elements are greatly injured by opportunist coalitions with middle-group Socialists.

The majority of the "International Group" evidently thinks that it can have this freedom within the new "Independent Party." Another part and probably the most active part is convinced that under present conditions affiliation with the Center in a regular party without any half-way acceptable program is bound to become a failure, even when accepted only as a temporary measure.

This means a regretful split in the Left Wing, and developments in Germany since do not show an increase in revolutionary spirit or action. It is a specific feature of any "swamp" to swallow whoever struggles to keep his head above the general level, and it is to be feared that the hope for the future now rests with a reduced number of fighters outside of the new party. *Arbeiterpolitik* holds the banner of this group and there may be a ray of light in the decision of the group in Hamburg, which not only refused to join the new combination, but decided that the time was ripe to constitute a new Socialist organization in which the economic and political struggles will have to be fought as one and inseparable. Here is the dawn of the new hope, of new forms for the new struggle.

The "Independent Social Democratic Party" does not constitute a unit, neither of thought and principle nor of action, and it leaves outside of its organization groups of the most active elements for the reorganization of the Socialist forces of the future.

# COMMODITY CONSEQUENCES

By AUSTIN LEWIS

A fair day's work" has been the slogan, and in the last half century, millions of tired slaves have passed through the streets of our cities behind banners bearing this significant device. They made it perfectly obvious that the commodity position was good enough for them, and that all they asked was a free market and the right of all dealers to organize for their own benefit.

So far there is little doubt that among the workers capable of organization, at least, there has been little tendency to quarrel with the commodity concept. Occasionally, of course, humanity has transcended the commodity concept. The human heart has refused to bear the pain of conditions into which unregulated *laissez faire* plunged large bodies of helpless workers, and the politician has legislated for the perpetuation of the race, as they legislate about the preservation of forests. But Organized Labor has not viewed these encroachments of the state upon the free market with any marked approval, or it has more or less indifferently seconded the efforts of the philanthropist and the practical statesman. And now we get the quite horrifying demand of the State Federation of New York that those legislative enactments passed for the benefit of the helplessly unorganized sections of labor should be allowed to lapse during war time. This is the crudest and most diabolically cruel resolution of any body of organized labor in the history of the modern world. Even the capitalistic agents have not contemplated any such perversion, and the whole experience abroad during the war has required the extension rather than the diminution of such protection in the interests of mere efficiency.

For better or worse the organized labor bodies are wedded at present to the commodity concept. They have the mind of the dominant class and their contribution to the problem ethically and economically is nil. But we know that the "servile state" will have something to say at the end of the war which will make the ears of the labor leaders burn. For the present, however, we are justified in demanding that the labor leaders stand by their ideals and that they should employ their commodity concept for the advantage of the labor movement and the development of organization.

Our capitalistic economists are very insistent upon the supremacy of the law of supply and demand, which applies equally to the human and material elements of production and exchange. They will act on their theory to the full, at least their employers will, and will demand for all the commodities which they control at least the full market value, even where they do not make artificial combinations and surreptitiously corner the market. We know that all the governments have been obliged to take extraordinary precautions against fraud and extortion on the part of the business groups, and that they have had to accede to unreasonable demands under the pressure of conditions. In spite of all their precautions, the war profits mount in the most horrific fashion; and the government of Britain, to save its face, has been obliged to impose war-profit taxes to the amount of sixty per cent, which it is now proposed to raise to eighty per cent. In spite of all this, however, profits constantly pile up and new millionaires, conspicuous for their arrogance and extravagance, spring out of the chaos of the war. Commodity prices are maintained and the market will not be baulked. Even in Germany, where the organization is supposed to be complete and where the government is credited with an approach to evenhandedness in its control of the "interests," where Holy State can impose its decrees impartially on capitalist and proletarian alike, even there the industrial capitalists have taken the bit in

their teeth and the dividends of the manufacturing firms bear witness to the weakness of mere political government in dealing with such implacably obstinate things as commodities.

The scarcity of commodities incident upon the war places the industrial and commercial exploiters where they cannot avoid making great profits. The general misfortune is their good fortune. They draw inordinate profit from the public misery. Even the sums which they advance in the form of bonds are excellent investments and tend to secure their own position and that of their children. They are in the happy position that everything they touch must turn to gold whether they will or not. They must profit by the war unless the government took the only logical step of confiscating all profits in excess of average profits before the war. But governments are not like that, and could not afford to be so. The reply of the owning classes to such a measure would be a refusal to advance capital or to use their workshops; for capitalistic patriotism has its limits, and these are reached directly business is interfered with, since business is more holy than Holy State itself. The only reply of the government would be confiscation, that is the abolition of the capitalist class; and no government will commit hari-kari, even for the sake of victory. The exploiters must be humored if the system is to continue and commodity values must be realized.

The commodity, labor-power, like others, rises in value during the period of war. It is destroyed in large quantities and the demands for it are constantly increasing. We know that all labor is fully occupied in all the countries at war and that the demand is so great that the apparently insuperable margin of unemployed has been destroyed and that most of the crimes incidental to poverty have disappeared along with the poverty. But we know also that there has been no attempt on the part of the laboring people anywhere to realize upon the increased value of their own commodity in the labor market. Wherever the least tendency in that direction has become manifest the governments which have submitted in silence to the most shameless capitalistic robbery have turned loose their journalistic and platform pack in pursuit of the unpatriotic laborers who have dared to declare that, labor being a commodity, they will demand for labor a return such as all other commodities receive, its price in the market.

For labor to constantly submit to this sort of governmental dragooning is fatuous folly. If anyone thinks that the possessors of other commodities, patriotism notwithstanding, are going to emerge from this war poorer by sacrificing the economic values of the commodities which they control, he is very much mistaken. The entrepreneur may send his sons to the war, and submit to taxation, he may grudgingly invest his surplus funds in national securities, but he will never surrender his claim to the full value of the commodities which he controls. To do so would mean his ruin; it would imply the speedy termination of his economic superiority.

Such a surrender on the part of labor is no less ruinous. The rise in the prices of necessary commodities means an essential reduction in the actual wage unless such wage is raised to meet the new conditions. And how is the wage standard to be raised except by combined effort to raise it? Such effort will be met with indignation and vituperative insult by the dominant class, and they will pour out on that portion of the working class which first takes up the burden of the fight the vials of their most violent wrath, as in the case of the South Wales miners.

Only by combination to raise wages to realize the value of the commodity labor-power, can the economic position of labor be so preserved that the horrible reaction after the war will not drag it back into the abyss from which it has with difficulty extricated itself. The very economic position of labor as a whole is dependent upon the action of Organized Labor in this respect.

As for the moral effect which is after all much more important in the long run—that does not belong to this discussion.

## Lenin on the Russian Revolution

AFTER his departure for Russia, Lenin wrote a letter to his Swiss comrades, in which he reaffirms his position that if the Revolution in Russia brings a republican government and government should be willing to carry on an imperialistic war, together with the imperialistic governments of France and England for the conquest of Constantinople, Armenia, Galicia, etc., he will uncompromisingly fight this government and the war "for the defense of the fatherland."

Lenin had been asked what would be his position should the Socialists would get into power now, to which he answers: 1.—We would offer peace to all people involved in the war on the following peace terms: a) Immediate deliverance of all colonies of all countries; b) immediate deliverance of all suppressed people. 2.—We would start immediately with the deliverance of all people suppressed by the Russians.

"We do not doubt for a minute that these peace terms would be unacceptable not only to a monarchial Germany, but also to a republican Germany, and not only to Germany, but also to the capitalistic governments of England and France.

"And in that case we would be compelled to wage a revolutionary war against the German Bourgeoisie, but not only against the German Bourgeoisie, and we would take up that fight.

"We are not pacifists, we are against Imperialistic wars waged by capitalists for profit. But we always did consider it nonsense that the proletariat should reject revolutionary wars, which may be necessary in the interests of Socialism."

Lenin realizes that this task would be a stupendous one and would mean a series of class fights all over the world, but he points out that it is not our impatience, our desire to confront this issue, but the objective concrete conditions resulting from the world war that put before us this dilemma: either to sacrifice more millions of men in the destruction of European civilization, or to conquer the governments of all civilized countries for the Socialist Revolution.

"Historic conditions have made the Russians, perhaps for a short period, the leaders of the revolutionary world proletariat, but Socialism cannot now prevail in Russia. We can expect only an agrarian revolution, which will help to create more favorable conditions for further development of the proletarian forces, and may result in measures for the control of production and distribution.

"The main result of the present Revolution will have to be the creation of more favorable conditions for further revolutionary development, and to influence the more highly-developed European countries into action."

"When in November, 1914, the Russian Party demanded: 'Transformation of the imperialistic war into a civil war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and for Socialism,' this demand was considered ridiculous by Social Patriots, as well as by those who constitute the 'Center.' Nowadays even a blind man can see that this demand was correct.

"The changing of the imperialistic war into a civil war has already started. Good luck to the proletarian Revolution in Europe!"

This letter, of which we publish the most essential parts, was written in accordance with instructions of a group of members of the Russian Social Democratic Party, traveling with Lenin from Switzerland to Petrograd, and was adopted at a meeting on April 8, 1917.

## The International Movement

A SPECIAL convention of the Swiss Socialist Party affirmed its adherence to the principles of Zimmerwald and Kienthal. It decided in favor of a New International, excluding the Social Patriots. A resolution to arrange mass-meetings of munition workers, to discuss the possibility of a strike in munition factories in co-operation with comrades in other countries, was lost with 86 against 113 votes. A resolution condemning the "defense of the fatherland" as against the principles of International Socialism, was passed by 222 against 77 votes. Platten spoke in favor, Muller and Greulich against the motion.

THE labor conference in Leeds (England) showed a remarkable change in the minds of the English workers under the influence of the Russian Revolution. Not only was the general opinion in favor of immediate peace on the conditions of the Russian Council of Soldiers and Workmen, but a growing opposition against the English Government was evident. Robert Smillie, speaking in favor of one of the resolutions, mentioned the English Government as "our provisional government, and it was acknowledged that Ireland and Egypt should also have a right to decide their own destiny. A suggestion to ask indemnities from Germany for families of submariners sailors was shouted down with the remarks: "Let the ship owners pay for their victims," and "our enemies are the English ship owners, not the German sailors."

RAKOWSKY, the Rumanian Socialist who was liberated from prison by a mass-demonstration in Jassy, in which 15,000 soldiers participated, has been welcomed at a meeting of the Russian Council of Soldiers and Workmen. Rakowsky denounced the demands for annexations of the majority of the Socialist Party in Bulgaria, and favors the establishment of a federative Republic of Balkan peoples, as advocated by the minority Socialists in Bulgaria as well as by the Socialist Parties in Serbia, Rumania and Greece.

THE Americans are certainly not losing sight of their business interests, and their Allies may find out some day that their new associate has the best part of the bargain. Think of the millions and millions which France and England have loaned to Russia, practically without security, even without gaining a solid foothold in the economic system of the Empire of the Czar. Comes the United States in the game with a few millions and takes hold of the mines and other concessions! They evidently want to try out their methods of Ludlow, Butte and the Mesaba range in Russia, but it is doubtful whether the Soldiers and Workmen will accept this new form of democracy, even at the hands of Charles Edward Russell.

OUR intrepid Comrades Liebknecht and Friedrich Adler have been elected honorary members of the Council of Soldiers and Workmen. We may expect that the liberation of their honorary members, as well as of other victims of the opposition against Imperialism in different countries, will be made a peace term of the Russian Council. The Left Wing Group with Lenin, as well as the Left Wing Socialists in Holland, have already made this demand a condition for participating in any International Socialist Congress.

THE Left Wing group of Socialists in France, of which Loriot is the best known representative and which endorses the resolutions adopted at Zimmerwald, decided at a conference that Alsace-Lorraine should not be in the way of a general peace. They accept the "no annexations" in the sense as proclaimed by the Russian Council of Soldiers and Workmen.

A COMMITTEE has been formed in England on the initiative of the Independent Labor Party and the British Socialist Party, to work for a speedy peace on the basis of Zimmerwald. Labor unions will be represented and Ramsay MacDonald has been elected Secretary.

SOME of the Russian social democratic papers in France have been suppressed, evidently to make the world safe for democracy.

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