

Socialism is a failure—and in despair, La Monte accepts the hypocritical idealism of this “war for democracy.”

The article is not an argument as much as a soliloquy. La Monte was thinking aloud, and put his thoughts on paper. And the peculiarity of it all is that La Monte is really arguing against himself, against the La Monte of five and fifteen years ago, against the errors that distinguished him and that he himself helped to make popular. The circumstance that La Monte was himself a peculiar victim of the errors he now attacks, is not an argument for or against those errors, or against La Monte; but it does explain the psychology of his reactions.

Consider the charge of “romanticism” that he hurls against the Marxist. The Marxist, according to La Monte, refuses to accept “the facts of life.” But here is a 6,000-word article on Socialists and war, an article that in places goes back to the period of the childhood of our race, and which makes only *one* mention of the Russian Revolution, the great “fact of life” in this war, and that a passing one—“I believe that . . . the recent Russian Revolution with the release of the prisoners in the Fortress of Peter and Paul and the glorious home-coming of the Siberian exiles was worth while.” I can understand the psychology of despair that seized upon La Monte because of the collapse of Socialism, but I cannot understand this failure to appreciate the Russian Revolution and its tremendous influence on our hopes and fears, and on our future activity. Nor can I, except on the basis of an incurable romanticism, understand his failure to appreciate the new aspect thrown upon this war by the Russian Revolution. Is not the attitude of the Allies, and of America in particular, toward the Russian Revolutionary democracy a sufficient refutation of their claim to be waging an unselfish war for democracy? Why does not America and its Allies accept the aspirations of the Russian democracy? Instead of accepting, they are rejecting; and in rejecting, they are using their industrial, financial and diplomatic forces to strengthen the imperialistic reaction in Russia.

La Monte’s incurable romanticism is evident again in his acceptance of the idealism of this “war for democracy.” I do

not imagine for a moment that La Monte believes that the United States went into the war to make the world safe for democracy. President Wilson’s urging of a “peace without victory” upon the belligerents is too fresh in our memory. The brutal, selfish indifference to events in Europe, an indifference that did not alter in the face of the devastation of Belgium, Serbia and Rumania, that did not act to protect France but transmuted its blood and agony into profits—this indifference has characterized American capitalism for two and a half years. The world needed to be made safe for democracy one year ago, two years ago, as much as to-day—but this country did not act. Perhaps La Monte believes that whatever may have been America’s motives, its act will conduce toward making the world safe for democracy. If that be the case, we anxiously await the proof and the demonstration.

This incurable romanticism of La Monte is an old characteristic. His Marxism has always had a peculiar romantic tinge. I remember his argument, in *Socialism, Positive and Negative*, that Daniel De Leon was an utopian, because De Leon had expressed a doubt concerning the inevitability of Socialism! De Leon emphasized the human factor that would utilize and transform favorable economic conditions into Socialism; La Monte emphasized the economic factor. Moreover, in this book La Monte travesties the Socialist philosophy by maintaining that the materialistic conception of history ascribes pecuniary motives as dominating the conduct of the individual. The very “economic man” or “economic marionette” that La Monte now scorns is the warp and woof of the ideas promulgated in *Socialism, Positive and Negative*. This mechanistic mode of thought has played, and still plays, an important part in the ideas of many a Socialist; it was dominant in La Monte’s ideas. But it was never identified with Marxism. The Marxist was the first to repudiate it. It didn’t require August 4, 1914, to “make even the dullest of us . . . realize that men and women of flesh and blood do not act like economic marionettes.” Twenty years ago, one of the editors of this magazine, Louis B. Boudin, split a lance with La Monte on this very subject, accusing La Monte of garbling Marxism by promulgating ideas that La Monte now