

EDITORIALS*

The Prospects of Peace

The test of an army is in defeat and retreat. Defeat, much more than victory, reveals an army's morale and capacity. This is equally true of the international army of the Socialist proletariat, which wages war upon Capitalism and Imperialism. And now that this army has met an overwhelming defeat (but not disaster) in its campaign for an immediate, general peace, now that the prospects of an early peace are apparently more hopeless than during any period of the four years' immemorial agony, it is precisely at this moment, in the midst of defeat and retreat, that our morale and capacity are being tested, that we should face the facts, however uncomfortable. Reality, after all, is the supreme factor in the coming of peace—and of Socialism; and adherence to fundamental principles is as much a part of reality as are "facts."

It is the tragic feature of this war, emphasized again and again, that it should have produced and shattered so many illusions concerning an early peace. These illusions are indispensable in the waging of a great world war, in maintaining the morale of the people, in preventing discontent coming to a focus. Journalists, in characterizing German offers of peace as "peace offensives," as "peace traps," convey the impression that these manoeuvres are to trap the Allies, split them asunder, etc. They are only incidentally that: the major purpose of these "peace offensives" is to bolster the German people's will to fight: in general, peace manoeuvres are part of government propaganda to satisfy the people, persuade them to "carry on." Peace, accordingly, becomes increasingly active—in promises; while the war multiplies its intensity and peace recedes into the crimson future. The

* Comrade L. B. Boudin has resigned from the Editorial Board of the Class Struggle and as a member of the Socialist Publication Society because of differences concerning the policy of the magazine.

collapse of these peace promises is equally characteristic of an imperialistic war, because the stakes are too vast to allow the making of an "inconclusive peace," that is, a peace not in absolute accord with the world interests of an imperialistic nation. An "inconclusive peace," a peace without victory, is conceivable only in the event of mutual exhaustion. Unless the proletariat drastically intervenes, in accord with its independent class policy and action, peace, an imperialistic peace, negative or positive in character, will come, by means of decisive victory of one or the other, or by means of their mutual exhaustion.

Every defeat, every victory, has prolonged the war. The peace disappointments have been most acute in that nation which has secured victory after victory in four years of unparalleled carnage. Germany was promised peace in three months, in six months; each offensive was preceded by the promise of an early peace: each promise was followed by a more sanguinary struggle. The most bitter disappointment of all was the brutal peace forced upon revolutionary Russia: this separate peace, which in one form or another was a vital phase of German military and political strategy, was the signal for the flaring up on the western front of the most intense struggle of the whole war—and peace more than ever a thing of the future.

The Imperial German Government's attitude toward peace is clear. It wants a peace on the basis of the war map, an imperialistic peace. German Imperialism repudiates a democratic peace; it will adhere to imperialistic peace purposes until either crushed by its revolutionary proletariat or by a military defeat.

But does the attitude of the Entente governments promise an early, democratic peace? The secret treaty agreements, of a predatory character, have not been repudiated. On June 20, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "These treaties were entered into by this country with other members of the Allies, and to these treaties we stand. The national honor is bound up with them." In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Entente has not accepted President Wilson's peace proposals: these proposals are considered simply as excellent material to bolster up the war spirit