

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

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THE LENIN REVOLUTION

WHAT IT MEANS TO DEMOCRACY.

"Anarchy in Russia," say the newsagents' placards. The capitalist newspapers denounce the latest Russian Revolution in unmeasured terms, and even the working men and women in the street too often echo their angry denunciations. Yet the latest revolt of the Russian Revolution, the revolt with which the name of Lenin is associated, has been brought about in order that the workers of Russia may no longer be disinherited and oppressed. This revolt is the happening which definitely makes the Russian Revolution of the twentieth century the first of its kind. Had the Revolution stopped short at Kerensky's premiership and Kerensky's policy, it would have meant little more to humanity than an echo of the French Revolution. Now it bids fair to be something very much more. The "Manchester Guardian" compares the Russian and the French Revolutions, saying:

"The fundamental difference between France in 1792 and Russia in 1917 is that the French movement was as much nationalist as democratic. The French understood from the first that the liberty they had won for themselves they had to guard against unfriendly Europe and invading Germany. The more democratic the revolutionary party, the greater its fervour in this cause."

More than a hundred years have passed, and though the "Manchester Guardian" still regards the ideas of 1792 as revolutionary, the real revolutionaries of 1917 have a wholly different outlook. The Bolsheviks say:

"We are opposed to a separate Peace with the Imperialists of any nation."

The Bolsheviks, like the French revolutionaries, realise that the Governments of Europe are unfriendly; but they separate the peoples from the Governments. They realise that the Imperialist-capitalists of all nations are their enemies, and that the workers of all nations are their friends. The "Manchester Guardian" suggests, and some British Socialists who should know better suggest, that if the Allied Governments had shown more sympathy for Russian aims and treated Russia somewhat more generously, this Bolshevik view would not have been held. To argue thus is completely to ignore the outstanding fact that the Russian Revolution is a Socialist Revolution, and that its aims and ideals are incompatible with those of capitalism.

The Bolsheviks, or Maximalists, whose best known leaders are Lenin and Trotsky, but who do not depend for their policy on any group of leaders, were the driving force which made possible the Revolution last March, when the Czar was deposed. In the present upheaval they are but striving to complete their work. When it was suddenly made known that the Revolution of last March had been accomplished, the event was hailed with expressions of boundless enthusiasm, even by those who for months past had been using every effort to prevent its taking place. No doubt the imperialists hoped that, with careful diplomacy and a judicious admixture of threats and compliments, the Revolution might be prevented from interfering, either with Russia's part in the War and the treaties into which she had entered under the old regime, or with the capitalist system in Russia and the financial and trade interests of Russia's Allies. Rodzianko, the Conservative President of the Duma, who had waited to act till the Workers' and Soldiers' Council created by the Socialists had made the Revolution, endeavoured to seize the reins of Government in Russia, and was hailed by the British Press as the hero of the hour. When the Workers' and Soldiers' Council forced Rodzianko's resignation, Miliukoff, the Liberal Imperialist, eagerly forwarding aims of conquest, including the annexation of Constantinople and the Dardanelles, came to the front. But

the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, the great power in Russia on which the confidence of the mass of the people rested, was ever pressing towards Peace and Socialism, and Miliukoff resigned when the Council insisted that the Provisional Government should accept its declaration for Peace on the basis of:

"No annexations, no indemnities, the right of the peoples to decide their own destiny."

Kerensky, not quite a Socialist and enthusiastic for the Alliance with Britain, France and Italy, became Premier by the will of the majority of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council. He professed adherence to the Council's Peace formula, and declared that not one drop of Russian blood should be shed for imperialist aims of conquest. Yet he dragged the Russian people after him in unconditional support of the capitalist Governments of the Allies which refused to abate their aims of conquest, or even to state what these aims are. As was stated in the French Chamber on July 31st, 1917, he even allowed the reaffirming of the secret treaty between France and Russia by which Russia was to support France in annexations on the left bank of the Rhine. M. Ribot virtually admitted this when, in reply to accusations in the French Chamber, he said:

"M. Doumergue, after his conversations with the Czar, asked and obtained from M. Briand authorisation to support our claim to Alsace-Lorraine, torn by violence from us, and to leave us free to seek guarantees against further aggression, not by annexing to France territories on the left bank of the Rhine, but by making, if need be, of these territories an autonomous State, protecting us as well as Belgium against invasion from beyond the Rhine."

An autonomous State, of course, means here a French State to which Home Rule is given.

The Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies created by the soldiers was the power that made the Revolution, and though sections of our Press have belittled it, it is, as Mr. Arthur Ransome, the "Daily News" special correspondent, says: "the broadest based elected body in Russia." Since the first outbreak of revolution the Bolsheviks have consistently demanded that until the Constituent Assembly is elected by the votes of all the men and women of Russia over 20 years of age, the Workers' and Soldiers' Council shall take over the Government of Russia. The Bolsheviks (whose title merely signifies that they are out for the maximum Socialist programme instead of the minimum programme like the Mensheviks) at first formed the minority on the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, and the majority, who thought it safest to have a Coalition Government, carried the day. Those who formed the majority voted for a Coalition Government because they hoped that by giving the capitalist parties representation in the Government they could buy off capitalist opposition to the new regime and induce the capitalists not to work for the re-establishment of the Czarism. The same tactics induced continued support of the War from many Socialist Revolutionaries who recognised its aggressive capitalist character, but feared that to retreat from it might mean invasion by Japan and the withdrawal of Allied capital from Russia, where capital is so greatly needed.

But hardship and hunger have grown on Russia, and the coalition with the capitalist parties has proved a disappointment, whilst Allied help has been but sparingly forthcoming. The advice of the Bolsheviks to withdraw from the capitalist War and to press on towards Socialism has gained steadily in favour, both in the country and on the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, till at the last All-Russian Congress of the Councils the Bolshevik delegates numbered 335 out of a total of 475. Their opponents strive to make it appear that Lenin and his party are a handful of people which has imposed its domination upon the unwilling Russian people; but it is the Workers' and Soldiers' Council which has now deposed Kerensky and the Provisional Government, and itself becoming the Government has chosen Lenin to be its Prime Minister. Arthur Ransome, in the "Daily News," admits that "the Bolsheviks do hold a majority of the politically active population," and quotes in proof the composition of the Soviet of Moscow as well as that of Petrograd.

On November 7th the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies became the Government of Russia. "Anarchy, anarchy," newspaper headlines label the proceedings, but a "Daily News" correspondent says:

"Seldom in history has a coup d'etat been carried out quieter or more efficiently. There has been a total absence of the popular conception of what revolution is."

Kerensky is said to have left Petrograd on November 7th because the troops prepared to support his Government were too few, and, indeed, only the officer cadets and the Women's Battalion, a reactionary handful organised by reactionaries, defended the seat of Government. The Baltic Fleet and the Committee representing the forces in Finland voted to support Lenin's administration. An Exchange Telegraph telegram reports that only three persons were killed in the coup d'etat. A "Daily Telegraph" correspondent heard that the deaths were 200, but adds that firing was first heard at

5 p.m., all was quiet at 3 a.m. and the trams were running and men and women proceeding to work at 7 a.m.

Contrast that with the War! Yet this Socialist Revolution in Russia aims at taking the momentous untried step from capitalism into Socialism; whilst the War, even were it waged for the objects put forward by its most democratic advocates, is not in advance of the best ideals which animated those who fought against Napoleon.

The Government of Russia was taken over by the Workers' and Soldiers' Council with a minimum of disorder, but the Council is not to have the easy victory which was allowed to the Provisional Government which immediately succeeded the Czar's regime. The deposed Provisional Government is not prepared to let the Council try what it can do to save Russia from her present misery. Already there has been fighting in the streets of Petrograd. Kerensky at once endeavoured to procure troops to reinstate him. Korniloff and Rodzianko, a sinister partnership, began to concentrate forces in Moscow. The opponents of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council formed an "All-Russian Committee for saving the country and the Revolution"—from the body which made the Revolution! The people who made the Revolution are accused of being traitors even by men like Korniloff, who but lately attempted a rebellion to re-establish the Czar. All the forces of reaction are massing against the Soviet, and it is said that reaction has won to its side the Railway Workers' Union, the Post and Telegraph Officials, and the Union of Government Servants. But such news may be false.

As was anticipated, the capitalist Governments are hostile. The "Daily Telegraph" reports that in America:

"It is suggested that financial advances to a Bolshevik administration will not be made while there is any uncertainty as to whether such money might be applied to promoting the Peace agitation."

"The Times" reports that the Russian Embassy in Washington refuses to accept the authority of a Bolshevik Government. The agreement between the United States and Japan may have a bearing upon the situation. Indeed, the Russian Revolutionaries, the real Revolutionaries who are done with the old regime and all its ways for ever, are now faced with grave dangers both from within and from without. It may be pretended that the opposition to them is due to the character of Lenin and his colleagues, but the Bolshevik policy which is formulated below is the cause of the opposition.

THE PEOPLE'S PROGRAMME.

Here is the manifesto which the Second General Congress of the Soviets of all Russia has issued to the workers, soldiers and peasants of Russia, and which was adopted by the Congress with only two dissentients and 12 abstentions:—

WORKERS TAKE CONTROL.

"Resting on the will of the overwhelming majority of workmen, soldiers and peasants, and depending on the successful armed rising of the workers and the garrison of Petrograd, the Congress takes the powers of the Government into its own hands.

AN IMMEDIATE ARMISTICE ON ALL FRONTS.

It will propose to all peoples an immediate democratic Peace, and an armistice to come into force at once on all fronts.

THE LAND FOR THE PEASANTS.

The power of the Soviets will assure the free return of all private, State, and ecclesiastical lands to the Peasants' Committees.

It will defend the rights of soldiers, thus realising the complete democratisation of the Army.

WORKERS TO CONTROL INDUSTRY.

It will establish the control of the workers over production, and will ensure the timely summoning of the Constituent Assembly.

It will arrange for the food supply of the towns and the provision of necessities for the villages.

FREEDOM OF NATIONALITIES.

It will guarantee to all nationalities inhabiting Russia the right of their sons to organise their own future.

The Congress has decided that all local power shall pass into the hands of the local Soviets, which will establish strict order under the revolution.

PROTECT THE REVOLUTION FROM IMPERIALISM.

The Congress calls the soldiers in the trenches to vigilance and firmness, and it is persuaded that the Revolutionary Army will be able to protect the Revolution against all Imperialist efforts until the moment when the new Government shall have obtained the democratic Peace which it will propose direct to all peoples.

GET MONEY FROM WHERE MONEY IS.

The new Government will take all necessary measures to provide the Army with everything that it requires by means of an energetic policy of requisitions and taxes to be imposed upon all moneyed classes. It will likewise improve the economic position of the families of soldiers.

The parties of General Korniloff, M. Kerensky, and General Kaledin and others are endeavouring to move troops upon Petrograd, but several detachments of the troops with M. Kerensky have already passed over to the side of the people in revolt. Soldiers, oppose an active resistance to Kerensky, that partison of Korniloff! You, railwaymen, stop the forces that Kerensky is sending to Petrograd!

The things set forth in this manifesto are the things which the Russian Revolution originally set out to attain—a democratic Peace; land for the peasants, promised again and again by Minister after Minister since the Revolution in March; democratisation of the Army, partially

(Continued on page 885, col. 3.)

War hardships, greater in Russia than in any other belligerent country, have contributed to make Russia riper for revolution than the others and to increase the need of her people for Socialism; but this is not the sole reason why the Russian workers are politically ahead of ours. In Russia the politics of advanced politicians have long been more definite and scientific, and, above all, more democratic, than the politics of those who are held to be advanced politicians in this country. The British Labour Party has hitherto existed without a programme; the programme which its Executive now proposes for it is so vaguely drawn that Mr. Sidney Webb, a member of its Executive, is able to describe it as embodying:

"A Socialism which is no more specific than a definite repudiation of the individualism that characterises all the political parties of the past generation."

Our Labour Conferences deal chiefly with fugitive partial reforms of the moment, in a spirit rather of opportunism than of adventure and research; and, to a lesser extent, the same thing may be said even of our Socialist Conferences. In the political field we believe we are right in saying that neither a Labour Party, Trade Union nor I.L.P. Conference has discussed, at any rate within recent years, such essential democratic institutions as the Initiative Referendum and Recall, institutions which are all actually in being in the Western States of U.S.A., and which are partially established elsewhere. A Russian Socialist woman said to us: "People here are actually discussing whether the Referendum is democratic; why, I realised the democratic importance of the Referendum when I was fifteen years of age!" The following evening we heard Mr. Bernard Shaw assuming, in addressing a Fabian audience, that our populace is too ignorant to be trusted to use the Referendum, and declaring that if it were established in this country, legislation would be held up altogether. The Lettish Social-Democratic Workers' Party was formed in 1904; at its second Congress in June, 1905, it placed the following political reforms on its programme:—

"(1) Government by the people—i.e., the supreme power of the State—to be placed in the hands of a Legislative Assembly consisting of representatives elected by the whole population of Russia.

"(2) Adult Suffrage—i.e., the right to an equal, secret and direct vote in all elections, local and national—for all citizens, men and women, who have reached the age of 20, according to the proportional representation system. Biennial elections. . . ."

This was in 1905, and things move fast in Russia. Let us take a few further points at random from this same programme of 1905, points many of them which our Trade Union and

Socialist Conferences have not even discussed:—

"(8) Law Courts and defence free of charge. Elected judges and members of the jury to take a conspicuous part in the debates. The abolition of all special and extraordinary (military, clerical and administrative) Courts, hard labour for life, corporal, and other degrading punishment; compensation to be given to those unjustly accused, arrested, or sentenced.

"(9) . . . War to be declared, or Peace proclaimed, only by the national representatives; international intervention or arbitration.

"(11) Compulsory free training at school up to 16th year; free meals for every pupil. . . .

"(3) No overtime to be worked.

"(4) Night work is to be prohibited—i.e., from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.—in all branches of work . . . except for technical reasons approved and endorsed by workers' organisations.

"(6) No children to be employed during their school years—i.e., up to 16 years. Boys and girls from 16 to 18 years should not work more than six hours a day.

"(9) Workers are not to be employed at a smaller wage than that legally fixed or advised by workers' organisations.

"(14) Superintendents of both sexes . . . to be elected by workers and paid by the State to see that all laws and sanitary regulations are implicitly obeyed in all trades."

But this was a long time ago; the Russian Socialists are now heading straight for Socialism, and for years past have been busily hammering out the programme and learning confidence in themselves and in it.

The educational value of a programme, which every new recruit to the Party must consider and accept, and every critic must discuss, is very great, and the Russian Socialist parties have not overlooked it. They have insisted that their members shall make up their minds as to what they believe and what they want.

In this country we have in the workers' movement a very large and very cautious body of people which always shrinks from taking any step that appears adventurous or new and which always seems to be looking out of the corner of its eye to find out what the capitalist Press and public is saying and thinking of what it does. There are also, both inside and outside the Labour movement, large masses of people who are vaguely revolutionary in their tendencies and always ready to criticise those in power, but who have never mastered any economic or political theory. Their criticism is purely personal; they believe that if only Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, or Mr. Bonar Law can be turned out of office all will be well. Successive Ministries pass and re-pass; they are opposed to all of them, but never learn that their quarrel is not with the individual Minister, but with the system which he upholds. Whilst our people are largely divided into one or other of these two categories we shall not make much progress. A great educational work is necessary to open the people's eyes, to induce them to study Socialism, and to compare

an demand this from the Government now before it may be too late.—Yours truly,

A CHILD LOVER.

Advert.]

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it with the capitalist system, the evils of which they now endure. Without the knowledge that such study will bring them, revolution would only mean a change of master, however successfully it might be accomplished; with that knowledge the people can do without delay all that they will.

The Russian problem is our problem: it is simply whether the people understand Socialism and whether they desire it.

Meanwhile, our eager hopes are for the speedy success of the Bolsheviks of Russia: may they open the door which leads to freedom for the people of all lands!

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.

THE DREAM SPLENDID

We learn that our notice of the poems entitled the "Dream Splendid," by John Langdon-Davies, has caused some embarrassment to Mr. B. N. Langdon-Davies, to whom we attributed them. Also that a lady calling herself "R.E." writes the Civil Liberties Advice Notes, which we also attributed to Mr. B. N. Langdon-Davies. We did not intend to suggest that the advice notes emanating from the Council of which he is secretary were necessarily written by Mr. Langdon-Davies, merely to say that he has associated, in our minds, with such activities as those represented by the advice notes rather than with the romantic poetry from which we quoted. We regret to be obliged to snatch from the minds of our readers the idyllic picture of the secretary of the N.C.C.L. turning from the gruesome struggle with a coercive Government's encroachments to seek solace in the woodland solitudes of which Mr. John Langdon-Davies has written, but we are able to supply an equally piquant contrast in recalling to our readers the fact that Mr. Langdon-Davies is an assistant dough-maker, and can show honourable scars obtained in lifting plates of hot bread from the bakehouse oven.

ANTIQUES

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