

THE WORKERS' DREADNOUGHT

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THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC.

The Hungarian Workers' Revolution at last has answered the call of Soviet Russia. In Budapest, the beautiful city where East meets West, the great hall of the Vigadó will become the scene of many a wonderful meeting, and great doings will be witnessed from the windows of that suite of rooms occupied by the Women Clerks' Trade Union, which overlooks the Vigadó Square, the Corso, and the Danube.

Political propaganda held an important place in Budapest before the war. The offices of progressive organisations were not, as so often here, hidden away in back streets, but prominently situated. The Women's Movement was in many ways the healthiest and most active in Europe. Four thousand of the 6,000 women clerks were organised in 1914, and their union had its own library, employment bureau, and legal adviser. It worked actively to influence legislation in the interests of its members and to secure wider educational opportunities for women. It was the first organisation to ask for Votes for Women. Did it discover presently the futility of Parliamentary Government? Did it throw itself actively into the work of establishing the Soviets? The Women Clerks' Union and the Social Democrats were just before the war organising the shop assistants. The Women's Suffrage Movement was the most vigorous on the Continent and was more democratic, more friendly towards the Socialists, than in most other Continental countries. Miss Pogány, who was active in it, is sister to Willy Pogány, the Socialist artist, the well known in London, and, we think, also to Joseph Pogány, the President of the Soldiers' Council, who is now Soviet Minister of War. The Suffragists occupied splendid offices in the same building as the great newspaper *Pesti Lloyd*. Their activities were filmed by the cinema shows. Their paper AN6, the woman, was sold on the Corso. Will it presently be said that Hungary with this advanced Woman's Movement has nationalised her women? The Pacifist Movement was also strong in Hungary. Rosika Schwimmer, a foremost Suffrage leader, joined the Women's International Peace Movement, attended the Women's Conference at the Hague, and with Jane Addams and others toured the world, visiting the neutral and belligerent governments in the interests of peace. She received widespread support and was greeted on her return by great and enthusiastic popular demonstrations. War fever evidently took no strong hold in Hungary. In 1915 the English residents in Budapest made a collection in aid of the Hungarian Red Cross in recognition of the kindness shown to them. The French colony petitioned the French Government asking that Hungarians in France should be treated as well as the Hungarians were treating them. Active reformers had secured for Hungary the best child welfare system in the world. National sick insurance had been established in 1907. Rural home industries were subsidised by the State and minimum wages fixed by the State for such industries. Wages Boards were set up for home industries. Municipal housing in the form of great suburban colonies was carried out on a more extensive and efficient scale than anything attempted in this country.

These reforms brought slightly palliated appalling conditions. Nevertheless, nowhere could one see a more striking contrast between the workers and the bourgeoisie. The former worn and often refined by hard toil, the latter fleshy and luxurious. Rents were high; wages low. Women clerks, in spite of their union, could be had for £2 10s. a month; domestic servants got 16s. to 25s. a month. Men and women were building the houses together; the women serving as labourers to the men got 1s. 8d. to 2s. 1d. a day; the men 2s. 6d. to 3s. 4d. per day. Carpenters' wages were similar. Market riots by the women and rent strikes were common even before the war. Poverty drove even children into prostitution. Vice was regulated by the State and in the Budapest Prison we saw numbers of little girls in their early teens who had been sentenced for selling the trade of prostitution without first being registered by the police. There were a few women officials in the prisons; the men warders wore swords. Four or five girls were kept in the same small cell. Some of these poor children, dying of venereal disease, bare-footed and clad in filthy rags, with matted hair over their eyes, seemed to have become sub-human. The franchise even for men was very narrow.

Agriculture is the main industry of Hungary; it is said that the land, next to that of Colorado, is the richest in the world. Almost every inch of the vast plains appears to be cultivated. One sees no hedgerows; the furrows come down to the edge of the narrow roads. Peasant women, minute in the vast landscape, are at work in the fields. Sometimes a long train of carts drawn by oxen or horses and laden with brushwood passes slowly. Everywhere is great evidence of labour. Occasionally the wide stretches of arable land are broken by wooded knolls, where wonderfully large and numerous stacks of faggots are ready for collection. A long line of giant supports with connecting wires carries water from the Danube to distant fields. The houses of the peasants are small and neat. Until yesterday these rich lands, so splendidly cultivated by the patient hands of innumerable workers, were concentrated in the possession of a few rich individuals, but now the Revolution has come.

In 1914, going by chance and on a sudden impulse into a Budapest elementary school, we saw in the headmaster's room the statuette of a big man in working clothes; his massive head was bowed despairingly, his clenched hands, in one of which was a weapon, hung still more despairing at his side. We asked the schoolmaster the meaning of this figure. He said that it represented the peasants, who, after the revolution of 1849, had been forced to lay down their arms. The schoolmaster's grandfather had been the model for the figure. "I am a revolutionary like you," he said. "I would fight for freedom if I could." Neither we nor our unknown comrade realised that in less than five years he would have his chance.

The letter from Hungarian Socialists which we publish on another page tells us how events have moved in Hungary since the first revolution, which substituted Count Karolyi for Count Tisza as head of the Government, and set up a bourgeois revisionist anti-war government. The limits of Count Romanowski's power in Serbia secured the revision of the armistice concluded at Belgrade on November 8th, 1918, between Karolyi and General Franchet d'Espèrey on behalf of the Allies. The new terms involved territorial encroachments, causing Hungarians, who had secured a wide measure of political freedom by their revolution, to be forced under the control of these small and backward autocracies. They also deprived Hungary of supplies stored in these territories. The Allied occupation of Hungary opposed all freedom. A *Times*' correspondent, writing recently, said that the country was on the verge of starvation, coal was unobtainable, and in all the large factories the workmen had "turned out the directors and appropriated everything to themselves," there was "no army to speak of," and the police "were not to be trusted." (That is, of course, from the standpoint of the possessing classes.) Karolyi seems to have tried to make

friends with the Allies, but the Council of Ten in Paris would not relax their extortionate grip, in spite of the fact that their oppressive treatment of Hungary was bringing the workers to that point of desperation at which they would risk all and plunge into a second revolution to establish a proletarian government. That so-called Peace Council has recently presented to Hungary a demand that a neutral zone be set up between the Hungarians and Rumanians, which would lop off another large piece of Hungary, including the towns of Szegedon, Arad, Grosswardin, and Delroczin. Civil government in this neutral zone would be "exercised by the Hungarians under Allied control."

The Karolyi Government replied that the new demands were contrary to the armistice and Military Convention of November 13th, and that the Government was "not in a position to recognise the decision of the Peace Conference and to assist in carrying it through," because it was not invited to the Peace Conference, therefore its only alternative was resignation. Perhaps the reply may have meant: if you had helped us we would have held on; as it is, we wash our hands of the business and leave you to deal with the Workers' Revolution which is about to overcome us. Be that as it may, Count Karolyi published simultaneously a proclamation to the people, in which he declared that the Allies intend to use Hungary as a base of operations against Soviet Russia. He concluded:—

"I, as provisional President of the Hungarian Republic, turn from the Paris Peace Conference to the proletariat of the world for justice and support. I resign, and hand over power to the proletariat of the Hungarian people."

Karolyi has resigned, as the Kaiser and Prince Max of Bavaria resigned, nominating as they did, the power that is to succeed him. But Karolyi has not, like those others, chosen to be replaced by men whom he thinks able to stave off the dictatorship of the workers; he has handed the government to that dictatorship. If the news is authentic and Karolyi has acted in good faith, he has done a very wise and courageous thing.

The Budapest Workers' Council hastily formed a Ministry with the following members: President, Alexander Garbai; Home Office, Eugene Landler; Treasury, Eugen Baga; Education, Siegmund Kunfy; Foreign Office, Bela Kun; War Office, Joseph Pogány. Kun was recently imprisoned and injured in a fight between the police and the communists. Pogány, the President of the Soldiers' Council, is called by *The Times* "the strongest man in Hungary." He recently said:—

"The political revolution, although apparently at an end, is in reality only beginning and will be succeeded by a social revolution, which will only end when we have completely crushed the old system. If there is a revolutionary Government, but it has not power over the country. The question is whether the Government is willing to carry through quickly the revolutionary transformation. We gave them a limited time to demolish the old system and the sources of its power. If they refuse, they must crush the present land-owners, capitalists and clergy. Not the small landowners but the farm labourers must carry out the land reform. In the development of Socialism they can proceed step by step, but the question of power must be settled now."

This seems to prove that Pogány, at least, adopts the Bolshevik standpoint.

This Government, formed from a coalition of the Social Democrats and Communists, evidently regards itself as merely provisional. For it says that Workers', Peasants', and Soldiers' Councils are to be established and to wield supreme legislative, judicial, and executive power. It declares for a dictatorship of the proletariat the socialisation of mines, industries, and banks, and the land.

"Land reform is to be carried through, not by land partition, but by way of Socialist production and trade unions," so runs *The Times* telegram, which means that the land is to be worked co-operatively, presumably by organisa-

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tions of the land workers. Hungary, a stage further advanced than Russia in the capitalistic system, is mainly peopled by a peasantry which lost its land long ago. Russia, whilst it too had great estate owners, had also millions of peasant cultivators. Their grievous lack of agricultural implements and shortage of stock, Soviet Russia has not been able to supply, owing to the vast numbers to be dealt with and the war and the blockade. Hungary, in spite of war conditions, is, in this respect, more fortunately placed. Agriculture is in Hungary a great and equipped industry, only partially dislocated by war; Hungary, with its rich, well-cultivated lands, and its great dairy farms, will prove of great assistance to the Revolution, to Russia, to Germany, and to Austria also, for the Revolution in these two nations must shortly place the proletariat in power.

The best evidence that the Hungarian Revolution is genuinely Socialist, is that it declared for the Soviet form of government and has at once allied itself with Soviet Russia. At the same time, we do not know how far the Hungarian workers have developed the confidence and solidarity necessary to maintain the Soviets against all attack. If the present news be authentic, the workers have not passed the test of overthrowing the bourgeois government, but have actually had the reigns of government handed over to them. Nevertheless, the workers' revolutionary movement must have attained to a certain strength in order to induce the Karolyi Government to this step. If the Soviets take drastic Socialist action, the Hungarian capitalists, like the capitalists of Russia, will ally themselves with the foreign invaders.

The members of the Council of Ten must surely have foreseen that Soviets would be set up in Hungary, should they persist in again making it a theatre of war, in order to use it as a base of attack against Russia. Either they foresaw this, or they are the most arrant blunderers. We believe they foresaw it, but in order to attack Socialist Russia they were prepared to fight Soviet Austria also, if need be. Evidently they believe the class war is destined to be international, but believe that capitalism has a chance of winning. We do not believe that, but we urge Socialists to open their eyes to the struggle that is taking place.

The Times reports that Garbai, the new President, stated at the Workers' Council Meeting that he had been disappointed in the Entente, "which he had supposed had a love for democracy, and only when it was obvious that nothing but a dictatorship peace was to be obtained from the West, had Hungary turned to the East to obtain what the West denied." Erdelyi, the new Food Controller, is reported by *The Times* to have declared that "the Entente measures had compelled Hungary to take this step."

If these reports are correct, we hope they are not, the alliance with Soviet Russia is only a measure of expediency to some of these men, and non-Socialists are still to be found in the Hungarian administration, but once the Soviets are in working order we shall assuredly see the Menshevik thrust into the background in Hungary, as in Russia.

A committee of five has been appointed to arrange for the election of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Councils. Each People's Commissary is instructed to prepare a programme for his department, and a Directory of 31 members is instructed to discuss these programmes which will, of course, eventually come before the fully constituted Soviet. A revolutionary Law Court is to be established at Budapest; the carrying of arms, except by the workers' guard, and the sale of alcohol are prohibited. Looting will be strictly repressed. The banks have been taken over by the Soviet Government, which has decided to abolish all titles of rank, to separate the Church from the State, and to abolish ecclesiastical taxes.

Allied troops, including French, British, and Czecho-Slovaks, have been disarmed by the Soviet soldiers, and the Czecho-Slovak consulate was seized without bloodshed. The Socialists of the world should rejoice indeed.

Mrs. Snowden, in the Labour Leader, wrote, concerning the Women's Congress at Berne, the other day: "It was grievous to hear that Clara Zetkin, Adelheid Popp, and Rosa Bloch are now fierce converts to Bolshevism."

Has Mrs. Snowden observed that the women whom she has mentioned together with the murdered Rosa Luxemburg, are the foremost Socialist women of Europe? Socialists, who may be passing through mental tremours on the verge of deciding whether to support revolution, should consider why it is that these four famous women should all be found on the side of the Soviets and revolution, whereas in this country but few hitherto prominent Socialists, whether men or women, have taken this stand. We think that the reason of this is partly because the Socialist Movement in this country has been very little Socialist; partly because the issues, for and against revolution, and the Soviets or Parliament, have not yet become so acute here as they are in the Continental countries, and as they will presently be in this country also. If Mrs. Snowden were in Russia, Hungary, or Germany she, too, might be a "fierce convert to Bolshevism." It requires a greater power of clear, independent, and adventurous thinking to say one is a Bolshevik in Britain to-day, than it will do when the argumentative battle of Bolshevism has been won as far as the Socialist Movement is concerned.

The establishment of the Hungarian Socialist Republic has sent an electric shock around the world. Though hesitant semi-Socialists may fail to realise its significance, the governments of the world are awaking to it. *The Times* observes, with excitement, that "Bolshevism has installed itself well to the west of the *cordon sanitaire* which the Allies have been urged to establish around Russia."

In Germany Radek, the representative of Soviet Russia who has been imprisoned there, even fettered in his cell, under conditions of mediæval cruelty, is now released, the German Government announcing that "he entered Germany in a perfectly regular manner," and there is "no reason for keeping him under arrest." This change of front is due to Hungary's alliance with Soviet Russia. The growing oppressions of the Allied Council of Ten are making the German Government realise that perhaps, after all even from the selfish standpoint, its safest and most profitable course is to join hands with Russia. Already it is rumoured that Kautsky is about to visit Moscow on the German Government's behalf, and the fact that German sailors are refusing to hand over their ships to the Allies may bring matters to a head.

Austria hesitates whether to follow Hungary's example. The German-Austrian Workmen's Council at Vienna on March 24th passed a resolution against doing so, excusing its failure by saying: "In our land there are no more supplies; we are completely the slaves of the Entente." Food supplies have begun to reach Austria; just in time, it would seem, to defer the alliance with the Soviets.

But the alliance of the peoples of the Central Empires with Socialist Russia is inevitable. It cannot be long delayed. Soviet Russia offers them freedom and friendly co-operation: Allied capitalism offers only punishment, exploitation, and economic and political slavery.

Meanwhile the Russian Soviet troops are scoring many successes, especially in South Russia, so vitally important because of its stores of coal, oil, iron, and wheat. Reports of victories and defeats contradict each other from day to day, but General Renkin's message that "No time must be lost, if Rostoff-on-Don, Novo Tcheslak, and the Donets coal region is to be saved from the Bolsheviks" plainly shows the position. The Bolshevik victories in the south will mean food and warmth for the starving people of Moscow and Petrograd, supplies for the factories, and vital necessities for the peasant cultivators.

The theatrical flights of J. H. Thomas to Paris and the absurd letter addressed to Lloyd George by Wilson, Clemenceau, and Orlando have been combined with many subtler arts to stave off the Labour unrest threatened. The trade union leaders, without waiting for a rank and file mandate, appear to have made up their minds that a compromise shall be accepted and no strike take place. Nevertheless, the Rhondda miners are on strike and no one can predict with certainty what may develop.

The miners have been offered a 7-hour day from July 16th; 1919, and a 6-hour day from July, 1921, a 46½ hour week for surface workers; 2s. a day increase in wages; 1d. a ton to be spent on housing and other amenities in mining localities; and the question of nationalisation to be reported on by May 20th.

These are poor terms; the 1d. a ton on coal which is to raise £1,000,000 a year reveals how poor they are, for why should only 1d. per ton, out of the wealth produced by the miners, be spent on the districts where the miners live? There is no guarantee that nationalisation will be granted as a result of a further inquiry, no likelihood that a capitalist Government will give the miners control.

The Miners' Executive has put forward the following further claims:—

1. That the six-hour day should be established in July, 1920 (instead of 1921), and should not be contingent on the economic condition of the industry.
2. That the seven-hour day, and ultimately the six-hour day, should apply not merely to the men under the Eight Hours Act but to all workmen in the mines.
3. That surface workers should have a 45-hour week (instead of 46½ awarded in the report).
4. That the advance in wages should be 2s. 6d. a day (instead of 2s.).
5. That where workmen have been paid a "bonus turn" (i.e., given six days' pay for five days' work), the 2s. 6d. advance should be paid for the extra turn.

But these are trivial details. The miners' charter is dissolved in a maze of small points.

The railwaymen were again offered terms so bad that it seemed impossible they could accept them, and it appeared probable that the miners, even should they compromise on their own position to avoid a conflict, must strike work in support of striking railwaymen, because their Federation is a component part of the Triple Alliance, "the very name" of which *The Morning Post* condemns as a "threat." The Railway Executive then offered terms which were slightly less flagrant than those originally announced. The present wage and war increase is not to be reduced till December 31st, when the position will be reviewed; Sunday duty is to be paid for at time and a half; overtime between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. to be paid for at time and a half, other overtime at time and a quarter; and work not overtime between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. to be paid for at time and a quarter; a week's holiday a year is to be given; and in every 24 hours 9 to 12 hours' rest. A Committee is to discuss setting up a Joint Committee of the two railway unions and the Railway Executive to discuss questions affecting rates of pay and conditions of service. There is no pretence that the Government is offering the railwaymen any share of control of the railways and their management.

Unless the rank and file take things into their own hands the great Triple Alliance will subside, as ignominiously as though it were a little union in a half-organised industry. Mr. Bonar Law threatened that the Government would oppose the strikers with "all the resources of the State without the smallest hesitation." And the trade union leaders spent their efforts in inducing the workers to accept a compromise, not to take up the challenge.

Beside all the wire-pulling of the last days how grandly rises the vision of the Workers' Socialist Republic in which all poverty and inequalities shall be abolished!

E. SYLVIA PANKHURST.