

The war against the Soviets of Russia and all the Soviets must be stopped; it is a disgrace to the Allied workers that they ever permitted it to be begun. The most effectual way to end it is to set up the Soviets in Britain.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, as we write, are holding a conference to discuss this question. Indeed, it is high time that they should act. Their policy towards Russia has been most reactionary; Henderson, who placed his faith in Kerensky and bitterly attacked the Bolsheviks and the Soviets, has been very much to blame. Now that the pressure of rank and file understanding is steadily forcing the reactionary officials to a change of front, it must be made plain to them that mere resolutions are not enough: that action alone counts. Already in Bristol dockers have taken action by refusing to load ships for Russia; in the Thames area, the press complains that men are delaying the export of munitions. In the Labour world is a smouldering fire of hostility to the anti-Russian adventure, which may break into flame at any time. Soldiers and sailors also, have manifested their determined disapproval.

Albert Thomas, an abler counterpart of Clynes or Henderson, has made some important admissions concerning Russian affairs, which have appeared in the *Populaire*. Writing to Capt. Jacques Sadoul, French Ambassador in Petrograd, whose indignant letter exposing Allied anti-Soviet plots created a sensation last year, and was seized by Scotland Yard when it appeared in this country, Thomas says:—

"I have always said, here in France, that Lenin, whose character I know, is above suspicion; I have always said concerning Trotsky, that I do not know him and can therefore say nothing, but that I have no reason to suspect him: but as for the others, I have a strong suspicion that they had German money for their propa- ganda."

"That said, all my reserves are made: it is necessary to negotiate and to enter into relations. And for my part, if I can be of use in this direction, I am ready to forget past injuries. [He remarked in an earlier part of the letter that, on his visit to Russia, he was attacked by the Bolshevik press as an agent of French and British capitalism and Russian reaction.]

"...The very conditions under which they have engaged in peace negotiations force the Russians to show themselves more insistent than ourselves to realise the democratic objects of war.

"I have been, for my part, much impressed by the resistance with which they opposed the Germans on the question of the right of peoples to dispose of themselves. What a pity that we could not support them directly in this effort.... Rest assured that you find an echo here, that if the Governments hesitate a little at holding a conversation with the Bolsheviks, they nevertheless feel the necessity for such a conversation. Particularly at the time of writing, I think that the futility of a policy of separation and of Russian divisions has been recognised, and what is occurring in the Ukraine ought specially to open the eyes of all those who hoped to organise an important military effort against the Germans and the Bolsheviks."

Thomas also asked Sadoul to assure the Russians that the Allied war aims are now purified!

To have written thus Albert Thomas must either be a fool or a deceitful hypocrite.

This letter of his should be studied in conjunction with the Berne Conference majority resolution, which condemned the Soviets and the Bolsheviks and which he supported.

What is Thomas doing in France to oppose the intervention?

Bolshevism and Belgium.

Bolshevism is likely soon to appear in Belgium, because the condition of the people is one of such acute hardship, and the neglect by the Allies is so great, that they will realise, in spite of Vanderveelde and Huysmans, that the workers must take the power in their own hands, and this they can only do effectively by the establishment of Soviets.

In the neighbourhood of Antwerp all but eleven per cent of the workers are said to be unemployed. Vanderveelde says that two and a quarter million out of a population of seven millions are living on State aid. Out of 20,000 dockers in Antwerp only 2,000 are working. In Brussels there are 92,000 unemployed. Britain has forced Belgium to cease exporting coal to Switzerland, as this "upset the British exchanges." Belgium has lost 213,000 tons of shipping out of a total 350,000. No compensation has been paid for this or other damage, and Belgium has had no definite guarantee as to her share of the sum to be exacted from Germany. Latterly the Allies have even questioned her right to priority of compensation.

Whilst the Peace Conference wrangles, the people of Belgium are workless and hungry. Many are homeless; their ruined houses are not rebuilt. Yet the Allied capitalist Governments, in a spirit of callous iniquity, are busy spreading reports of Bolshevik atrocities! Belgium may presently have the distinction of starting the Soviets in Western Europe. Thus will her people find what recompense is possible for the sufferings which capitalist rivalries have thrust upon them.

The workers of Europe are fighting a desperate battle with capitalism: a struggle the loss of which means actual death to large numbers, and the living death of subjection to the entire proletariat.

And here we have British trade union leaders unanimously adopting a report containing a jumble of out-of-date reforms, as a bait to enter into a partnership with the employers under the proposed Joint Industrial Councils, which are designed to stultify working-class action. The worthlessness of the partnership was clearly demonstrated, if any demonstration were needed, by the Chairman's reply to a delegate's request for an interpretation of the term "legitimate grievances." The Chairman's reply was:—

"That is a thing that all the world quarrels about, so I am sure we cannot get any answer."

Precisely: on every important question, employers and employed must fail to agree. What further condemnation of this pretence at unity is necessary! Arthur Henderson, in moving the resolution to accept the report, again showed himself totally unfit to hold an official position in the Workers' Movement. He said that the trade union representatives on the Committee were determined not to press the claims of the workers to extremes, and that the employers were of the same mind. He declared that Lloyd George had not been able "to conceal his delight" at the report. He said that this Joint Council would get for the workers those increases of justice to which they believed they were entitled. They could get them "and be an example to the whole world."

"An example to the whole world." Yes, we British workers are in danger of becoming an example, a warning, to the world of to-day and to posterity, in that we set by, our officials smugly priding themselves on their cleverness in avoiding conflict, whilst the workers of all the world were enslaved by our masters!

Lloyd George's reply to the pettifogging proposals of the Conference was not even a promise to legislate, but merely an expression of sympathy.

We are glad to learn that the conscientious objectors who have had the pluck to bear imprisonment for their convictions are to be released after two years in gaol. But we emphatically dissent from the thanks which *The Herald* has offered to Lloyd George. It says: "We are grateful to the Prime Minister and his colleagues that at last they have been able to defy the reactionary forces in our country and release these martyrs to conscience."

We give no thanks to the Government for this tardy relaxation of its cruel grip upon the men who have resisted conscription. We say to the workers: When are you going to join in getting them all released; when are you going to dismiss this Government and end the capitalist system?