

ACTION. By E. Sylvia Pankhurst.

Our comrades often talk of the unconscious movements of the people, which we who foresee and desire revolution must watch and, as occasion offers, must harness to the Socialist or Communist ideal.

But those who would take a part in moulding events and actions must not wait passively, or they will fail in their attempts to influence. Only they who will act and suffer with the people should be, or will be, accepted in their councils. It may be a comfortable and pleasing exercise to imagine oneself sitting aside, pulling the strings and directing the whirlwind, but in matters revolutionary it does not work.

Moreover, we are the people; our individual acts all help to make up popular movements. Each one of us counts, only as one of course, but still as one.

The duty of action falls on each one of us individually. It would be very pleasant if suddenly, like clockwork, all the workers would begin to act in the mass, without any more uncomfortable propaganda to urge them on than the holding of some great public meetings, in which the speakers would be cheered to the echo. If the social revolution could come about without any violence or imprisonments it would be most pleasant, but life, alas! does not follow the easy working of our desires: the bed of the revolutionary is not made of rose leaves!

We must not wait for the mass to act: by individual action those who are spurred to the need for action must create the atmosphere in which the mass will act.

We are all agreed that mass action is most effective: that what will actually achieve our goal is the general strike and the setting up of Soviets or Councils by large bodies of workers, soldiers, and sailors. We are all agreed on that, but how is it to be done?

The sentiment must be created which will make it possible.

People say that the workers of this country will only move when they come to suffer from hunger and privation as the people of Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary are suffering. But will the like condition of want ever come to this country? The Allies have been victorious in the war, the British Empire has tremendous resources, and our rulers, knowing the danger to them which might arise if our people were forced to endure extreme privation, will do all that they can to preserve a minimum standard of comfort to the workers here.

Our rulers may be successful in their effort to prevent actual famine ever reaching this country: are we, then, to endure capitalism forever?

When the question is put in that way, all but the extreme pessimists of the movement will admit that we shall probably obtain Socialism by some other means. But, it is said, we must pursue educational methods until the great day of mass action shall dawn. Precisely; but there are various means of education and the action of the comrade who goes to prison, even though his or her action did not appear to shake the citadel of capitalism by even a hair's breadth and was something done in a very small way, will perhaps have as great an educational effect as the publication of numerous books and pamphlets!

But let us return to the subject of industrial mass action, which, as every one is agreed, is the strongest and most direct power the workers possess. It is important to realise that palliative reformism, which is so widely condemned by Socialists in the Parliamentary field, must be guarded against in the industrial field also. It is quite true that we must welcome every strike, however small its object, because it is an effort of solidarity, an example of revolt; but in our industrial effort, those of us who have grasped the idea of revolution and who desire the abolition of capitalism, must continuously advocate industrial action for that object.

It is essential that we should purge our minds of the pharisaical thought that we are not as others; that we should strip ourselves of the idea that there is an inherent incapacity in the mass of people to grasp the truths that have

revealed themselves to us. Above all, we must not follow the example of those who desire to keep the masses in subjection by seeking to gull them with sham reformism in the hope that they will be led by accident further than they can see. No, we must treat them as equal human beings, realising that as we are to-day they may be to-morrow, explaining to them frankly our own philosophy and the thoughts which are the motives of our actions. In this Lenin has shown a fine example: his speeches and writings clearly show that he places entire faith in the masses, that he tells them fully what the position is, what are the hopeful features, what the difficulties and dangers.

The great and simple ideal of a society in which all men and women shall be equal, without masters or servants, rich or poor, is not difficult of comprehension. It is easy to understand the idea of the Soviet system, in which every group of workers is entitled to appoint delegates from amongst themselves whom they instruct to speak for them, who must report as to how they have carried out the instructions given to them and who may be changed at any time; also the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the refusal of any share of political power to those who, instead of joining the general companionship of workers, employ others to work for them for private gain. The workers' control of industry appeals forcibly to all workers. Any one can grasp these ideals; they are simple in the extreme.

But if we refrain from preaching them, if we waste our energy on details—in protesting, for instance, against the levying of income tax on the better paid workers, instead of urging a change in the social system—we can hardly expect to make converts to Communism; we can hardly expect to bring about the Social Revolution.

"It is more important that I should act than that I should remain urging others to action. If I should pass away, others would take my place." This is the standpoint of the real revolutionaries, the standpoint of those who made the Russian Revolution, the first proletarian revolution. To follow in their footsteps needs less courage, less faith, than that which animated those pioneers. They did not wait in quietude for events to develop, for the masses to bestir themselves to action. The revolutionaries fought, and toiled, and suffered until they had created the spirit in the masses which at last caused them to rise when circumstances gave the spur.

The growth of all popular movements, for objects whether small or great, has been accelerated by individual action. Plimsol, by his shouts of "murder," could not have secured the fixing of the load line unaided; but Plimsol's cries awoke the public feeling which forced the Government to obey. Plimsol did not wait for the electors to act in the Parliamentary constituencies, for the Trade Union Congress to go on a deputation, or for the Seamen to strike—although, no doubt, many people said that he ought to have done so, declaring with unctuous superiority that only by such large and important action could the seamen be protected. The fixing of the load line was but a small palliative: the cries of one man sufficed to create enough public feeling to secure it; the Social Revolution is a thing of vastly greater magnitude: a very mountain of force is needed to achieve it. But for the Social Revolution also, we have seen the way prepared by individual action, and not alone in the terrorist field. The Russian writers have told us how, again and again, some little group of workers has braved the forces of reaction by marching out with the forbidden Red Flag, incurring thereby both violence and imprisonment, in order to make the masses think. The Spartacists of Germany have made many such demonstrations. We all remember how during the War groups of Berlin Socialist women collected outside the Reichstag and how Karl Liebknecht spoke to them from a window in the Reichstag building. The women were dispersed by the police and soldiers. Karl

RUSSIA AND THE ALLIES.

WHITE GUARDS ENCOURAGED BY ALLIED GENERALS.

The *Isvestia*, February 13th, 1919, says: "We got possession of a parcel of Krasnov's publications, 'Isvestnik (news distributor) of the General Staff of the Armies on the Northern Front.' The issue dated January 5th contains a description of the reception of the Allied military mission in Rostov. General Poole said: 'We will support and assist you, but one must bear in mind that owing to the present lack of transport facilities, it will be difficult to give immediate help on a large scale; however, during the fortnight that I and the French have been on Russian territory, we have already supplied 50,000 rifles, several million cartridges, a large quantity of medical and other material. Before leaving for Rostov I received a telegram from London notifying me that measures have been taken to send heavy and light artillery, rifles, 500 tons of medicines, aeroplanes and tanks. As to the present situation, in my opinion it is not as bad as many people seem to consider it. We hope for great things through Admiral Kolchak.' The French Capt. Fougué said: 'You will make a proud and victorious entry into Moscow, and you will re-establish your great and glorious country.' The President of the military district, the Cadet Kharlamov said: 'Our allies are celebrating their victory, but they must bear in mind that the war is not yet over; Germany has one more ally—Russian Bolshevism. Our warriors are being worsted in an unequal fight, we need the Allies' help, and not only material help, but help with live forces.' That help the Allied Governments are sending.

In an article in the *Isvestia* of February 16th, 1919, Rakitnikov writes: "To prevent misunderstandings, I wish to say that E. K. Breshkovskaia does not represent the party (Social-Revolutionary). She has gone abroad in a private capacity and without any instructions from any party. It is a well-known fact that she disagreed with the majority of the Party at the beginning of the Revolution. The attitude of the Party is determined by its decisions. You are in possession of our decisions, which define the new attitude of our Party. It consists in the relinquishing of armed conflict with Bolshevism; a call to overthrow the reactionary Governments which have sprung up in some parts of Russia under the protection of the German occupation or with the support of the Entente; a sharp and emphatic protest against intervention; and the repudiation of all manner of 'bloes' and agreements with the bourgeois parties in the establishment of an All-Russian Government."

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Liebknecht was punished; but what of that? The movement gained a new impetus: the news spread. It was a method of propaganda—nothing more; but out of it has grown the present serious struggle of the Spartacists to overthrow the established Government; a struggle which at first might have been called hopeless, but which every day brings nearer to success. The Irish Rebellion of Easter week, 1916, was a hopeless effort, its failure was inevitable; it was costly, grievously costly, in precious lives, but it laid the seeds of something bigger, something that is growing too strong to be resisted.

The deeds of pioneers are calling to us to do something; to do, not waste our lives in dull inaction. Mass action is desirable; mass action alone can succeed, but those who are ready for action must act and thereby cause the mass to move.

How urgent it is! How terribly urgent! We British workers are being used to crush the working-class Governments in other lands. Action that will arouse and startle the people into a recognition of that fact is most imperative; it is imperative that we should hasten. The capitalists are sending a relief force to Archangel, but it is we Socialists who should heed the S.O.S. call from the workers over there. It is we who should play the part of Plimsol, crying "Murder!" for the capitalist armies are murdering our comrades who have set up the Soviets in Russia, Hungary, and Munich; it is the capitalists who have got the Workers' Revolution by the throat and are endeavouring to strangle it.