

Between Two Imperialist World Wars

By MARTIN ABERN

International Youth Day comes at an appropriate time this year. The day set aside by the handful of revolutionary youth during the bitter and black days of 1916-1917, as a day of demonstration against imperialist war, occurs this year amid smoke-screens of false and misleading "peace" pacts and the militarist preparations that forebode a new imperialist war.

While these war preparations are proceeding apace, and new betrayals are being planned by the socialists and labor misleaders, it is necessary to tell and retell the story of the days that gave birth to International Youth Day and to point out the significance of the occasion.

The outbreak of the world war of 1914-1918 tore the corrupt bodies of the entire socialist movement to bits. The sores that had festered for years were burst open by the terrific catastrophe. The labor and revolutionary movement of Europe in particular was exposed as a body poisoned by the agents of imperialism within its ranks. It was a slow poison, administered for years before the war, and nurtured by the small bribes and special privileges granted the aristocracy of labor by their imperialist masters.

Collapse of Reformists.

Only a small section of the revolutionary movement rose to the situation properly. The only elements that opposed the imperialist war were the Russian Bolsheviks, the Italian socialist leadership (Maximalists), the Rumanian and Bulgarian left wingers, and varied groups in the Scandinavian and other countries; and, significantly, the young socialist movement added its voice to the militant denunciation of the "socialist" traitors who were acting as agents for the kaisers, czars, bankers and business magnates in recruiting cannon fodder

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among the working class and peasantry.

The revolutionary youth were among the first to reestablish international working class connections. The miserable collapse of the second international only served to brighten by comparison the splendid work of the revolutionary youth center which was established in Switzerland.

The youth bureau in Berne, with its periodical, "The Youth International," received the closest and warmest collaboration of the exiled Russian Bolsheviks. Some of the most noteworthy contributions on imperialism, war, socialist-jingoism and the like, by such men as Lenin, Bucharin, Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kollontai and other Russian revolutionaries of the time could be found in the pages of the "Youth International." And this collaboration was a fruitful one in more than one respect, for the articles of Lenin in particular helped to burn away the last remnants of pacifist and petty-bourgeois illusions that still hovered over the revolutionary youth elements who were so anxiously and bravely striving to struggle against imperialism, the war, and the social patriots.

Set Aside Youth Week

It was while the trenches were flowing with working class blood, to the chants of praise sung by the "socialist" renegades, that the youth bureau in Berne issued a call to the revolutionary young workers and peasants throughout Europe to set aside the first week in September 1915 for broad, militant demonstrations against the imperialist war and the treason of the social democrats. The voice of the revolutionary youth was the first on a

Europe-wide scale to be raised in harmony with the Russian Bolsheviks, the German Spartacists led by Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, and the reds in other lands.

This great tradition, sprouting from the seeds of struggle, and forcing its way through the weeds of treason, has been properly carried down to this day. It is an occasion when the working and peasant youth of all countries demonstrate their hatred and opposition towards the imperialist wars of their master class. It is a special opportunity for the rallying of all of the toiling youth to the banner of struggle against imperialist war by enlisting on the side of the proletariat in the war of the class that continues every day. It comes during the election campaign of the Workers (Communist) Party which gives an added opportunity to the young militants. It is the warning of the militant youth to the imperialists that they will continue a revolutionary war against the reaction even if an imperialist slaughter should be going on at the time.

What more fitting occasion for International Youth Day demonstrations could be desired than the present? Military, naval, aerial, and industrial war preparations are going on throughout the capitalist world with unprecedented feverishness. The United States is planning a colossal navy and industries are being organized for two-minute transformation into war factories. There is a growing increase in points of friction between England and the United States, between the United States and Japan, between France and Italy, between the imperialist powers and the colonial peoples, and between world imperialism and the

workers' fatherland, the Soviet Union. The struggle for world markets, for colonies, for "places in the sun," for world supremacy, has never been sharper than at this time, and the storm clouds of war have rarely been heavier.

New War In Making.

Precisely at such a time are the imperialist rogues attempting to hoodwink the masses in preparing them for "service." Innumerable "scraps of paper" are being signed with great solemnity by the "wise" diplomats. "Peace" has been proclaimed, time and again at Versailles, at Genoa, at Lausanne, at Locarno, at Thoiry, and now at Paris with American imperialism taking the lead. The more "peace pacts" signed the nearer approaches the day of war.

International Youth Day must serve to tear the masks from these hypocrites and war mongers. They must be exposed as the mass murderers of the working class and peasant youth. Especially must the socialists be placed in their proper niche as at times open or concealed agents of the imperialist war lords. These renegades are continuing the tradition of the socialists of 1914. Norman Thomas supports the anti-Soviet Kellogg pact. Boncour helps to militarize working class France. Herman Mueller supports the navalism program of German imperialism. MacDonald bombs Chinese workers for his British masters. The Russian Mensheviks join the imperialist clamor for intervention against the Soviet Union.

Two Traditions.

Theirs is a tradition of despicable betrayal and they follow it consistently. Ours is a tradition of revolutionary anti-imperialist and anti-militarist struggle which received its baptism in war and revolution. It is a tradition which the youth best demonstrates on International Youth Day.