

SOCIALIST ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATION IN BERLIN.

WAR AGAINST WAR

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(Translated by William E. Bohn.)

DURING the closing months of the year 1912 the war against war has dominated the thought and action of European Socialism. Geographical and historical conditions give to war an extremely important role in the social evolution of Europe. In America there exists one great political unit in which immigrants from all lands amalgamate into a single mass; therefore America offers the best conditions for a gigantic development of capitalism and the class-struggle.

But old Europe, with its hundreds of millions crowded into a small area, is divided into small nations; on account of the traditions of past centuries, when everything was still on a small scale, these nations stand to one another in the relation of for-

eigners, different in traditions, speech, customs, and political life. Each of them has developed into a capitalist state, with a government organized in the interest of its own bourgeoisie. This capitalistic development necessitated struggles against the survivals of feudalism and absolutistic monarchial power, but also struggles of each nation against the others; for in the restricted area available each found itself opposed by the others. In all of these conflicts there persisted an element of ancient barbarism and traditional dynastic interests. Thus it has come about that to the evil of division into small political units has been added the greater evil of militarism, which, through compulsory military service and heavy taxes, squanders much of the produc-

tive power of the nations and increases the strength of the governments as against the people.

The recent development of capitalism has increased these differences. While bourgeois idealists have been dreaming of the United States of Europe the facts of actual development have gone in the opposite direction. The imperialist policy has made each of the important European nations the center of a world empire. The cause of this state of affairs is the export of capital. The accumulation of capital outgrows the possibilities of the home-land; it seeks new fields of investment, where it becomes the foundation of new industries, which, in turn, bring about an increase in the demand for home products.

This phase of evolution requires the political domination of the new industrial region or, at least, an adequate influence over its government. Every government attempts, therefore, to take possession of the largest possible areas of foreign territory or to increase to the utmost its influence over foreign governments. To this end power and respect are necessary, and these are attainable only through military and naval equipment. Governments have thus become the representatives of big business. They find their support, however in the whole body of the bourgeois class, most of the members of which, without having any direct interest in the results of imperialism, feel a concern in whatever promises higher profits for capitalism as a whole.

Thus the various nations of Europe stand opposed to each other like gigantic camps of contending armies. They have divided themselves into two groups about the mightiest of the rivals, England and Germany. On the one side stands the Triple Alliance, made up of Germany, Austria and Italy, three nations poor in colonies. On the other stands Triple Entente of the three nations which control the largest colonial regions, England, France, and Russia. As a result of the present division of colonial possessions the members of the former group are naturally the instigators of any struggle looking toward a redistribution, and the members of the latter are the defenders of the status quo.

Especially in Germany, which has developed into a great industrial power in the

same class as England and the United States, there is a tremendous impulse in the direction of territorial expansion. The German government has been arming itself for fifteen years; it has now a mighty fleet which compels England to add constantly more vessels to its navy. Austria and Italy are beginning to imitate Germany. At the same time armies are increased and placed on a war footing. Throughout the world German capital and German political influence attempt to gain entrance. In China the Shantung railway is built and Kiastchou is held as a military station; in Asia Minor the railway from Constantinople to Bagdad is built; in Central Africa an attempt is made to enlarge German colonial possessions. Everywhere, however, England stands guard, jealous and suspicious of every German advance. This is the explanation for the enmity which the German bourgeoisie feels toward England.

The conflict between England and Germany is most acute in Asiatic Turkey. England has long had an eye on Mesopotamia, the ancient Babylonia, the cradle of human civilization, the biblical Garden of Eden, which now lies barren and waste but can be transformed into a fruitful land. But German capital, supported by the Turkish government, pushes on toward this territory along the line of the Bagdad railway. If this line is finally completed to the Persian Gulf, the shortest route to India will lie in the hands of Germany and her friends, and the English dream of uniting India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, southern Persia in a great English empire will have gone up in smoke. On this account England sought to prevent the construction of the Bagdad line and to undermine the Turkish government.

The break-down of Turkish power will involve a readjustment of all the interests involved, including those of the United States and other countries. Herein lies a constant danger of war between various European nations.

But it is to the west of the Bosphorus that the danger of a great international conflict has first become imminent. The agrarian nations of the Balkan region, which had hitherto been regarded by Austria as the national sphere for her expansion, began to develop their own capitalist systems; the familiar class lines appeared and a strong

national feeling developed. Hence there arose the necessity of nationalities large enough to permit of commercial development and the desire for the possession of seaports. This, in brief, is the cause of the present war, in which Turkey has been nearly forced out of Europe.

Austria, disappointed in the prospect of territories to the east scents new dangers in the results of the conflict. She fears especially the effect of a strong, independent Servian government on the Serbs at present under Austrian rule. Therefore a great war fever has swept over Austria and the Austrian government has made the most strenuous opposition to Servia's efforts to secure a port on the Adriatic. This situation contained the threat of a conflict of the great powers. Russia and Austria began immediately to mobilize their troops. This was the time for the proletariat of Europe to arise and assert its influence.

I I.

The international policy of Socialism has not always been opposed to war. Marx and Engels repeatedly (in 1843 and 1853) urged the nations of western Europe to declare war against Russia in opposition to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie. In this Marx and Engels represented the interests of the working-class and of democracy. Throughout the nineteenth century Russia was the protector of the reactionary governments against the revolutionary peoples. So long as Russia maintained its position it could restore the absolutism which had been conquered by the German revolutionists in 1848; in order to secure the results of the revolution, Marx, called upon the German bourgeoisie to take up arms against Russia. But the bourgeoisie did not answer this call to arms; it feared Russia less than the political power of the German people. Even later the influence of Russia remained an element in the situation of the rising working-class of western Europe. It was on this account that Bebel declared himself ready to shoulder a musket in a war against Russia.

But since this time conditions have changed. The liberation and increasing poverty of the Russian peasants, together with the development of capitalist industry, led, after the Russo-Japanese war, to a revolution which broke the military power

of Russia for a long time to come. Russia can no longer play the part of guardian over the governments of Europe. It has become, like the others, a capitalist state which must reckon with capitalist interests and proletarian opposition. No fear of Russia need turn the working-class from a policy of international peace.

But in the meantime the society of western Europe has undergone a transformation. As capitalism developed, the necessity of being prepared to meet other nations in battle took hold of the imaginations of all classes. Even the working-class came instinctively to believe in the purposes to be attained through warfare. This was the case in Germany in 1870, and history has repeated itself in the Balkans during the past year. Such wars as these are called national; they are supposed to be waged in the interest of the national good. The Socialists, who see deeper and farther than this, were in both instances a negligible element in the situation. But at the present time Socialism has behind it in western Europe great masses of the working-class; in Germany a third of the entire population. In all countries these masses are in opposition to the government and they know that wars between modern governments are not national, but imperialistic. This means that they are conducted in the interest of big business, for the purpose of increasing profits. This conception destroys any enthusiasm which the proletariat might develop for a foreign war.

On the other hand, the workers have every reason for striving to maintain a state of peace. A war in modern Europe would be far more devastating than any which has ever occurred. The armies which stand opposed count their soldiers by the million. And the weapons which they carry are far more murderous than any which have been employed in the past; especially the rifles of modern infantry are calculated to destroy life with a rapidity which has hitherto been unexampled. War in the future will be far more bloody than in the past; a far larger proportion of the forces will be killed or wounded. For those who remain at home, moreover, war will be far more terrible. Formerly the greater part of the population lived by agriculture, which could be temporarily carried on by women, boys and men too old

And this organization of the working-class is international. Across all national boundaries and all distinctions of race and language the workers join hands; they regard one another as brothers, as comrades, and see in the bourgeois and the government of their own land only enemies. There can be for them nothing more disgusting than the notion of massacring their brothers at the command of their enemies. They do not wish to see their international brotherhood, the growing unity of mankind, destroyed by the capitalistic quarrels of their governments. Therefore they make war against war with all their might. For these reasons the international policy of Socialism must be a policy of active devotion to the cause of peace. "War against war!" is the cry of the proletarians of all lands.

This was clearly expressed by the Congress of Stuttgart in 1907. In the resolution there adopted, after explaining the capitalistic nature of war and the determined opposition of the proletariat to militarism, the representatives of international Socialism declared: "In case there is danger of war, the working-classes of the countries involved and their parliamentary representatives are in duty bound to oppose the resort to arms by the employment of the means which seem to them most effective, the character of which means will naturally be adapted to the degree of acuteness which has been developed in the class-struggle and to the general political situation."

Since this resolution was adopted have the workers more than once been forced to oppose the war policies of their governments. When, finally, the Balkan war broke out the Socialists recognized immediately the danger to European peace. Our journals resolutely opposed the imperialist statesmen and professional chauvinists. In the countries immediately involved there were immediately held great anti-war demonstrations. In Berlin there occurred on November 17 a meeting participated in by 300,000 persons. In Russia a strike demonstration was made. The International Bureau met in Brussels and called a special congress of the international Socialist movement.

This congress met in Basel, where the

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for military service. Only within the region of actual military operations did the population know the real hardships of war. But through the development of capitalism our social organism has become more complicated and sensitive. Every disturbance which upsets credit or otherwise interferes with production may bring about a crisis. Every war which removes great masses of workers from the field of production, hinders transportation or blockades the harbors; means a crisis, a terrible industrial catastrophe which reaches the smallest village and brings bankruptcy, unemployment, poverty, and starvation in its train. A great European war at the present time would destroy civilization, force the world back to a low plane of industry and in general bring about a condition approaching that of primitive barbarism.

Such a possibility concerns especially the working-class, which is exerting its energies to raise civilization to a higher plane. The proletariat bases its activities on the new order of society; it is bringing into being strong organizations in which the egoism of the bourgeois world is to be replaced by the communistic virtue of solidarity. It is through the cultivation of this virtue that it is gaining the power to conquer capitalism and throw off its domination.

fine old minster, the chief church building of the place, was placed at its disposal. What an extraordinary spectacle, the red revolutionary hosts of Socialism gathering there in the old church to the swelling tones of the great organ! This would have been impossible in any other land than Switzerland, for everywhere else the bourgeois is committed to the policy of violence and detests the activities of the workers; it was possible here only because the Swiss bourgeoisie consists for the most part of bondholders in state enterprises, which could only be injured by an international war. This incident was tantamount to an acknowledgement by the only peace-loving section of the bourgeoisie that the Socialist proletariat is at present the only group which has the power to prevent an international conflict.

The proletariat stood before all the world as the standard bearer of civilization. And for the working-class of the world the Congress of Basel was the visible demonstration of their international unity. Previous international congresses had made possible the exchange of ideas and the attainment of mutual understanding; they left the practical struggles of the proletariat to be carried on by the national organizations within the national boundary lines. Here the international policy became for the first time the most vital problem of the working-class. Therefore the Congress of Basel was more important than any similar gathering which preceded it. Formerly internationalism was but a feeling which dominated the heart; now it became an important political fact.

The work of the congress consisted of the resolution accepted without opposition and the speeches which were made in connection with it. The resolution reaffirms the statement made at Stuttgart that the workers will attempt to prevent war with all the effective weapons at their disposal. And the addresses delivered by the representatives of the various nations left no doubt as to the determination of the working-class. "Not only in words," said Jaures, "but in the deepest passion of our natures, we declare: We are prepared to make the utmost sacrifice." And Victor Adler, speaking in the name of the working-class of Austria, which now bears the

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brunt of the struggle against war, said: "All the power of the proletariat, all the means of each individual worker, must be concentrated in this struggle." "In the use of the means determined by our conditions, by our political and industrial organizations," declared Haase in the name of the German Social Democracy, "We will devote our utmost power to the securing of that which we all desire to have secured, the world peace and our common future."

With regard to the declaration of policy contained in the resolution there can be little difference of opinion. Oppose one another as we may as to the wisdom of the separate demands which are made, in devotion to the general principle we are all united; everywhere peace and friendship shall be maintained between peoples; all oppression of nation by nation shall be opposed; and for every people the fullest measure of self-government shall be demanded. In making these demands, expressive as they are of the desire of the workers for peace on earth as against the oppression and violence characteristic of the ruling class, the Congress of Basel set up for the masses of the people everywhere a great torch which shall illumine for them the path to the new world.