

Reconstruction in Russia

FROM "PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN SOCIALISM"

(Continued from Page Three)

The central feature of reconstruction in Russia is that it proceeds upon the basis of a proletarian state, functioning through a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat. The policy of the Bolsheviks, in complete harmony with Marxism, is that the first requirement of Socialism in action is the conquest of power by the proletariat, after which accomplishment reconstruction becomes fundamental reconstruction and assumes the tendency of making for Socialism, instead of promoting capitalism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, the dynamic mechanism of the introduction of Socialism, may be described as having three functions:

1. The annihilation of the political power of the bourgeoisie in all its ramifications. The assumption of state power by the revolutionary proletariat disposes of the bourgeoisie temporarily as a political force; the bourgeoisie must be disposed of permanently. This is accomplished in two ways: the economic expropriation of the bourgeoisie, and its complete exclusion from participation in politics and government. In the measure that the process of reconstruction absorbs the bourgeoisie into the ranks of the useful producers, will they again be allowed—as workers—to participate in politics and government.

2. The introduction of measures of temporary reconstruction. The transition from capitalism to Socialism is not accomplished in a day: it is a process. But while the moderate and the revolutionary Socialist agree that the transition to Socialism is a process, there is violent disagreement as to the character of the process. The moderate Socialist assumes that it is a process operating

upon the basis of capitalism and the bourgeois state; a gradual penetration of Socialism into capitalism; but this is a process that cannot and never will emerge into Socialism, being the process of petit bourgeois collectivism, and making for state capitalism. The revolutionary Socialist assumes that the process must be a revolutionary process operating upon the basis of the proletarian state—a process of reconstruction which alone annihilates capitalism and introduces Socialism. Moreover, the transition, the overthrow of the political power of the bourgeoisie, necessarily disorganizes industry, and creates a measure of demoralization; many of the measures of the dictatorship of the proletariat, accordingly, must be of a temporary nature in order to overcome this demoralization, and increase productive capacity. The rapid increase of production, a vital task of the proletarian state, is accomplished also by all the measures of reconstruction, by means of a dictatorial regulation of production.

3. But these temporary measures must be, and are, in accord with the fundamental tendency making for Socialism. Measures of reconstruction to solve immediate problems or disorganization may assume a capitalist or a Socialist character, dominantly; and these measures of the dictatorship of the proletariat are decisively of a Socialist character. This, accordingly, is the fundamental task of the proletarian dictatorship: to initiate the tendency towards the complete transformation of capitalism into communist Socialism. The forms of this tendency assume a character that logically and inevitably emerge into the definite forms of Socialist society.

ROMAIN ROLLAND TO RUSSIA

M. Romain Rolland, the famous French writer and author of "Above the Battle," which, as our readers will remember, was reviewed in the Labor Leader of March 9, 1916, has, we understand, addressed a letter to the Russian Soviet government. M. Rolland was recently elected a member of the Russian Socialist Academy of Sciences. In his letter M. Rolland says:

"Russian brothers, creators of a great revolution, accept our congratulations and gratitude. The freedom you have won is not for you alone, but for all of us, your brothers of the west. Human progress is an evolution, slackens its pace, stops, stumbles over obstacles, or falls asleep in the road like a lazy mule. To arouse it, vigorous shakings are from time to time necessary; powerful revolutionary stimuli are required which spur the will, strain the muscles, and surmount all obstructions.

"Our revolution of 1789 was one of those awakenings of the heroic will, which drag the human race away from the beaten track and drive it forward along a new path. But after this effort, no sooner had mankind advanced than it again halted. The fruits of the French revolution were long ago gathered in Europe. But the time has come when the once fruitful ideas, the propellers of a new force, become but dead idols of the past, pushing backward not forward, and rising athwart the road as obstructions.

"New times—new battles, new hopes. Russian brothers, go boldly forward, and we will follow you. Every nation in turn must lead mankind. Your virgin strength was not wasted during the long years of forced inactivity. Now pick up the axe at the spot where we dropped it, and cut new paths and sunny avenues for us through the maze of injustice and falsehood.

"Our revolution was the work of great bourgeois, men of great vices and great merits. Their race has died out long ago. Your revolution must be the revolution of a great, healthy, united, and generous people, and must avoid the mistakes which we in France have made.

"Above all, be united and strong in spirit. May our example be a lesson to you! Remember our French Convention, the Saturnus—which was ever devouring its own children—be more tolerant than we were. Let all your energy be given in defending the cause of liberty which you are bringing to the world; defend it from the mischievous and perfidious enemies who are lying in wait to attack you as you weaken or become disunited.

"Remember, Russian brothers, you are fighting not for yourselves alone, but for us. Our forefathers raised the banner of revolution in 1792 in order to give liberty to the world. They were unsuccessful; perhaps they were insufficiently equipped for the task. Nevertheless they were animated by a noble and ardent desire for liberty. May this wonderful fire burn also in your hearts." —Romain Rolland

SWITZERLAND

Of interest as throwing a light on labor opinion in Switzerland was the decision arrived at by a special conference of the Swiss Metal and Watch Workers Union held at Bern to give qualified sanction to the use of the general strike. The union previously committed to the position that the general strike was not a legitimate trade union weapon, reversed its attitude, on the ground that the general strike, favored by the war and the revolution, had come into common use. The conference limited its endorsement, however, by adopting the position that in a democracy the general strike should be utilized only as a last means of exerting pressure upon a reactionary majority. The conference defeated the proposal of the Zurich delegates to establish soldiers' and workers councils in all parts of the country to lead the labor struggle.

LOCAL VANCOUVER NO. 1
will hold its Annual Commune Celebration
on March 18, 1919, at Lester Court.
Admission by ticket only. Positively no
money accepted at the door.

is clearly reactionary. It acts against the great masses of the unorganized and the unskilled, as is proven by its attitude during I.W.W. strikes. The A.F. of L. is an organization of craft unions, that splits the working class; an organization, moreover, that represents only a very small part of the working class, being largely an organized system of "job trusts." The A. F. of L. during the war has pursued a policy of the utmost reaction, even more reactionary than many circles of capitalism; it united with capitalism against Socialism in the United States, and in Europe through its "Labor Missions"; and a Labor Party would pursue an identical reactionary, petty bourgeois policy.

There are elements in the Socialist Party, whose policy is not at all Socialist but the policy of reactionary trade unionism and laborism, who would welcome a Labor Party, and urge merging with it. That would be suicidal; there must be an independent Socialist Party: to merge with a Labor Party would promote confusion, compromise and disaster.

But it must be admitted that the official majority policy of the Socialist Party in action is, in substance, the policy of laborism disguised with "Socialist" phraseology. Should our party retain this policy, it would become the fifth wheel of the wagon, serve no necessary mission, and would either decay or become absorbed in the Labor Party. The Socialist Party would have to irrevocably separate itself from a Labor Party and wage war upon it by means of revolutionary Socialism.

The movement to organize a Labor Party, all the developments now transforming the world, are a call to Socialist reconstruction, to the annihilation of moderate, petty bourgeois Socialism. The Socialist Party must re-organize in accord with the new conditions, must adopt the policy of revolutionary Socialism, of the Bolsheviks—accept the ideas now developing a new pulse in international Socialism, and which alone represent Socialism and Marxism.

The way to wage war upon a Labor Party, should it eventuate, is not to promise more reforms than the Labor Party, is not to plead and placate, but to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat, to awaken to action the great, unorganized industrial proletariat, which is the dominant force in industry, and which will determine the destiny of the revolution. This would mean a broadening of the conception and practice of politics—a broadening fully in accord with Marxism and fundamental Socialism. The A. F. of L. does not represent the elements of the real proletariat—the industrial proletariat massed in the basic larger industry. The A. F. of L., except in the case of anachronisms such as the miners, represents the skilled workers, the aristocracy of labor, men who have skill and consider this skill "property." Their ideology is a petty bourgeois ideology, and their domination of Socialism and the industrial proletariat would prove a calamity. The answer to the A. F. of L. compromise and petty bourgeois policy is to awaken the industrial proletariat, and pull out of the A. F. of L. unions, such as the miners, which belong with the industrial proletariat.

As against the Labor Party, a Socialist Party: as against the aristocracy of labor, the masses of the industrial proletariat; as against A. F. of L. unionism, industrial unionism; as against conciliation with capitalism, the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

There is no magic in "labor"—it depends upon what labor represents, its tendency and action. There is no magic in "Socialism" either; both may be reactionary and counter-revolutionary. The great task of Socialism is its own reconstruction—this animates its policy on all problems.