

THE RED FLAG

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The New Germany

[By Ludwig Lore]

SUDDENLY as the war began it has ended. And the military rulers of Germany, whose insane lust for power thrust a world that was tottering on the brink of war for years into its horrible maelstrom, have fled from the wrath of their own revolutionary proletariat. The immediate causes of the sudden collapse of a seemingly invincible nation are obvious enough. The German people were suffering untold misery. They were starved and freezing. Their men and their boys were dying like flies on the battlefield. Their autocratic rulers, drunk with power, were showing with brutal frankness how utterly they despised the men and women who had given all they had to satisfy the insatiable greed of their capitalist classes. After four years of war Prussia still had its odious election laws, the Kaiser still ruled as the all-powerful lord over the German people. The great enthusiasm of the first period had given place to dumb, helpless apathy. The army at the front was fighting its last desperate battle. They, too, were sick to death of the endless slaughter. And the signs of misery at home, that crept into their letters and seeped through into the ranks at the front in spite of the stern measures adopted by the government broke the spirit of men who had gone without flinching through the bloodiest battles. The Allied forces found an army that had only one wish, to end it all, to be done with this fearful misery. The military power of Germany was broken. A victory of the Allied armies was inevitable. The horrors of warfare on their own soil stared the German people in the face. Their unbounded faith in the war-lords was shattered.

And yet, today Germany is not a nation of vanquished people. In spite of hunger and military defeat the morale of the German people is not broken. Its working class has emerged from this war in spite of the awful price it paid in blood and suffering, the victor. It has suffered complete military defeat, but it has gained the mastery over its own destiny.

Defeat was turned into victory, because, for generations, men and women of the working class have been preaching to their brothers and sisters the power of the proletariat. Defeat became victory because, through the days of darkest reaction, a small handful of men and women nursed the weak flame of revolutionary understanding in the hearts and minds of the people, because they sowed the seed of the revolution in the stony soil of a victorious nation, and waited for the fruit to ripen, with boundless faith in the ultimate awakening of the working class. Defeat became victory, because the splendid example of the Russian working class had shown them that nothing can crush a proletariat that believes in itself.

It would be difficult to overestimate the part that the Russian Revolution played in the revolution of the German working class. The appeals of the Russian leaders at Brest-Litovsk, and the shameful role played by the German war party, left an uneasy sense of shame in the hearts of men who had almost forgotten the meaning of internationalism. The soldiers that were sent to hold the conquered Russian provinces in subjection, came back filled with the new spirit of their vanquished captives. Russian aeroplanes dropped appeals and messages down upon the German soldiers. Newspapers in the

German language were printed in Russia and smuggled over the border for distribution among the German people. The Russian embassy in Berlin became the hotbed of anti-monarchical and proletarian revolutionary agitation; from the tower of the building that only a few years ago was the horror of every social-democrat because it personified the regime of the bloody Tsar, fluttered the red flag of brotherhood, stirring long forgotten hopes and memories in the breasts of the German workers. Great printing presses turned out tons of literature, in the halls once sacred to the interests of the Russian Black Hundred, leaflets and appeals that were distributed everywhere by the adherents of the radical socialist movement. German Junkers had taken possession of Russian land and Russian resources. The Russian people had won the very soul of the German nation.

Today the political fortunes of the German nation lie completely in the hands of the Social Democratic movement. The capitalist system of production in Germany was so absolutely and completely subordinated to the war interests of the nation that the sudden coming of peace has left the bourgeoisie utterly helpless and demoralized. In Germany all industries not directly necessary for military purposes were stopped at the very beginning of the war. The effective blockade of the English fleet wiped out even such private enterprise as flourished in the Allied nations notwithstanding the rigid demands made by the war upon the capitalist resources of these nations. The isolation of German capital was completed by the stringent guarantees demanded by America from the Neutrals to prevent the importation of supplies into the Central Empire. Even a victorious Germany would have passed through a terrible crisis before a return of its industries to a peace basis could have been effected. Defeat and the overthrow of the political and military oligarchy that had made Ludendorff the virtual ruler of the nation left the bourgeoisie powerless to resist its working class. After a few half-hearted attempts to safeguard their own political interests, the German liberal bourgeoisie, that was always notorious for its cowardliness and its servile toadying to the monarchical rulers gave up the struggle. The attempt to save the tottering throne by the appointment of the popular Prince Maximilian to the Chancellorship, with the appointment

of three government Socialists to the ministry, and a liberal political program providing for the responsibility of the government to parliament, the right of the Reichstag to dissolve the ministry by a simple vote of disapproval and the reorganization of the monarchy after the pattern of that of Great Britain came too late to save the situation. The release of the political prisoners, chief among them Liebknecht and Dittman, hastened the revolution that these measures were intended to prevent.

In spite of the honest and sincere efforts of Scheidemann, Gustav Bauer and Dr. David, these first socialist ministers of Germany, the revolution grew and spread. In a last desperate appeal directed by Scheidemann to Dr. Solf, then Secretary of Foreign Affairs, the former "requests" that the Emperor be "requested" to abdicate. And in order to leave no doubt as to the purpose of this appeal the "Vorworts" at the same time published an article, obviously written by Scheidemann, in which he says, "Minorities must not be permitted to make the whole situation a tool by means of which they may accomplish their purposes, or everything will fall to pieces. . . . The German people must show that it can accomplish the greatest steps toward progress without exposing itself to the nameless terrors of civil war." As late as the 27th of October, hardly two weeks before the outbreak of the revolution, the majority socialist organ "Dresdener Volkszeitung" published the following:

"Out of the ranks of the Independents in these days are sounding ecstatic cries for a revolution. It may be that some of these shouters know not what they do. They are calling for a revolution for the sake of a fanatic principle. They want a revolution for the sake of the revolution. They want a revolution according to their conception, with barricades and the blood of citizens without knowing what for. If they could read the history of the past, present and coming weeks in the light of the history of half a century, perhaps they could be made to realize that of which now they seem to have not even a conception, that we are living in the midst of a revolution, as bloodless, but at the same time as effective as any the world has ever seen, a revolution that has swept away hindrances that yesterday seemed insurmountable. that has overthrown, over night, the rule of those powers that yesterday believed themselves invincible."

On the 5th and 6th of November there were revolutionary outbreaks in Berlin, Kiel and other places. On the 7th Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils were being formed all over the country. On the 9th the Emperor fled from German soil and Prince Maximilian was proclaimed Regent. On Monday, the 11th, Scheidemann and Ebert demanded his resignation in the name of the German people, and Ebert was proclaimed Chancellor of the German Socialist Republic. The Council of Plenipotentiaries (People's Commissariat), composed exclusively of Socialists, was formed in which all groups of the socialist movement were represented, Scheidemann, Ebert and Landsberg of the majority, Haase and Dittman of the Independents, and Barth of the Spartacus group. This de-facto government of Germany is still in control but its status has already undergone radical changes. On the 25th of November the government officially announced that an

(Continued on Page Two)

SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

PROPAGANDA MEETINGS
EVERY SUNDAY
At 8 p.m. Sharp

COLUMBIA THEATRE
Hastings Street, West
A. McKenzie, Chair.; J. Kavanagh, Speaker.

ROYAL THEATRE
W. Bennett, Chair.; J. Harrington, Speaker.