

Capitalism in Peril

THE following quotations are from "Capitalism in New Peril of Collapse," by Major Chas. L. Hall, U. S. A., in "North American Review," reprinted in the "Democrat and Chronicle," Rochester, N. Y., July 6th, 1920.

"Up to 1900 the French and English blocs had been active competitors for colonial power, but about that time both realized that their whole civilization was subject to grave dangers from the Central Empires. Unless they presented a united front the structure of society, which we call democracy, and which the modern Russians call 'tyranny of the bourgeoisie,' was in grave danger of complete destruction. . . . Under the peril of this menace the two states united with Czarist Russia." Further on in the article he writes: ". . . Russian feudalists were an indispensable military assistance to the Entente bloc, and could not be abandoned."

"The immediate result of this combination was a danger to the Central Empires; because their trade got to be hampered by more or less disguised restrictions on their expansion. . . . Various endeavors were made to compose these differences, but they broke down. . . . The last attempt at compromise vanished at Agadir in 1911."

Then treating with the world war, ". . . wealth was transferred. . . either into economically useless goods or labor (munitions of war and pay of the army) . . ."

"In 1917 feudalism was destroyed in Russia. There being no native capitalism of any inherent strength, control of the State passed into the hands of the urban proletariat, who seized the industrial machinery, owned nominally by rich Russians, but really by foreign security holders. Such entrepreneur capitalists as existed were ruined. The agrarian character of Russia makes the best possible place to try out Marxian Socialism; but nevertheless, the economic results are not such as to lead people to long for its further expression. Yet it is safe to say that what happened in Russia is sure to happen in the rest of Europe."

"The collapse of Russia made the triumph of the Central Powers inevitable unless the Entente could secure further allies. This they were able to do on the American continent, and, as a result. . . the Central Powers were defeated, and forced to submit to the peace of Versailles. This peace, dictated by the Entente capitalists, . . . let us analyze it?"

He arrives at the following conclusions: ". . . First. . . the only probable effect is to impoverish the loser without enriching the winner." ". . . second. . . It further assumes that this population can be compelled to labor indefinitely at a rate barely sufficient to maintain life." "In the third place, it assumes that all German excess capital can be seized without, at the same time, so fracturing the organization of Germany as to make the continuation of the capitalistic regime there impossible."

"In order to reduce the resistance of the German people, the starvation by blockade was continued for seven months after the armistice. Thereby their economic value, either as citizens or slaves, was permanently diminished, . . . large Allied forces were placed on the Rhine at German expense. This expense exceeded the ante-bellum military budget of Germany . . ."

". . . the great areas of exploitation, Russia, Turkey and China, were to be parcelled out among the victorious powers

"Further expansion in the last is, however, definitely checked by Japan. In Turkey the native population developed considerable strength in resisting the burden, and commercial expansion in Mesopotamia and elsewhere seems to be stopped by the obvious economic difficulty that the cost of an expedition exceeds the returns. As for Russia, good money was poured out after bad in the Kolchak-Denikin coupon-collecting episodes until what little reserve strength the western financial interests possessed was almost completely dissipated, with exactly nil results. Moreover the lower classes in France and Great Britain have begun to appreciate the fact that Russian unity (call it Czarism or anything else) is even more distasteful to the Russian people than the rule of the urban proletariat, as it cannot possibly be maintained except by a reactionary government

"The impending collapse of capitalism in Europe is the most tremendous ogre that Western peoples have had to face since the Battle of Tours, that is to say for about twelve hundred years; and, if it is cataclysmic and not evolutionary in its nature, will be the greatest wrench to the existing order of society that has occurred since the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, ushered in the Middle Ages. The spectre of this wrench everywhere, the hackneyed expression, 'World Unrest,' is merely symbolic of the ubiquitous terror. But the methods hith-

erto proposed for meeting the problem have depended more on exorcism than on pure realism. Brave men do not scorn to analyze and appreciate, as well as to attack, their enemy. Only fools tilt at wind-mills."

Book Review

"SOCIALISM ON TRIAL.—By Morris Hillquit. Fifty cents. New York, B. W. Heusch, 32 West 58th St.

THE title of this book is not descriptive of its contents. It consists of a stenographic report of Hillquit's speech before the Judiciary Committee of the New York Legislative Assembly, which sat on the question of seating five members of that house who had been elected on the ticket of the Socialist Party of America.

The seventy-five pages contain much argument on the folly of expelling these members from their seats, and but little about Socialism. The book might be taken as an example of the unsound position of the Socialist Party of America.

However, in developing his argument, Mr. Hillquit produces much information that is valuable. We are told on page 13 that one of the members was charged with having introduced "affirmative legislation of an offensive character." This is worthy of a country where a girl can be charged and convicted of laughing at a policeman.

So far as the legal aspects of the case are concerned, we are willing to take Mr. Hillquit's views, and he appears to have shewn beyond doubt that the proceedings were not within the laws. But he undertakes to explain Socialism, and we have reason to question his ability. Mr. Hillquit says that on the question of religion, Peter Collins was called as a witness, and testified that Socialism was hostile to religion. He objects to this on the ground that Collins had not made a study of Socialism, and enquired why some university professor, who was not a Socialist but a student of the movement, had not been called,—say Professor Commons, or Ely.

Why call any one to testify? If Marx and Engels and their accepted writings are of any value to Socialism, then "hostile" is a very mild term; as Kidd puts it: "The subject of religion is logically eliminated" by modern Marxian Socialism. But alas, logic is the feeblest and frequently an after-the-event factor in human affairs. So I suppose we must have religion with us yet a while.

Under the caption "Socialism," we are told that Socialists ". . . really do no more than endorse, and perhaps extend, the very well known declaration which the founders of this republic have made popular all over the world, and that is, that the object of every government, and of every people is to attain and maintain the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To us these are not phrases to be recited glibly on the fourth of July. To us this declaration is a living truth." Well, to us it so much rhetoric, and of as much value to the working class as the profound query: "Why is the fourth of July?" which recalls the reply of one who had more wit than reverence: "Because the first is a jay, the second is you, and thirdly you get hell!"

Mr. Hillquit then pays eloquent tribute to the wealth of the United States, adding that there is "No reason in the world why there should be slums in any of our cities, why there should be underfeeding of children," etc. We know of a very good and all sufficient reason,—because in addition to the many capitalist apologists who work so ardently at befogging the mind of the workers there is also a goodly number who, in the name of Socialism, compete with them in their task.

We are told in a footnote that one of the Judiciary Committee declared on the floor of the Assembly "that the Socialist Assemblymen, if guilty, should be shot." Tall words, which the capitalist and his henchmen are never tired of repeating in one form or another.

There are some excellent quotations from American legislators during the period of the last Mexican War almost a century ago, wherein we see that patriots true and tried might oppose war in the legislature and live. On the question of Internationalism there is a quotation from a letter of

Father Ryan, who was Hillquit's opponent in the controversy, "Socialism, Promise or Menace," wherein the Reverend Father fears for the survival of his "Internation." These quotations and the legal argument are welcomed by us as an addition to our store of knowledge bearing on the mental processes of the master class mind, but the pamphlet is lamentably lacking of instruction in Socialism. Not one Socialist classic is mentioned, much less quoted, and with the exception of Lenin and Trotsky, not one name out of the many scores of working-class thinkers is mentioned, and Lenin and Trotsky are mentioned merely by the way.

America is a country where great things are done, and we can say without fear of ever having to recall our words, that in no other country in the world could a Socialist talk all day, on Socialism, and never introduce its fundamental principles, and its wealth of literature. Mr. Hillquit, busying himself entirely with the stupid objections raised by the master class, lost an opportunity which is not likely to recur. But should it recur, the working-class had better go out into the bush, to the docks, or anywhere the working animal abides, for there it will find its spokesman,—not among the lawyers. J.H.

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matists of old Europe, accustomed to a language of evasion and equivocation, than the straightforward talk of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. How could Lloyd George understand a note in which the victors repudiating the interference of the Allies in the Polish debacle, actually offered the defeated Poles more advantageous territorial terms than those suggested by their western protectors. "Propaganda," cried Lloyd George, in consternation, fearful lest the Poles discover the obvious truth that it is better to be defeated by Soviet Russia than to be protected by the Allies. To add to his embarrassment, the Soviet Foreign Office replied to Mr. George's suggestion of a general peace conference of the border states, by reminding him that Soviet Russia had already successfully concluded peace with Lithuania, Esthonia and Georgia, and that negotiations were proceeding with Latvia and Finland. There was no doubt, an unpleasant suggestion in the inference that while Mr. George and his peripatetic colleagues had been running about from one watering place to another, talking peace and prolonging war, Soviet Russia had been persistently and successfully making peace wherever possible. It was perplexing to be reminded that the Soviet Government has done more to make peace in the world and has actually conducted more successful peace negotiations with its neighbors than any other power in Europe since the armistice. We gather from the reports of the Prime Minister's discourse, however, that he understood that the Soviet Government was ready to make peace direct with Poland and that he would advise the Polish Government to sue for terms. Perhaps he did not find the Soviet note so difficult of comprehension as he pretended. He did not care where the peace conference met, he said, and did not desire to interfere if the Poles would negotiate directly with the victors. The main thing was to save Poland from the consequences of her "mistake." He concluded with some perfunctory and meaningless remarks about the aid which England and France would give to Poland. The British Ambassador at Berlin had gone to Poland. The French Government was sending "a General who is Chief of Staff," and finally, as some sort of dark hint, "it may very well be that Marshal Foch will follow." What all these worthies would do or could do in Warsaw, except to impede the hasty preparations for evacuation, the Premier did not say.

Over in Paris, M. Millerand was having his say, calling the Soviet note an impertinence, and threatening wildly. "France must keep her word to Poland," said the French Premier, forgetting that only a few days ago no less a personage than Marshal Foch himself had disclaimed all responsibility for the Polish enterprise. One correspondent, reporting the belligerency of the French Premier, remarks dryly that "it is possible that actions may not correspond with orations, for it is difficult to see how France or England can practice a war policy in the present circumstances."—"Soviet Russia."