

THE RED FLAG

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FIVE CENTS

The Principles of Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship

By LEON TROTSKY

AS MARXISTS, we have never been idol-worshippers of formal democracy. In a society of classes, democratic institutions not only do not eliminate class struggle, but also give to class interests an utterly imperfect expression. The propertied classes always have at their disposal tens and hundreds of means of falsifying, subverting and violating the will of the toilers. And democratic institutions become a still less perfect medium for the expression of the class struggle under revolutionary circumstances. Marx called revolutions "the locomotives of history." Owing to the open and direct struggle for power the working people acquire much political experience in a short time and pass rapidly from one stage to the next in their development. The ponderous machinery of democratic institutions lags behind this evolution all the more, the bigger the country and the less perfect its technical apparatus.

The majority in the constituent assembly proved to be social revolutionists, and according to parliamentary rules of procedure, the control of the government belonged to them. But the party of Right Social Revolutionists had a chance to acquire control during the entire pre-October period of the revolution. Yet, they avoided the responsibilities of government, leaving the lion's share of it to the liberal bourgeoisie. By this very course

the Right Social Revolutionists lost the last vestiges of their influence with the revolutionary elements by the time the numerical composition of the constituent assembly formally obliged them to form a government. The working class, as well as the Red Guards, were very hostile to the party of Right Social Revolutionists. The vast majority of soldiers supported the Bolsheviki. The revolutionary element in the provinces divided their sympathies between the Left Social Revolutionists and the Bolsheviki. The sailors, who had played such an important role in revolutionary events, were almost unanimously on our side. The Right Social Revolutionists, moreover, had to leave the Soviets, which in October—that is, before the convocation of the constituent assembly—had taken the government into their own hands. On whom, then, could a ministry formed by the constituent assembly's majority depend for support? It would be backed by the upper classes in the provinces, the intellectuals, the government officials, and temporarily by the bourgeoisie on the Right. But such a government would lack all the material means of administration. At such a political center as Petrograd, it would encounter irresistible opposition from the very start. If under these circumstances the Soviets, submitting to the formal logic

of democratic conventions, had turned the government over to the party of Kerensky and Chernov, such a government, compromised and debilitated as it was, would only introduce temporary confusion into the political life of the country, and would be overthrown by a new uprising in a few weeks. The Soviets decided to reduce this belated historical experiment to its lowest terms, and dissolved the constituent assembly the very first day it met.

For this, our party has been most severely censured. The dispersal of the constituent assembly has also created a decidedly unfavorable impression among the leading circles of the European Socialist parties. Kautsky has explained, in a series of articles written with his characteristic pedantry, the interrelation existing between the Social Revolutionary problems of the proletariat and the regime of political democracy. He tries to prove that for the working class it is always expedient, in the long run, to preserve the essential elements of the democratic order. This is, of course, true as a general rule. But Kautsky has reduced this historical truth to professorial banality. If, in the final analysis, it is to the advantage of the proletariat to introduce its class struggle and even its dictatorship, through the channels of democratic institutions, it does not at all fol-

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An Appeal of the Spartacus Group

To the Workers of All Countries!

"Christmas, 1918

"Proletarians! Men and Women of Labor!

"Comrades!

"The revolution in Germany has come! The masses of the soldiers who for four years were driven to slaughter for the sake of capitalistic profits; the masses of workers, who for four years were exploited, crushed, and starved, have revolted. Prussian militarism, that fearful tool of oppression, that scourge of humanity—lies broken on the ground. Its most noticeable representatives, and therewith the most noticeable of those guilty of this war, the Kaiser and the Crown Prince, have fled from the country. Workers, and Sailors' Councils have been formed everywhere.

"Workers of all countries, we do not say that in Germany all power actually lies in the hands of the working people, that the complete triumph of the proletarian revolution has already been attained. There still sit in the government all those Socialists who in August 1914, abandoned our most precious possession, the International, who for four years betrayed the German working class and the International.

"But, workers of all countries, now the German proletarian himself speaks to you. We believe we have the right to appear before your forum in his name. From the first day of this war we endeavored to do our international duty by fighting that criminal government with all our

power and branding it as the one really guilty of the war.

"Now at this moment we are justified before history, before the International and before the German proletariat. The masses agree with us enthusiastically, constantly widening circles of the proletariat share the conviction that the hour has struck for a settlement with capitalistic class rule.

"But this great task cannot be accomplished by the German proletariat alone; it can only fight and triumph by appealing to the solidarity of the proletarians of the whole world.

SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

PROPAGANDA MEETINGS

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

At 8 p.m. Sharp

EMPRESS THEATRE

Corner Gore and Hastings

Speaker

Lefevre

"Comrades of the belligerent countries, we are aware of your situation. We know full well that your governments, now that they have won the victory, are dazzling the eyes of many strata of the people with the external brilliancy of their triumph. We know that they thus succeed through the success of the murdering in making its causes and aims forgotten.

"But we also know that in your countries the proletariat made the most fearful sacrifices of flesh and blood, that it is weary of the dreadful butchery, that the proletarian is now returning to his home, and is finding want and misery there, while fortunes amounting to billions are heaped up in the hands of a few capitalists. He has recognized, and will continue to recognize, that your governments, too, have carried on the war for the sake of the big money stakes. And he will further perceive that your governments, when they spoke of 'justice and civilization' and of the 'protection of small nations,' meant capitalist profits as surely as did ours when it talked about the 'defence of home'; and that the peace of 'justice' and of the 'League of Nations' are but a part of the same base brigandage that produced the peace of Brest-Litovsk. Here as well as there the same shameless lust for booty, the same desire for oppression, the same determination to exploit to the limit the brutal preponderance of numerous steel.

"The imperialism of all countries knows no

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