

Problems of American Socialism

By LOUIS C. FRAINA

The ultimate decision as to whether capitalism or Socialism shall control the world will be rendered in the United States. As American capitalism is now the arbiter of international imperialism, so the American proletariat will become the arbiter of international Socialism. This imposes a great responsibility upon American Socialism, determines its problems and the international character of its policy.

Even now, after the accomplishments of the war, the enormous power of American capitalism is not fully appreciated. It is not appreciated because of the rapid ending of the war, of America's small sacrifice in men; one must probe below the surface to understand the decisive role of the United States in the war. But facts are facts. The United States provided the men and munitions that steadied the wavering front in France, providing means for the offensive; and it provided that deceptive ideology of democracy which steadied the wavering morale of the French, British and Italians, that seduced large sections of the masses, and, in Britain, Belgium and France, seduced the dominant Socialism and Laborism. The threat of American capitalism to Socialism is not alone physical, it is equally moral; moral, in the sense that its deceptive democracy is a splendid means for promoting imperialism and seducing the masses.

The United States has become a world power. It will maintain that position—potential of evil—unless the proletariat acts for Socialism. American capitalism is perhaps the most highly developed in the world, the most efficient, the mightiest; it controls a large section of the world's richest territory, bursting with natural wealth; it has tremendous resources of raw materials within its own borders and it can at any moment seize upon the tremendous resources of Mexico, Central and South America, convert them into means of conquest. Imperialistic finance capital nowhere is as aggressive, commands as much power, as in the United States. The wealth of the United States is twice as large as that of Great Britain—which is much more wealthy than its nearest rival. And this wealth is simply a symbol expressive of the enormous capacity for productivity inherent in American capitalism—a terrific power. The United States has a large navy, has proved that it can easily develop a large army, and is laying plans for the largest navy in the world, and will retain universal military service in one form or another. American capitalism has all the physical reserves for aggression and is becoming the gendarme of the world.

These physical reserves are supplemented by moral ones. In no other large nation is the labor movement as reactionary as in the United States; in no other large nation is organized Socialism as loose, as purposeless, as petty bourgeois, as in the United States. Should Great Britain, France and Italy decide upon complete military intervention in Russia, the revolutionary proletariat may march into action—surely in France and Italy; but should the United States decide upon this brutal military adventure, the American proletariat on the whole will acquiesce, and its representatives will manufacture justifications for the offensive against Socialism and the coming new civilization. And all this, not because the American proletariat is not possessed of reserves for action, but because of the organizations of this proletariat.—This is one aspect of our problems.

The American proletariat has an inspiring history of aggressive struggles. The great Homestead strike, the American Railway Union strike in 1893, the implacable industrial struggles in Colorado, at Coeur D'Alene and Goldfield, the strikes at McKees Rocks, Lawrence, Paterson, Passaic, Ludlow, the Mesaba Range—all these are expressions of an aggressive proletariat, of a proletariat capable of great things. The American radical Labor move-

ment first clearly formulated the principles, forms and purposes of industrial unionism, yet industrial unionism has made infinitely larger strides in Great Britain, Australia and elsewhere than it has in the United States. The American Labor Union, twenty years ago, formulated the industrial union program, but it went the way of all flesh; the Western Federation of Miners adopted industrial unionism, waged inspiring struggles against capitalism, and then was captured by the reaction; the Industrial Workers of the World started with great purposes and expectations, contributed a vital and aggressive spirit to our movement, in spite of all its faults; but the I. W. W. is incapable of rallying the revolutionary proletariat, and never banded definitely upon the basis of its achievements.

Why? There are a large number of reasons, material and ideologic; but one alone that can be considered here, and that is the petit bourgeois spirit that animates American Socialism—the Socialist Labor Party. All these great instinctive revolts of the proletariat, under the impact of which new forms of industrial organization and struggle, a new ideology, were being developed, met the open hostility or lack of understanding of Socialism. Instead of accepting these forces as the initial expression of new tactics and forms of action, the dominant Socialism tried to compress them within the stultifying limits of petit bourgeois and parliamentary Socialism—make them serve the ends of the middle class and petty bourgeois, "liberal" democracy. The Socialist Labor Party, which was an active force in the initial development of the new unionism, savagely attacked it and the I. W. W. when they did not pursue the

road charted by an essentially petty bourgeois conception of the revolution. To attack the unskilled proletariat rallied by the I. W. W. as a "lumpen-proletariat"—that was a characteristic expression of the fundamental defect of the S. L. P. in action, its petit bourgeois ideology, which, while it rejected the gradual peaceful conquest of power by the Socialist proletariat, accepted an equally fallacious policy, the gradual, peaceful conquest of power by the proletariat through organizing the majority of the working class into industrial unions. The Socialist Party majority was even worse—it rejected the I. W. W. while serving the monstrous reaction of the American Federation of Labor,—its attitude toward the new ideas compounded of hypocrisy and animosity. American Socialism has not yet developed a realistic, revolutionary policy—a policy that is instinct in the struggles of the proletariat—a policy able to arouse, integrate and direct the revolutionary energy of the proletariat.

The petit bourgeoisie is the slave of the illusions of democracy, avoids the implacable industrial struggle, rejects movements and struggles that refuse to proceed within the orbit of parliamentarism; the petit bourgeoisie pursues an anaemic policy, a routine activity, chained to the old and rejecting or camouflaging the new—refuses to consider the actual problems of the revolution and the violent struggles necessary to realize the revolution. What the American proletariat requires is a Socialism that has snapped asunder its petit bourgeois fetters, that issues to the proletariat the clear call to the revolutionary struggle—and which the proletariat will yet answer.

SPAIN

Spain, like all other countries is troubled with the unrest of its working class.

The workers in Spain are very poorly organized yet all over the country strikes are occurring, which, while without apparent connection with each other, have taken on the complexion of industrial revolts, revolutionary in their tendencies. To such an extent is this so, that the governing classes appear to be panic-stricken. Bolshevism has reared its head, they say, and it is recalled that some years ago, Trotsky paid a visit to the country while a little while ago Lenin was reported to be in Barcelona. The police are rounding up all Russians and other foreigners suspect of Bolshevik tendencies, for deportation, some eight thousand having been registered in Barcelona. Just so it is thought to solve the problem; just so, the ostrich thinks to hide himself by burying his head in the sand.

Nevertheless Soviet Russia is serving as an inspiration to the proletariat of Spain as the following quotation from the Christian Science Monitor will show. "Thus at a meeting held in the Teatro de Marvillas in the Cuatro Caminos, fiery speeches were made by such advanced elements as Evaristo Gil, Manuel Sainz, Garcia Cortes, and Virginia Gonzalez. Gil said that Socialism was about to triumph all over the world; Sainz declared that Russian Bolshevism was sacrosanct, was the essence of Socialism, and that Spanish Socialists were disposed to implant it in their country as soon as they had the opportunity; while Virginia Gonzalez had it that this was the hour not for preaching, but for acting and what they ought to do was to shake up the people so that the Socialist pest, as it was called by the bourgeoisie, might be spread all over the world. Garcia Cortes said that it would emancipate the working classes. So long as a man had not the economic means, he could not be really free.

SOUTH AFRICA

The agreement of the Negro and native population of South Africa to refrain from political agitation for the duration of the war was formally renounced at a mass meeting of the colored citizens of Claremont called by the African Political Organization. An aggressive campaign of organization and agitation was determined upon with a view to combating discrimination against the colored people of the Union. A resolution supporting "any action the African Political Organization may take to obtain the deletion of the 'color bar' from the Act of Union" was unanimously adopted.

SOVIETS IN GERMANY

These workmen's councils "will not merely participate in regulating the general conditions of labor in different workshops and factories, but also in controlling and fixing production and distribution of wares and likewise measures of socialization, also tendering advice to the government respecting all legislation of a social and economic character, the government promises to introduce no such legislation without previously consulting the Soviets. The cabinet has further promised to introduce a law and has accepted and undertaken to introduce other measures without delay and to submit all offences even by the military to civilian tribunals."

This development in Germany has had a profound effect in France. Employees of public services, of the railways and of the state, desirous of winning the right of collaborating with the government for realization of labor reforms and with other kindred aims have decided to join hands with the general confederation of labor, which is a revolutionary organization, and demand nationalization of all public services. Yesterday the following resolution was adopted:

"All employees of the public services send fraternal greeting to the organization of working men and undertake to make the necessary propaganda to bring about a speedy adhesion of the administrative proletariat of the general confederation of labor."