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State Capitalism or State Socialism in Russia

--Which?

IN a recent issue of a Seattle paper appears a report of a lecture delivered by Wilfred Humphries, a Red Cross worker but lately returned from Russia. In this report Humphries is credited with the assertion that "State Socialism" is now in operation in Bolshevik Russia and that the Bolsheviks admit that the "period of transition" must necessarily take that form. This statement, as I find, viewed with something very like consternation by certain "Revolutionary" Socialists. Some are inclined to deny the correctness of the statement and to insist Humphries misunderstood his informant. Others, while accepting the statement at its face value, take the stand that the Bolsheviks have, by adopting such a stand, "betrayed the revolution." Meanwhile, Socialists of the "Menshevik" type are, of course, highly elated at what they are pleased to interpret as a tacit admission that the transitory period must inevitably be patterned on their particular conception.

There should be no misunderstanding on the part of "scientific Socialists" regarding the point here raised. But, as I have suggested, such misunderstanding does undoubtedly exist at least among those who have not a thorough grasp of the principles involved. Wherefore, I take it, a little light on the subject will not be amiss at this juncture.

The misconception undoubtedly arises from a careless but very prevalent habit of treating the terms "State Socialism" and "State Capitalism" as synonymous. I have heard "Menshevik" Socialists use the term "State Socialism" when an analysis of the particular economic condition to which they had reference showed undoubtedly that they meant "State Capitalism." On the other hand, I have known "Revolutionary" Socialists to denounce as reactionary any reference to "State Socialism" as a probable transitional state when it was obvious that what they had in mind was "State Capitalism."

We know, of course, that the State, as at present constituted in all capitalist countries, is merely the instrument of the national capitalist class. This is so in FACT but not to any degree in FORM. The FORMAL assumption, then, by the State as at present constituted, of all economic authority would be "State Capitalism" and nothing else. This is certainly the immediate "Menshevik" program.

On the other hand the formal and actual assumption of all economic authority by a State controlled by the proletariat would be "State Socialism" or, in other words, a "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," which are one and the same thing. Viewed thus it may be clearly seen that there is an essential difference in FORM between "State Socialism" and "State Capitalism." There is also an essential and vital difference in FUNCTION which it would be well to note.

The formal Capitalist State would exist, as does now the actual Capitalist State, for the purpose of perpetuating a comparatively small exploiting and privileged class and consequently a large exploited class. On the other hand the aim, and literally the end, of the Socialist State or Dicta-

torship of the Proletariat would be the elimination of the exploiting class and consequently of the exploited class, thus ultimately banishing all economic class distinctions. The foregoing points being clearly understood it will be obvious that the statement attributed to Mr. Humphries and referred to above, while probably correct in substance, affords no excuse for premature elation on the part of Menshevik or Bourgeois socialists nor for consternation on the part of Revolutionists.

While on the subject of the Proletarian Dictatorship it might not be out of place to dispose, once and for all, of an objection lately urged against that institution as now functioning in Russia by one John Spargo, erstwhile socialist. It appears that Mr. Spargo objects to the Bolsheviks because they are not what he terms "Democratic." It has been said that "by their fruits ye shall know them." If then, Democracy is to be judged by its fruits it might be as well to let Mr. Spargo's objection stand. If such conditions as now exist in practically all countries, now that the world has by a particularly gruesome process been successfully made safe for democracy, are to be accepted as illustrating Mr. Spargo's meaning of the word, then might one will say "Away with your Democracy. We want none of it."

I imagine, however, that the democracy Mr. Spargo has in mind is that purely theoretical democracy which has nowhere any actual existence and may be defined by a slight alteration of a well worn formula, thus: "Government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people." If this be Mr. Spargo's conception of the meaning of the word then may I be permitted to point out to him that there is not one single argument which can be urged on its behalf against the political system now in vogue in Bolshevik Russia that cannot also be urged with greater justice against the very system in vogue in that "land of the free and home of the brave" wherein Mr. Spargo resides; the rulers of which have some time since taken Mr. Spargo to their collective bosom.

What Mr. Spargo objects to, of course, is the fact that in Russia under the Bolsheviks the Bourgeoisie are denied the franchise. This is indeed a terrible business. We can imagine Mr. Spargo's uplifted hands. We can visualise the whites of Mr. Spargo's uprolled eyes. Alas! that these things should be.

But why this sudden consideration for the Russian Bourgeoisie? Charity, it has been said, and rightly so, should begin at home. Does not Mr. Spargo know that in the United States, that model democracy, millions of women are denied the franchise while in Russia they are admitted on equality with men? Is he not aware of the fact that in the United States no man who is not a citizen can vote no matter how useful a member of society he may be, while in Russia any person resident there may vote providing only that he or she is performing work that is in some way or other useful to society? Has not Mr. Spargo himself some-

where remarked on the fact that enormous numbers of men otherwise qualified to vote are virtually disfranchised by the fact that the nature of their occupation prevents their staying long enough in one place to fulfil the necessary qualification of residence, whereas in Russia no such qualification exists? Does not Mr. Spargo know that in the United States there are millions of young men and women of eighteen and twenty-one years of age who are performing useful work in mines, factories, and industrial plants but are denied the franchise until they are twenty-one, whereas in Russia workers of eighteen years and up have a vote, and that the statements made above regarding the franchise in the United States are, in the main, applicable to all other countries except Russia?

Undoubtedly Mr. Spargo knows all these things but, for reasons perhaps best known to himself, he chooses at this time to ignore them. Let the facts speak for themselves. Mr. Spargo, by his criticism, has invited a comparison between the degree of political democracy existing in Russia under the Bolsheviks and that existing in the so-called "Democratic" countries under capitalism. We who endorse the Bolshevik program do not fear to meet the issue.

Russia today stands forth as being formally and actually more nearly democratic than any capitalist country on the surface of the earth, and potentially more democratic than any country can ever hope to be under Capitalism.

C. K.

[This article was sent to us without any indications as to the identity of the author. Will our comrade kindly oblige us again? Please.—Edit.]

ARE FRENCH AND GERMAN PROLETARIAT COMING TOGETHER? LONGUET TALKS WITH HAASE

In the "Populaire" of May 6, Jean Longuet, just returned from Amsterdam, records a long conversation which he had there with Hugo Haase, the leader of the German Independent Socialists. Haase declared that there had been in Germany "a superb movement to the Left, towards a genuine revolutionary Socialism," as proved by the last elections for Workmen's Councils. In Berlin out of 25 seats, 13 were now held by the Independents, 4 by the Spartacists, only 7 by Majority Socialists, and 1 Bourgeois Democrat. The party had now 250,000 members; its Press was growing in circulation despite the paper shortage. At the recent Congress of Councils they had carried the majority on many important issues.

The Schiedemann-Ebert-Noske Government, said Haase, was absolutely discredited; the way was clear for a real Socialist Government. The Spartacists were really a tiny body; such increase as they had shown was entirely due to the abominable persecution and repression (worse than anything under the old régime) to which they had been subjected by the Schiedemann Government. In Russia he thought that the Soviet Government was now thoroughly stabilized. Over the war now being waged against the Hungarian Soviet Republic he wrung his hands.