
The Necessity of an Emergency Convention.

by Louis C. Fraina

Unsigned article in *The Revolutionary Age* [Boston], v. 1, no. 14 (Jan. 18, 1919), pg. 1.
Attributed to editor Louis C. Fraina. Associate Editor was Eadmonn MacAlpine.

Ever since the cessation of hostilities it has become increasingly clear that the Socialist movement of America must formulate an opinion upon the momentous happenings through which the world is passing. The last considered opinion of the American Socialists was issued at the St. Louis Convention [April 7-14, 1917] and dealt almost exclusively with the war. The war, as it was then, is over, and in its place have developed new antagonisms and new problems; arising out of the war itself and out of the revolutions which the war developed. The war was merely a preliminary struggle, in which contradictory elements were by the necessity of the moment forced to make alliances. With the signing of the armistice these elements gradually began to resume their correct relationship and out of the welter of nationalistic war began to emerge the real alignment of the conflicting forces of the world — the forces of Capitalism opposed to the forces of Socialism.

Day by day this alignment becomes more distinct. The shades of opinion are gathering together and assuming definite color. The lines of demarcation are becoming definite and distinct. The two conflicting elements — Capitalism and Socialism — are drawing to themselves all their sympathetic forces for the final struggle....

Many Socialists foresaw this development, even through the smoke of battle, and endeavored to adapt their programs to the new conditions, but even the most foresighted never antici-

pated the incredible swiftness with which the revolution has swept onward. Socialism, from the position of a weak movement propagating an ideal, has leapt to the position of a vital force in action, dominating the trend of the world. In all the calculations of statesmen and diplomats Socialism is now the dominant factor and the chief concern of bourgeois governments is the defeat of this new force.

But with the sudden transition from theory to fact, the Socialist movement of the world has had to face new problems within its own ranks. Old values have gone by the board and men who prior to the war sat in the same councils, fought the same fights, suffered for the same ideals, are now engaged in death grips. Where the revolution has marched into action, the assault on the aristocratic remnants of feudalism has been a matter of practically no moment. The proletariat moved, and aristocracy, in the old sense, crumbled on its thrones. With the collapse of aristocracy the revolution faced its real enemy, Capitalism, dressed in the habiliments of bourgeois democracy. And led by men from the ranks of the Socialist leadership! The real struggle of the revolution, while essentially a struggle between Socialism and Capitalism, was the fight between Socialists and Socialists. Majority Socialism, first in Russia and now in Germany, became frightened by the development of its own theories and after a period of fruitless compromise found itself do-

ing the work of the bourgeois masters.

This situation in the countries where the revolution developed is necessarily reflected in the Socialist movement of the other parts of the world. Within the Socialist movement is developing antagonisms, differing fundamentally from the antagonisms which are necessarily a part of any healthy progressive movement, and these antagonisms will inevitably rend the Socialist Party of this country into a thousand fragments if it is left without any definite plan of action or well-considered program.

Due to a variety of causes, these antagonisms have as yet not assumed definite shape in the American movement. A vague feeling of uneasiness, a restlessness, is so far the only outward sign that they really exist, but the convocation of this "International Congress" will precipitate the crisis and finally split the movement unless the membership is given an opportunity of expressing its attitude.

The Second International is dead, dead at the hands of some of those pledged to uphold it, and it can never be revived. Many of the men who spoke loudly against war, who swore by the brotherhood of the world's workers, went over to their respective governments when war broke. They used their voices, their pens, and the prestige accruing to them as members of the Socialist International to drive worker against worker. Having once started on the downward path they did not stop at glorifying international war, but when the Russian proletariat rose, overthrew the Tsar, and subsequently the bourgeois Socialists who would have cheated them of the fruits of their efforts, these men joined their governments against Revolutionary Russia. And now that the revolution is in action in Germany they have joined with the Kaiser's generals to destroy the revolution and to enthrone Capitalism in the Kaiser's place.

Even at this moment the streets of the principal cities of Germany are running red with the blood of the workers who are dying to save the

revolution. The "Socialists" who told the German workers that they must march to the trenches at the behest of the Kaiser and his junkers are now using "loyal" troops to mow down those workers who would banish Capitalism forever. These "Socialists" have jailed Radek, the Bolshevik envoy to Germany, because he is a Socialist. Are the Socialists of America to meet in council with the men who are jailing the representative of Revolutionary Russia?

These men who have betrayed every principle for which Socialism stood now call an "International Socialist Congress." By cablegram they invite the American Socialist movement to send delegates to such a Congress. Camille Huysmans, the pre-war Secretary of the Second International, issues the call. The Socialist movement of America knows nothing of the matter except what is conveyed in a brief cablegram and what it can glean from the bourgeois press.

Socialists are fighting and dying in Europe that Socialism may triumph, mankind is trembling on the brink of worldwide Social Revolution. The action which the American movement takes now will commit it to the policy of Socialism or the policy of counterrevolution. Can such a momentous step be taken on such scanty information as we possess? Huysmans is one of those who have betrayed Socialism; newspaper dispatches report that the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviki) have already refused to participate in this Congress on the ground that it is counter-revolutionary. These facts, all the information we have so far obtained about it, would indicate that American Socialism has no place in such a gathering. Are we to act in a slipshod fashion at such a moment?

The early date set for the present Congress is another matter which may well give us pause before we decide. Why has the notice of the meeting of this Congress been so short? How is the membership of the Socialist movement of the different countries to express an opinion on the

matter when they have had no time? This in itself is a suspicious circumstance. It may be that those who are calling the meeting do not want the workers to have any say in the matter. It may be that they wish to commit the various countries to a plan of action that does not represent the rank and file. It may be that the purpose of this Congress is to bolster up the forces of counterrevolution in Germany. Naturally Scheidemann would turn to those “Socialists” of the enemy countries who have taken the same attitude in their countries as he has in his, and naturally Huysmans would not turn to Liebknecht or Rosa Luxemburg when he wanted an ally in Germany.

Again on such a momentous matter it is vitally necessary that the whole American Socialist movement decides on what policy to pursue and the only effective method of so deciding is the convocation of an Emergency National Convention. Let the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party immediately call such a convention and there let the American movement

decide what course it will take — whether it will stand by the Russian workers and the Spartacus Group in Germany, or whether it will line up with the Social-Patriots who call themselves Socialists and who are attempting to stifle the revolution.

The National Executive Committee has already selected 3 delegates to attend this Congress, but in so doing it acted beyond its power. No small group of men has the right to pick out the representation of the party, no small group of men has the right to decide that the party will participate in such a Congress. The 3 delegates appointed should be immediately recalled and without delay an Emergency National Convention should be convoked, first to decide whether or not we will participate in what has all the earmarks of a reactionary Congress, and then to take the further steps necessary to bring about the convocation of the Third International — the International of the revolutionary proletariat of the world, who are even now marching to victory.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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