

# VANGUARD

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## The Lesson of the German Events

**B**Y THE TIME this issue goes to press, the readers will have already learned of the further stage of development of the rapidly unfolding events in Germany. Two weeks is quite a long time for the period which Germany is going through now—a period of a rapid denouement of the tragic plot laid twelve years ago. Hitler's coming to power is the beginning of the last act of this tragedy, the beginning of the end, the approach of the last decisive struggle between the frenzied forces of a triumphant reaction and the German working class fighting for its elementary rights, fighting desperately in order to forestall the fate of the Italian working class, prepared for it by its most implacable enemy.

That the German proletariat, twelve years after a triumphant revolution which secured for it a number of strategic positions, has to fight on the defensive, has to fight with its back to the wall against the most heinous reactionary forces who are in full possession of every point of vantage,—this in itself is a situation charged with deep tragic implications, this in itself points to the working of some inexorable laws of a tragic development. Twelve years ago the country was covered with a net of workers' soviets challenging the power of the capitalist state; the trade union and factory committees were reaching out for an ever growing control of industry, concrete plans for the socialization of the heavy industries were discussed; the bourgeoisie was cowered into a timid opposition, and it seemed but a matter of a few years before the German proletariat would undertake the greater task of doing away with the capitalist system altogether. What happened during this brief historical period that not only had those larger aims vanished from the field of the German struggles, not only have all the revolutionary gains been nearly wiped out, but that the very elementary rights, which had been won in the course of more than half a century's tenacious struggles, have become endangered to an extent unheard of in the history of the German labor movement? Was it an overwhelming, crushing defeat that placed the German proletariat in such a tragic situation?

With the exception of a few skirmishes engaged in by its revolutionary vanguard, the German working class did not wage any major battles during these twelve years. Hoodwinked by a false sense of security, it rested complacently upon the positions won during the November revolution, without trying to consolidate and extend them along the whole front of its class struggles. It was

not defeated in an open battle, it was outflanked, outmaneuvered and gradually despoiled of all its gains simply because it relaxed its vigilance in regard to its class enemy. The best method of defense is aggression—and this is what the German workers easily forgot in the moment of the first victory. They embraced the most ruinous illusion—the faith in the democratic potentialities of the capitalist system. They let themselves be hoodwinked by pseudo-socialists, petty bureaucrats, job-hungry politicians, who, in pursuance of their own petty group interests, kept on assuring the workers that once a democratic republic had been established, a straight, an open road to socialism would be secure. Don't press your socialistic demands too far; don't frighten off the bourgeoisie into the anti-republican camp; establish the republic first even at the price of surrendering some of the positions won—and only when the bourgeoisie has been fully converted to a collaborating attitude on the basis of an allegiance to the parliamentary democracy—only then will you be able to expand your program of social reconstruction,—this was the burden of constant urgings and exhortations on the part of the German Social-Democracy.

The German proletariat came to believe in the possibility of such a collaboration. It did not realize that there is a certain point beyond which a decaying economy, like the present day monopolistic capitalism, cannot go on granting concessions to the working masses, and that this very limit tends to an ever sinking level. They did not realize that a decaying economy must inevitably tend to a decaying form of political relationships. In order to keep the masses at an ever sinking level of subsistence, capitalism must stiffen its resistance to any democratic movement, it must turn its back upon its own youthful infatuation—parliamentary democracy. The latter came into being when capitalism was a progressive economy, holding out possibilities for expansion and improvement of the economic lot of the masses. At the present time this political form exists in the old democratic countries by the sheer inertia of its historical momentum, showing the effects of great strain at the sign of the least economic crisis. In this respect Germany shows the way to other capitalist nations. They all tend in the same direction. Hitlerism is not an accident of German history; it is the political fate overtaking the decaying economy of a monopolistic capitalism. Dust unto dust, an economic abomination seeking out its political equivalent.

And this is what the German proletariat refused to understand in spite of the very objective lessons it had been getting during these twelve years. It interpreted the fright of the bourgeoisie in the revolutionary years of 1919-21 as a democratic change of heart, as a sign of its willingness to cooperate with the workers on the basis of parliamentary reforms. It accepted the democratic truce in full faith, giving up at the urgency of its misleaders one hard won revolutionary position after the other. It dissolved its organizations of self-defense, the workers' soviets; it curbed the power of its own economic organizations; it went back on the elementary demands of international solidarity by accepting a strike-breaker's wage level intended to boost the home exports; it yielded without any protest to the methods of capitalist rationalization; it foresook its most helpless section, the great army of unemployed, who are condemned to perennial misery in a technically advanced country like Germany. All that was done with the idea of placating the bourgeoisie, of obtaining some sort of cooperation in the matter of strengthening the democratic republic. And the greater the concessions of the workers, the more lukewarm did the bourgeoisie

grow towards the republic, the more openly did it begin to support the rising hydra of counter revolution. While playing the parliamentary game according to all rules, exacting more and more sacrifices on the part of the workers, it shifted its allegiance to the gathering forces of reaction, throwing all the weight of its powerful economic position behind an absurd demagogic movement started by a half-demented psychopathic degenerate. It was the industrial barons who made the Hitler movement the terrific reactionary force it presents now, it was they who poured a golden stream into the coffers of the latter, it was they who mobilized all the power of their press, financial control, economic pressure in order to inflate Hitler's movement into the dimensions of a national counter-revolution. And it wasn't only the upper class of the bourgeoisie that turned its back upon democratic liberalism—the middle classes in their preponderant majority began to gravitate toward the fascist reaction; the student youth, which always reflects to some extent the political sympathies of the middle classes, joined the forefront of the fascist struggle. In face of that open betrayal of the republic by the bourgeoisie, the Social-Democracy kept on playing its contemptible parliamentary game, holding out before the workers the hope of staying the reactionary tide by playing off one counter-revolutionary camp against the other. It kept on leaning upon broken political reeds, inveigling the German proletariat into the most odious misalliances, in the name of which it had to part with the last shreds of its hard won rights. And great must have been the drugging effect of parliamentary action upon the minds of the workers that they could not see through this despicable game in its last moments, when it already took on the forms of a political farce. To support Hindenburg, and the feudal clique surrounding him, as a possible brake upon the Hitler counter-revolution—this is more than a political miscalculation. It is a clear case of collective aberration, of collective psychopathology, induced by the debilitating effect of parliamentary drugs.

The German proletariat has itself to blame for the tragic situation created. It yielded all its conquests without any struggle, it let itself be swayed by naive illusions and maudlin expectations. It closed its eyes to the harsh realities of the class struggle, and now it stands weakened and demoralized by the futile parliamentary game, having almost lost through disuse the power of direct action. It lacks the true militant spirit which is developed only in the process of constant direct struggle, and it lacks a true militant revolutionary vanguard—one acting upon the urge of immediate realities of the situation and not by orders from a far away power, whose interest in the revolutionary movement of Germany is that of using it as a pawn in a diplomatic game. And it is only the class instinct of self preservation, the cumulative effect of more than half a century's socialistic education, the great potential power of its mass strength, that gives us hope that the German proletariat will rise to the great historic test it is facing now.

S-X.

## The Farm Revolt

**W**ITHIN the past few weeks, the nation has frequently heard rumblings from the agricultural west. That these convulsive disorders arising from our staunch individualistic farmers are beginning to be taken seriously, is evidenced by the fact that they even elicited an editorial from the high towers of

our New York *Times* building. These rumblings sometimes take the form of crude statements rashly made by desperate farmers, but lately they come from the grinding wheels of somewhat loosely organized movements which may rapidly pick up the momentum of mass organizations. Last summer we witnessed some striking pictures of how our embattled farmers finally resorted to direct economic action. An inquiry into this unexpected move would teach valuable lessons to our social revolutionists. It should definitely prove the fallacy of the socialist myth that, given political control, the social revolution could be legislated into existence. The farmers were forced to adopt direct action methods after patiently awaiting alleviation of their misery through parliamentary channels.

The West has certainly given the legislative method a fair chance. Its troubles date far back to the nineties of the last century, when the farmers rallied to the cry of free silver. Why then did they finally adopt such drastic measures? Let us examine their first attempt.

The western states that produce the country's food have an overwhelmingly predominant rural population. For instance, in the 1930 census, South Dakota had a farm population of over 81% of its total population, North Dakota 84%, Iowa 60%, etc. So it was not a lack of numbers which prevented them from forcing the legislatures of these states to act. Neither was it a lack of political consciousness and governmental interest on the part of the farmer. For, if the democratic ideal existed anywhere, it was in the west. It was historically so. The Populist movement drawing its main strength from these states attests to it. Democracy was a frontier tradition since the birth of our nation. Today we still speak of the progressivism of the western states. The farmer, with his faith in the democratic institutions in which he actively participated, patiently waited for the help they would give him. He waited even through the prosperous years of the late twenties while the east enjoyed the profits of industrialism in an expanding economic system. Congress of course could not ignore the misery of the west. Palliatives, such as the McNary-Haugen bill, were discussed, but even these when passed, were vetoed by the president.

Thus the farmer learned the futility of legislative means. His problem is one whose solution is impossible under this economic system. A decaying capitalist order first paralyzes agriculture. In the greedy attempt to safeguard the profits of industry, farm prices are forced to the lowest possible level. World competition among the imperialist powers becomes keener. His surpluses climb, and a crisis in the home market finally pauperizes him almost to the status of a peasant. Such is his fate. A concession to agriculture means a blow at the foundations of the capitalist system. The farm problem is permanent in our economic order. Only the social revolution will bring its final solution—communization of lands for the maximum consumption of the farmer and working class.

Now we see why the political institutions he controls refuse to help him; that the purposes to which he wishes to bend them are inconsistent with the nature of these institutions; that they will not function in any other manner than that for which they were originally intended. The rising bourgeoisie framed these political institutions. Built them to preserve its class domination. Their seemingly popular character, hiding their true purpose, were mere concessions to the libertarian philosophy of the eighteenth century. And so our farmers are learning

that these institutions go their own way, the way they were meant to go, and even if they are nominally controlled, those within them attempting to change their direction find themselves overwhelmed and carried along by these institutions for their historical purpose of class rule.

Direct action was therefore the only means that would prove effective for the farmer. Whatever relief the legislative channels will grant him, will be wrested from them by such methods only. They will not serve his interests despite his *apparent control* over them. His interests are irreconcilable with the implicit functional idea of the political institutions.

And so, on July 30th, 1932, the "Farmers' Strike" was called and ordered to continue for thirty days. Object:—the withholding from the market of all farm products until farm prices shall equal cost of production. Although the Farmers' Holiday Association which called this strike intended only to voluntarily withhold from the market the products of its members, the need for direct action was so apparent, and its use so foisted upon the farmer by unbearable conditions, that violent measures were soon adopted to prevent the transportation of farm products. "If we cannot obtain justice by legislation, the time will have arrived when no other course remains than the organized refusal to deliver the products of the farm at less than production cost." Thus reads the preamble of the strike order. The American farmer will continue to use such tactics. Over thirty years of experience has shown him that his apparently democratic institutions are not so responsive to his needs. "They speak of revolution," says the "N. Y. Times" editorial, and then the newspaper calls them cranks; for, haven't the state and federal government showered him with gifts?

Since the farmer, essentially petty-bourgeois, at times an advocate of the most reactionary measures of taxing the working class for his benefit, has already realized the inefficacy of parliamentary action, upon what ground can those social revolutionists stand who still talk of political action? This should be sufficient proof, that the social revolution, so much further removed from the economic system it wishes to overthrow than mere farm relief, should steer clear of the parliamentary game, lest it be chained to the historical purpose it will be forced to serve, and its leaders taken up by the current become social reformers. ". . . a social institution cannot serve all aims indifferently because like every other organ, it is developed for a certain purpose and not for all purposes. . . ." (Kropotkin)

R. WINTERS

## The Policy of the International

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is the first of a series of articles which we hope to obtain on the I.W.M.A.—its history, present day revolutionary activity, its basic principles as enunciated by Bakunin's First International and developed since by revolutionary syndicalism. In featuring these articles monthly we hope to contribute our modest share towards the building up of a genuinely revolutionary syndicalist movement in this country, for which its labor movement is more than ripe.*]

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL WORKING MENS ASSOCIATION was founded in 1922 at the moment of an inner crisis in the labor movements of various countries. The shadow of the awakened Russian giant overhung the world capital-

ism, and notwithstanding the obvious tendencies towards a break between the Soviet government and the Russian workers, the world proletariat, and especially its left wing, continued to regard the economic development of the U.F.S.S.R. as the partial realization of its drive towards freedom.

The Red Trade Union International, set up a year before by the Russian Communist Party, drew within the sphere of its activity the revolutionary syndicalist movement of a number of countries. France, Spain, Italy were represented at its first congress. There still loomed the possibility of a collaboration between those who believed in the state and centralization,—and the anti-authoritarian federalist syndicalists.

In vain. Already in 1921, the class conscious section of the working class became clearly aware of the imperialist and usurping plans of the bolsheviks. They felt that the soviet state was yet to play an odious role in the development of the socialist and anti-authoritarian ideas all over the world. And they clearly realized that only an organization of truly revolutionary forces will be able, on the one hand, to put the brakes upon the dictatorial, corrupting activity of the leaders of the Lenin school, and on the other hand, to impart new vigor and power to the world proletariat in its struggle against capitalism and bolshevism, against the White and the Red state,—a struggle becoming fiercer from day to day.

The International Working Men's Association, born under the direct influence of Bakunin's International, set before itself, as the direct aim, the banding of all revolutionary elements of the international workers' movement into one solid union. If we take into account the heterogeneity of the ideological trends, criss-crossing the federalist labor movement,—from the pure, self-sufficient syndicalism to the inveterately dogmatic anarchism—the heterogeneity of the methods of struggle advocated in various countries, the differences in the organizational systems of the labor unions and the diametrically opposite temperaments of their workers,—then we shall see how difficult and complicated was the task of unification.

This first period of the inner organization of the I.W.M.A. has already come to an end. There is no country, in Europe or America, where the ideas proclaimed by the International did not strike root; in most of the countries sections of our International develop and expand. And if in some countries the dictatorship did succeed in stifling all revolutionary activity, this cannot last very long. At the first glimmer of the rising dawn, the strangled I.W.M.A. organizations of Italy, Portugal and South America will regain their own; and new sections, dedicated to the principles of anti-authoritarianism and federalism, will spring up in those countries where they had been prohibited until now, like Russia or Poland, for instance.

The International Working Men's Association is independent of any political party; it is not linked with any one of them, struggling against all of them. It proclaims as its ultimate goal, the free communistic society, developed upon the basis of an anarchistic federalism. At the same time the I.W.M.A. proclaims that the world proletariat, apart from the realization of the immediate demands touching the betterment of present day labor conditions, must set before itself the realization of its ultimate aims as an immediate task by working out a political, economic, and social system, which, on the day after the crumbling of the

old order, should take the place of Capitalism and the State and do away with the economic exploitation, the religious and social oppression.

In view of the clear and exact statement which leaves no room for any misunderstanding, the attitude of the International toward other labor organizations becomes equally clear and precise: in the struggle for immediate betterment of labor conditions, for the purpose of obtaining greater success, agreements and joint action with the national and local organizations are desirable and permissible.

True, even in the field of these partial improvements the I.W.M.A. and its national sections run up very often against the narrow and out-lived reformism of other labor organizations, as the so-called "Amsterdam" unions. Thus, for instance, at the Liège congress of 1928, the I.W.M.A. brought forth the slogan of immediate struggle for the six-hour working day. This demand, the value of which is probably greater than the struggle for an eight-hour day which began half a century ago, is only now considered by the reformists without a smile; but, alas, they do it not so much under pressure of their own united working masses as of the ever growing unemployment and the fact that even among the capitalists this problem becomes the burning question of the day.

In its international activities the I.W.M.A., notwithstanding its readiness to take part in the united action of all the labor factions of world socialism, finds it impossible to enter into any agreement on principle with "Amsterdam" and still less with "Moscow," which shows very little regard for its own proletariat whom it claims to represent. Still less does the I.W.M.A. hope that the worker's organizations of the reformist and bolshevist make will undertake a joint revolutionary action for the carrying out of social measures which would lead necessarily to the overthrow of the Capitalist system and the downfall of the centralized state.

However numerically weak the I.W.M.A. might be, it must set before itself the problem of fulfilling the second task: to transfer the idea of the social revolution from the domain of a myth into that of actual reality.

In other words, the I.W.M.A., in full agreement with its national sections and under their direct influence, upon the basis of their practical suggestions must work out a general plan of economic, political and social reconstruction of the existing order. The present economic mess, which is the direct result of the confusion reigning in the ranks of world capitalism, opens up great opportunities to that revolutionary organization which *is desirous* of doing constructive work. There are no insoluble social tasks if, underlying their method of solution, there will be the idea of self-organization, personal and collective freedom and anti-authoritarian federalism.

The I.W.M.A. is the only workers organization which is built upon these foundation stones of free socialism. It is the only organization capable of undertaking the task of reconstruction. What then must be the policy of the International in regard to vital questions facing the contemporary world and especially the working class? This policy must consist in studying, in all its details, the present mechanism of agricultural and industrial production, of exchange and distribution. It must clear the ground for the interference of the labor organizations into the process of production by creating organs of control in the mills, factories, offices and agricultural units. On the basis of the data afforded by the study of these problems, revolutionary cadres of the new social reconstruction

process must be created—economic shock battalions which, on the morrow of the downfall of capitalism, will be able to undertake in a practical manner the organization of a new system of social interrelationships which, by virtue of the above mentioned basic principles, will be capable of uniting the workers of all the world. This policy of the I.W.M.A. is not the policy of its executive committee or the secretariat, but the one carried out by the revolutionary organizations of each country. The critical situation in which every country finds itself at the present time brings forth the fundamental problems of the social structure and regime, a circumstance which demands from the revolutionary movement of each and every country bold, heroic solutions and practical methods of application.

As to the executive and coordinating organs of the I.W.M.A., their duty must be to unify all that work, all these attempts at social organization, all these sketches of economic solutions—and to put them at the disposal of the international proletariat in the form of a broad program of social reconstruction, the necessary premise of which must be the General Strike and the Social Revolution.

The I.W.M.A. can and must undertake this work. It will bring this task to a successful end just as it succeeded in uniting the general revolutionary elements of the whole world. Besides, such a program of action and social reconstruction will have a quickening effect upon that section of the working class which is still under the influence of politicians of the reformist and dictatorial ranks.

The great work of the I.W.M.A. is just beginning. It needs the backing not only of the national sections and unions but also of all those elements who are permeated with the anti-authoritarian and federalist spirit. It needs in the first place the support of the revolutionary Anarchists. With that support the I.W.M.A. will be able to proclaim widely its program of action and building up which will confound the reactionary forces of the bourgeois and Marxist capitalism.

A. SHAPIRO

## The I.L.G.W.U. Calls Upon Youth

WITH less than fifteen per cent of the workers in the needle trades organized, and this small number in a weak and ineffective position, the leadership of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union is now attempting to strengthen its organization by making an intensive drive for membership. The manifold difficulties which confront this rapidly declining A. F. of L. union have prompted them to request the assistance of the radical youth in New York City. After a few preliminary conferences with the representatives of several youth organizations a general membership conference was called for February 3rd, 1933, at 3 W. 16th Street, New York City. The following groups were invited: The Young Peoples Socialist League, The League for Industrial Democracy, The Young Circle League, The Youth Section of the Communist Opposition (Lovestoneites) and the Vanguard Group.

From the beginning of this drive it was stated by the union leaders that they were attempting to reorganize the union on a new, clean basis, free from political interests, from graft and corruption. It was to be an economic fight whose immediate and foremost purposes would be the improvement of working



conditions, wages, the elimination of the open shop, sweat shops, etc., by means of a workers organization which could force the bosses to grant these immediate demands. It was to be a fight to alleviate actual conditions of slavery, misery and starvation which exist among the needle trade workers. It seems, however, that the conservative A. F. of L. was again true to its high-handed traditions. One illustration will suffice: The I.L.G.W.U. organizers, in sending out the invitations, failed to invite such youth organizations as the youth section of the C.P.L.A. and the youth section of the Trotskyites. Such political, sectarian maneuvering, from the start, is obviously not conducive to the best interests of the destitute workers. This sort of "united front" cannot but be open to suspicion. It appears that the Vanguard Group, a rising Anarchist-Communist youth organization, was invited with the expectation that it would be quiescent and would fall in with the line advocated by the leadership. The fact that this group is comparatively new and has not yet asserted itself prominently in the field of labor struggles, was the probable reason for its being included in the list of organizations invited.

At the general conference on February 3rd, all the participating groups, except the Vanguard, pledged their support in the campaign, in strikes, in picketing, etc. Their attitude was apparently one of complete acceptance of the A. F. of L. principles and tactics, and except for one of the representatives of the Lovestoneites who criticized the corruption and improper organization of the union, it was well expressed by the representative of the L.I.D. who said, "We are ready to take orders." The Vanguard Group, however, was of the opinion that an unqualified acceptance of that which is handed down by the A. F. of L. would have resulted in an utter waste of its efforts, and in the assistance in the continuation of the same useless and noxious work of organizing limited, ineffective, politically controlled craft unions. From the point of view of immediate demands, such unions have been and will be of little value. And from the point of view of organizing a class-conscious, revolutionary industrial organization which would be one of the bases of a libertarian communist society, they are of no avail. Even so, the Vanguard Group is willing to participate in the necessary work of fighting for immediate demands, provided that a minimum of requirements be granted. We feel that it would be useless to engage in such work unless there is full workers democracy within the unions, unless the unions are free from gangsterism, racketeering and political cliques, unless those leaders with a differing point of view are given an opportunity to express their ideas. The Vanguard Group wants to cooperate, but it does not desire to go into a blind alley. It does not want to continue the work of the decadent A. F. of L. It demands a reorganization of the labor movement—and not the rebuilding of the old A. F. of L. And it wants a real united front. The attitude of the Vanguard Group toward labor struggles and toward this struggle in particular is briefly summarized in a statement which was read to the general membership conference of the youth groups. This statement and its concluding resolution follows:

The Vanguard Group, as any other revolutionary anarchist-communist group, does not regard labor struggles in the light of any possible political benefit that might accrue to it, as does any political organization striving to dominate the labor movement. It regards any labor struggle as of paramount importance in the gradual process of liberation of the working class from

any form of outside political interference. And, inasmuch as these struggles are conducted on the plane of pure economic interests and are controlled to some extent by the membership itself, it is the duty of every revolutionary anarchist to participate in them to the full measure of his ability, even if these struggles are not conducted by a clear-spoken revolutionary organization.

But with all that a certain minimum of conditions must be laid down before such participation might become effective: A certain minimum of workers' democracy within the unions, free room for the development of this organization along the lines of advanced method and principles of class struggle, a free opportunity for all revolutionary vanguard organizations of the proletariat to work within this organization for the gradual revolutionary education of the masses in the light of the accumulating experience of the great mass struggles. This should inevitably lead to the gradual transformation of the present day conservative, narrow minded, self-centered, monopolistic unions, placing before themselves the larger and what has already become the actual task of overthrowing this system and replacing it by an industrial democracy.

But these minimum conditions, so necessary for the free development of any labor union along the road of full emancipation are lacking at the present time in the organizations of the A. F. of L. type, this union included. Complete disregard of the elementary rights of the rank and file, a highly overpaid bureaucratic apparatus, unconcerned with the larger aims of the working class, and even frequently uniting with the employers against the interests of the workers, the use of gangsters against their own masses, the rank and file membership, which inevitably leads to the gradual swallowing up of the last vestiges of workers democracy and the increasing control of labor unions by the criminal underworld,—all that renders sterile and ineffective any work on the part of revolutionary militants within that type of an organization.

The Vanguard Group is eager to lend its cooperation to the highly important work of fighting against the sweat shops in the dress industry providing that the minimum of conditions aforementioned be embodied in a general document to be formulated and released by this conference, a document which will proclaim openly:

First—*The ultimate goal of the working class as one of the direct aims of this labor union;*

Second—*Full workers' democracy within the union, freedom for any opposition group to exercise its legitimate right of appealing to the rank and file against the existing administration;*

Third—*The open condemnation of the use of gangsters for any purposes whatever;*

Fourth—*An industrial type of organization embracing all who work within this line on the basis of factory employment;*

Fifth—*Complete dissociation from any political clique trying to interfere for the purpose of vote gaining.*

Although our speaker received prolonged applause, our resolution was not adopted. The union officials stated that they would give it careful consideration. Our point of view which is beginning to take root among many of the youth

who do not follow blindly, will be presented at subsequent discussion conferences. We urge all radical youth groups to participate, so that our views may be crystalized in the formation of revolutionary labor unions.

S. MORRISON

## International Notes

### ARGENTINA

#### THE SECOND ANARCHIST REGIONAL CONGRESS

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *The anarchist movement of Argentina is one of the few which, following the war and the Russian Revolution, did not lose its hold upon the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat. That connotes a much greater maturity on the part of the Argentine movement in respect to the great problems of revolutionary reconstruction of modern society which, in Argentina as in any other country, arises now as an immediate historic task. It should, therefore, be of great interest to revolutionary anarchists of other countries to learn how a strong, powerful anarchist movement which had left behind it the stage of sectarian impotence, meets the pressing problems of revolutionary actualities.*]

The Second Anarchist Regional Congress was held last fall in the city of Rasario from Oct. 13th to Oct. 17th. Forty-four Anarchist Groups were represented, as well as several prominent comrades who were there as individuals.

The agenda included many problems of vital interest to all militant Anarchists, such as immediate propaganda and action, the revolutionary defense necessary to prevent any governmental restorations after the revolution, and post-revolutionary reconstruction.

The Congress declared its solidarity with the resolutions passed, sixty years ago, at the Congress of Saint-Imier (Sept. 15th, 1872), and recommends the following directions derived from the conclusions reached at said Congress:

1. That the destruction of all political power is the first duty of the proletariat.
2. That any organization of a political power, allegedly provisional and only of a revolutionary expediency, cannot but be just one more deceit, and it would therefore be as dangerous to the proletariat as any of the governments existing today.
3. That, in order to attain the Social Revolution, the workers of all countries should establish, apart from all bourgeois politics, the solidarity of revolutionary action.

We can report, in a general manner, that such problems as specific organization, the labor movement, cooperatives, revolutionary defense, and post-revolutionary reconstruction were widely discussed. The greatest difference of opinion was manifested with regard to the first two issues.

The minority was against the Anarchist Federation (specific organization), believing it a dangerous course, likely to lead the workers away from the desired end. After drawing upon the history of the revolutionary and Anarchist movements of Argentina, they came to the conclusion that the Anarchists must work within the labor organization (F.O.R.A.) because "the *Federacion Obrera* and the Anarchist Movement should not be separate. Together they form a militant revolutionary organization, and their uniting is a necessary

condition for our militant strength." The majority declared itself in favor of specific organization, since "the unification of the Anarchist forces will make their work more effective and useful; it will not cause its separation from the labor movement, but will rather complement its work in fields beyond the reach of the labor movement and outside its structural fold." It avows the continuity of Anarchist activity within the F.O.R.A., but stated that Anarchism should not be limited to the workers' movement only, but should extend its radius of influence to other social fields. This indicates the need of coordinating our efforts, and therefore recommends the formation of the Anarchist Federation.

(From *Revista Blanca*) J. GIGARO

#### CORRESPONDENCE FROM SPAIN

From the province of Palencia in Castille, we have received the following letter, dated January 20th, written by a Spanish worker, a portion of which we are printing. It vividly reflects the tenseness of the situation. Despite the provocations and violence on the part of the government, we can see that the syndicates have not been demoralized but have rallied more firmly in preparation for the final blow. A detailed analysis will appear in the next issue of the VANGUARD.

"... We, in Spain, are now living on a volcano; no one can surely say what will happen tomorrow. So great is the shamelessness of the socialists and of the government in general that the peasants, tired of waiting for the fulfillment of the government's promises, are on occasions forced into sporadic revolts which the government cannot suppress, and these naturally lead to deplorable incidents. The government's system of repression compels the workers of all regions, no matter how backward they may be, to realize that they must act on their own account. After having been defeated once, they prepare themselves for a greater offensive. The C.N.T. (Anarcho-sindicalist federation of labor unions) wishes to act in a coordinated fashion.

"The government spoke with reason in saying that a railroad strike would be a spark releasing all revolutionary forces and placing them at the service of the social Revolution. At the railroad workers congress that took place in Madrid, the general railroad strike was enthusiastically approved, in spite of the fact that many delegates had been instructed by their party-controlled organizations [Social-Democratic Party—Ed.] not to come out for the general strike. This caused such a great confusion that it was impossible to have a general approval of the strike, which doubtlessly would have led to the fall of the government and the triumph of the Spanish proletariat. Spaniards of all classes were greatly concerned over the strike, and there is no need to say that in labor circles, the event was anticipated with bated breath. They were prepared for anything. The disappointment caused by the delay gave birth to the impatience, and this accounts for the events of the last few days which no one could have controlled.

"The Socialist government which is slick when concerned with labor questions, has done all that it could to avoid the imminent conflict, and has placed itself so that it must give unconditional backing to the railroad companies in the same manner as it had done in regard to the telephone companies.

"What has happened during these last few days?' you may ask. 'Was it madness?' Not at all, don't believe it. Since it was impossible to have a railroad

strike, it was necessary to seek another solution. This soon presented itself, and it was so well prepared that it seemed to afford an easy way out. The idea was to have the soldiers deliver arms to our comrades, but this did not succeed because a "stranger was found at the door."

"Nevertheless, the atmosphere is charged; the revolution must come. It does not matter how long it will take. Our propaganda reaches even the most hidden corners of the country.

"This 'Republic of Workers,' degenerating into a dictatorship, so frightened that it may fall of its own weight, has mobilized all its forces, in cities as well as countryside. Everywhere we see nothing but uniforms and rifles. All bridges and railroad stations are guarded by the Civil Guards. The government is in mortal fear, and with good reason. . . ."

## The Union of Anarchist Forces in Bulgaria

[EDITOR'S NOTE: *This small chronique is only a small part of the cheerful news coming from Bulgaria. The libertarian revolutionary movement is again on the upgrade in this little country whose strategic importance for the development of the revolutionary movement of the Near East is disproportionately great. But of still greater significance is the fact that the anarchist movement is rising to prominence after the terrific persecutions which it had suffered several years ago. The Golgotha of the Bulgarian anarchists is known to the whole revolutionary world. An attempt was made to uproot the anarchist movement by wholesale slaughters and horrible inquisitionary methods. It was of no avail, the seeds of anarchism have taken too deep a root. Revolutionary anarchism is invincible where it knows how to sow and plant as deeply as our Bulgarian comrades did. This is the object lesson of the latest news coming from there.*]

**T**HE libertarian labor movement of Bulgaria has been suffering a long time from the internecine struggles of the syndicalists and anarchists. This hindered to a great extent the development of our movement.

A short time ago a congress was called of all the libertarian elements of the labor movement of Bulgaria and both factions united on the basis of a common platform. From now on the purely anarchist elements will concentrate all their efforts upon the unfolding of the ideological propaganda. Their organizations are in the nature of communities of ideas, do not have a mass character, but constitute a movement of groups which, apart from propaganda work, form study circles with the participation of all who are interested in the furtherance of anti-authoritarian ideas.

The syndicalist organizations are to become instrumental in organizing the masses of workers and peasants into the respective industrial unions. These unions must be built upon the basis of anti-authoritarian ideas, and should proclaim the libertarian communism as their ultimate goal. Such syndicalist organizations have sprung up already in ten localities. These unions set before themselves the two-fold task: the struggle against the bosses in the defence of the workers, and at the same time laying the foundations of the new socialist order.

Of great importance is the organization of peasants which the congress approved. An organization of poor peasants, which already exists under the name of "Vlasovden" and conducts its struggles independent of all political parties, is promoted by the anarcho-syndicalists. Its aim is to struggle for the socialization of the ground and soil, and wherever possible to organize even now collective farming. The congress appealed to all comrades to join the organization of poor peasants in order to foster the spirit of anti-authoritarianism and to impart to the class struggle a revolutionary character. (From "Der Syndicalist")

## Book Reviews

*"Rebels and Renegades" by Max Nomad*

MAX NOMAD set himself an unsavory task, and fulfilled it very well. With the revolutionary movement as his woof and a brilliant, superficial, dazzling theory based on pseudo-reality as his warp, he has woven a tale truly fitting for the depression. He has gathered together a notable collection of leaders of the revolutionary movement, most of whom have written, or have been the main collaborators of some of the finest pages of Machiavellian principles, tactics, and betrayals in the records of mankind; and by the application of ingenious additions, subtractions, and colorations, has been able to prove triumphantly the justice of his contentions.

It is his claim that the present revolutionary movement was conceived by the intellectual, was born from his womb, and is being fostered, nursed, and, finally, milked by him. The declassé intellectuals, finding themselves with little or no future in respectable bourgeois pursuits, created a working class movement to serve as the lever necessary to break through the entrenched bourgeois fortifications and foist said declassés upon the bourgeoisie whether they liked it or not. The more ambitious intellectuals, with larger vision, conceived a more daring plan: they would abolish the bourgeoisie, establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and thus make the intellectuals, the natural leaders of the proletariat, the sole rulers of society. These men are not satisfied with half a loaf. In any event, both classes of declassés wanted jobs.

With this as his theme, Nomad proceeds to write the history of the revolutionary movement in various countries in terms of its leaders. The history is partial, as are the biographical sketches of the leaders; he merely combines the two elements at their points of contact. The choice of his leaders is adequate for his purpose—but his purpose is woefully inadequate in accomplishing all that he wishes it to accomplish. To cite the careers of the MacDonalds, Scheidemanns, and Briands, as well as the Mussolinis and Pilsudskis (who wanted even more than mere participation in a bourgeois democratic government) is to furnish irrefutable arguments that intellectuals and self-educated ex-workers do take care of their own hides only. But to attempt to prove from this that the historic course of the working class movement has been charted by them, that its militancy or reformism may be laid to their door, and their door only, is to pay ridiculous homage to a ridiculous theory, which may serve adequately enough in explaining the careers of individuals, but cannot be considered seriously as an explanation of mass movements, their inception, growth, and development.

If MacDonald and his ilk flourished in England, it is because conditions did not demand a greater militancy. If Briand crushed the General Strike in 1910, he only seemed to foreshadow the reformist trend of the Syndicalist Movement in France. Nor can this change be explained by the betrayal of individual leaders—it goes much, much deeper, into the lives of the workers, their standard of living, their working conditions. . . . The successful leader can only mirror, in the long run, the needs and desires of the masses. . . . He may betray once, he may betray twice, but he cannot go on forever. . . .

But it is in his chapter on Malatesta, the first of the hook, that Nomad reveals his true colors. Unable to put Malatesta in the same category as all the others, since he refused to make his living from propaganda or take compensation for his revolutionary activities, he tries to dispose of him by terming him unreal, ethereal, visionary, romantic. But on what basis can he characterize Malatesta as such, Did he not, after his romantic youth, try to bring Anarchism to the masses in a practical manner, through the Syndicalist Movement? And, at the same time, did he not foresee, what actually happened later, that Anarchists would lose their identity as Anarchists if they did not maintain their integrity in ideological groups separated from the unions? Was he not always combatting the disintegrating romanticism that permeated the Anarchist Movement and made its adherents fear organization? Yet Nomad accuses him of unreality, romanticism. . . .

This, I believe, furnishes us with a clue to the philosophy of Nomad more conclusively than anything else in the book. So completely is he absorbed in his pseudo-materialistic theory, that all are judged by this criteria, and those who are too idealistic to subordinate their principles to their career, a la Malatesta, are branded as unreal, ethereal, visionary, romantic, no matter how realistic their principles and tactics may really be.

ABE COLEMAN

*"A New Deal"—Stuart Chase*

*"A Planned Society"—George Soule*

THE hacketing in one little review of these two interesting books is due not only to the limitations of space. Both belong to a certain type of works, and it is the typical features that are of greater interest than the individual differences in manner of writing and approach to the problem. Both reflect the changing attitude of a certain section of the middle classes, who become aware to an ever greater extent of the blind alley into which the system is driven, but who are prevented by their class position from facing the revolutionary implications of the system's collapse. The crisis accelerated the process of radicalization, and both books reflect it fully in the hindsight shown in their examination of the prosperity period. We no longer meet there any more of the author's flirtatious attitude to the idea of the potentialities of a neo-capitalism, nor is there any more of their former sneers about the "catastrophy" period. The catastrophe loomed up before the sneers had entirely gone from their faces, and both, Messrs. Soule and Chase, are too well informed not to see the deeper implications of the catastrophe.

Now, hindsight is not so often exercised even now, in this supposed period of universal enlightenment which followed the great debacle, and both authors should be congratulated on the manner and extent in which it was applied in the analysis of the gilt age period. But still, hindsight cannot take the place of

foresight, and it is the latter that is essential in planning ways and means of overcoming the impasse. A belated discovery of the "system" and a vapid humanitarian sentiment, which makes one shrink before the idea of a "violent" break in the course of our social life, are not sufficient qualifications for plotting a radical way out of this impasse. A sense of social realities is needed, an awareness of the realities of the class struggle, both of which would be too much to demand from the typical spokesmen of the middle classes who aspire to speak in the name of the nation. And so we see both of them indulging in a delightful piece of day-dreaming about the glorious new deal to come via the planning commissions which are going to regulate capitalism out of existence. Witness, for instance, the great success achieved by our war boards, by the Interstate Commission, and utility boards. Witness for instance, the agony of capitalism in the fields of utilities and transportation, the dwindling of dividends, the disappearance of inflation, the vanishing control of the financial oligarchy, the merciless tightening grip of the utility boards which have already brought these industries at the very door of a socialistic economy.

It is a delightful day-dream, but strictly speaking, its discussion does not belong here. It belongs to the field of social psychopathology, the study of social compulsives which distort so violently the straight course of logical thinking of such clear minded people as Messrs. Stuart Chase and George Soule.

—SENEX

COMRADES!

The regular appearance of the VANGUARD is contingent upon the consistent support of our comrades and friends. This support must be financial as well as moral. We urge that a strenuous subscription campaign be initiated by the various groups and individuals and that a greater effort be made to distribute our magazine as widely as possible, especially among young workers and students. The impetus given to the growth of our organization and our publication by the wholehearted endorsement of both the Pacific Anarchist Conference in Los Angeles and the Mid-Western Anarchist Conference in Chicago, should be of great assistance to us in making a success of our subscription and distribution campaign. Comrades, let us translate these endorsements into action.

A subscription to the VANGUARD costs only one dollar for twelve issues. Let us hear from you.

#### DEBATE

RESOLVED: That the working class needs the Communist (left opposition) to lead it in its struggle for emancipation.

Spartacus (Left opposition) say YES

Vanguard (Anarchist-Communist) says NO

AT THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER—227 EAST 12TH STREET, NEW YORK

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH, 8 P. M.

#### DANCE AND ENTERTAINMENT

given by "VANGUARD" GROUP AND "REBEL YOUTH"

(youth club affiliated with the "Vanguard")

at the International Center, 227 East 12th Street

SUNDAY, MARCH 5

*Entertainment furnished by "Rebel Youth" will consist of  
two one-act plays and interpretive dancing*

*Music by a good jazz band. All are invited.*