RESIST THE TERROR!

By LOUIS C. FRAINA

THE safety of democracy is an accomplished fact in America. Completely safe! If you keep your mouth shut, if you don't stray on the streets, if you realize that the first duty of the citizen is to obey the mandates of the governing powers and attempt absolutely no criticism of the hypocrisy of pretending to fight for democracy in Germany and crushing democracy in America,—then all is well and the safety of democracy an accomplished fact. But if you don't, then you are ruthlessly crushed, for in order to make the rest of the world safe for democracy, we must submit to autocracy in America.

The process of imposing autocracy to promote a mythical democracy seems illogical—and insincere. But it isn't, really. The age of miracles is again in the world. It is a miracle that the ruling class is performing, and a miracle is a thing that passeth understanding. Accept, and doubt not!

The situation is serious. Socialist and radical papers are being denied the mails—among them the *International Socialist Review*, the *American Socialist* and *The Masses*. Denial of the mails is a preliminary step to complete suppression. Moreover, the distribution of often perfectly harmless leaflets is being curbed by the simple agency of arresting the distributors on preposterous charges of disorderly conduct. The owners of halls are being intimidated into refusing to rent them out for Socialist meetings. In New York City it is virtually impossible to secure a hall in which to hold a meeting for the repeal of the Conscription Law.

Not satisfied with this, the representatives of Law and Order are raiding meetings, provoking disorder and riot, freely using their clubs and making indiscriminate arrests.

The most outrageous case of this sort occurred this month in Boston. A parade held by the Workingmen's Council was stormed by soldiers and sailors in uniform, men, women and children beaten, their faces smashed and their clothes torn to shreds. The revolutionary flags in the parade seemed particularly to arouse the ire of the ruffians. The assault was general and unprovoked. It was a reign of terror. And the police did not interfere. When the parade got to the Common, in spite of the assaults, the police charged upon the crowd of 30,000, stopped the meeting and indiscriminately used their clubs in dispersing the people. But the fury of the soldiers and sailors that are to make the world safe for democracy was not satisfied. They marched to the local headquarters of the Socialist Party, broke into the rooms and smashed all the furniture they could lay their hands upon, the books from the library being hurled into the street.

Nor is this campaign of terror sporadic. It seems to be general and organized. The government is shaky. The people are not at all enthusiastic for the war. Frenzied demands are being made upon the president for a declaration that will "stir up" the people, and councils are held to determine upon a campaign to "educate" the people into the meaning of the war. A really significant sign of the times was the dismal failure of "recruiting week." The president issued a call for volunteers, 70,000 volunteers, to fill up the regular army; *and less than 20,000 enlisted, in spite of the president's call and the insistent appeals of posters, newspapers and portly patriotic gentlemen.* The country is not against the war, nor is it for the war; it is disinterested and apathetic. This is the danger for the government. Apathy may be turned into active discontent by agitators, especially when people begin to feel the burden of conscription and the sorrow of the casualty list. The agitators and their agitation must be crushed.

And it must be crushed particularly at this time, when the draft is only a few weeks away. The governing powers are nervous. The sentiment against conscription may be gauged by the fact that apparently a million eligibles did not register and that 60 per cent. of the registrants claimed exemption. Resistance is anticipated. The draft riots of the Civil War may be repeated and exceeded to-day. This is not imagination. It is fact. And the government is preparing itself by arresting the agitators, terrorizing the people, and crushing the revolutionary press.



EMPTY SHELLS

It is the task of the Socialist movement to resist the terror. There is no alternative. Acquiescence would be ethically unjustifiable and tactically suicidal. Thousands upon thousands of men and women have become members of the Socialist Party since the declaration of war. They have joined the party primarily because they see in the party an instrument of protest and action against the reaction. They want to fight. If we do not fight, we shall not only lose these new members but our own integrity. Principles and expediency equally impose a course of *action* upon the Socialist Party. And since the Majority Report has been accepted overwhelmingly by the party as its program on the war, there can be no equivocation based on the assumption that the party has not yet spoken. The party has spoken, and in unmistakable words. It is now our task to put through the program of action by all means in our power. No compromise!

We should not, however, ignore the fact that there is a tendency to compromise in the party. A portion of the bureaucracy is satisfied with a "magnificent gesture" in the form of a documentary declaration against the war. Moreover, Morris Hillquit, in an article some time ago, declared that "all means in our power" includes only lawful means and those means that the government allows us to use! This interpretation is absolutely wrong. The phrase is taken from a resolution I introduced in Local New York, subsequently adopted by Local Kings County, and incorporated in the resolution of the Socialist Propaganda League, and I know that Hillquit's interpretation was not in my mind, nor in the mind of the comrades who favored the resolution, nor in the mind of Louis B. Boudin who was responsible for its introduction into the Majority Report at the St. Louis Convention. The phrase means exactly what it says, and nothing else.

Another discouraging manifestation is an editorial in the New York *Call* of July 3, on the Boston outrage. It is an extraordinarily pessimistic editorial, typical of the *Call*, the only consequence of which can be discouragement and paralysis of action. The *Call* says:

"Can we do nothing more than denounce these performances as an 'outrage'? Is it possible to get the protection of the law that is theoretically due us, or are we, and all people who advocate a general and speedy peace, to remain as outlaws? Is there any machinery we can set in motion to curb these riotous mobs? If so, the sooner we discover and apply it the better.

"And, if not, what then? Are we to go along, offering ourselves as sheep to the slaughter? Are we to expose ourselves constantly to the fury of riot that, to all appearances, may pass over into murder, unchecked by the law? Are we to voluntarily offer our headquarters to pillage, destruction and incendiarism? Is this the duty of every Socialist, to go right ahead as we are going and take the consequences, which already we have seen and which, apparently, will follow in every similar case?

"Or shall we abandon this form of propaganda as impossible? Shall we passively accept the war as an existing condition, against which we can do nothing in direct opposition, and turn our attention to other phases of those results, which we may, perhaps, use to advantage for ultimate Socialism?

"We frankly confess that we cannot answer these questions. It is the Socialist party that must decide, and that decision, one way or the other, must be made as speedily as possible."

Instead of a clear call to action, the *Call* miserably offers pessimism, equivocation, and the hint of compromise!

There is only one answer: *We cannot abandon this form of propaganda.* It *is* worth while. Demonstration should be piled upon demonstration. Our determination will answer the assaults of the soldiers. They cannot conquer determination: it is invincible. And if they go too far, we shall still not give up our rights. The democracy that once was America was created by resistance to tyranny and wrong.

No, we cannot "passively accept the war as an existing condition." That was the animating spirit of the miserable Minority Report, and it was humiliatingly defeated. There is no way of achieving "ultimate Socialism" except through immediate action. The masses can be organized only through education *and action*. Of what value is "ultimate Socialism" if we compromise our action to-day? It was in the interests of "ultimate Socialism" that the German Social Democracy justified its abandonment of revolutionary Socialism, an abandonment that led straight to the disastrous collapse of 1914.

Moreover, the issue is deeper. Demonstrations develop the spirit *of mass action* in the proletariat. And mass action develops independence, integrity and fighting spirit. The proletariat must develop its own action, in its own way, through its own mass activity. Decades of wrong tactics, of making the proletariat rely on forces outside itself, may be righted by fitting action to-day. Our action may not achieve immediate tangible results, but it will set a precedent and develop moral and physical reserves for the future. Is it, then, only for to-day that we are fighting?

Demonstrations in the streets, without any violence (except perhaps the violence of the representatives of law and order), are a revolutionary form of action. They create an impression. They arouse enthusiasm, and the spirit of action and solidarity. Do the soldiers, sailors and police disperse the demonstrations? Splendid! They are emphasizing our ideas. They are contributing mightily toward destroying the apathy of the people which is the great obstacle to action.

Crowds are not cowards. I have seen conscription riots, and it is ominous the way a crowd refuses to disperse in spite of the brutal behavior of the police. Crowds may not act, but at least they do not run away. An outrage doesn't frighten them, it angers them. The action of the crowd develops out of outrages.

I am not preaching violence. I am not urging retaliations. *Peace is the great power, moral and physical, that crowds possess.* Against a crowd that does not retaliate and still refuses to disperse, the violence of soldiers, sailors and police is helpless. *Moral resistance is itself an aggressive act of resistance.* The individual alone is helpless; in a demonstration *en masse* the individual becomes a moral and physical giant.

Out upon the streets, men and women of the proletariat!

They cannot crush you. They cannot destroy the ideas you represent. They dare not push things too far—they fear revolt!

The strength of the mass is the fear of the tyrant. The German autocracy has the mightiest engines of force in the world, yet it prohibits proletarian demonstrations in the streets of Berlin. In France, in Italy, in England, the power of militarism trembles for the future when the workers organize demonstrations in the streets. The revolution in Russia was made in the streets of Petrograd.

At any moment, the apathy of the American people may transform itself into active discontent. Our action to-day contributes toward that transformation. Organize and act!