Socialists and War

By Robert Rives La Monte

I.

The editors of *The Class Struggle* have honored me by inviting me to debate "on the proper attitude of the Socialist Movement toward the War." For convenience of discussion, I take it, we must divide this subject into two parts; first, we must consider the proper attitude of the International Socialist Movement toward War with a big W—war in general; after that we can take up the more specific question of the proper attitude of American Socialism toward this particular War.

In approaching the subject at all we at once find ourselves confronted with an obstacle that appears almost insurmountable. I refer to the incurable romanticism of Socialists. For we Socialists are intense romanticists. Facts are for us seen only through a distorting medium of theories and hopes. We are above all else dreamers, idealists, utopians. In saying this I do not imply any note of disparagement. On the contrary our chief distinction is that we have had the courage and persistence to stick to our ideals amid the sordid horrors and grim realities of Twentieth Century Capitalism. I remember Maeterlinck in one of his finest passages likens Society to a sailing vessel in which the conservatives and reactionaries perform the function of ballast, while the idealists and radicals are the sails that carry the ship ahead. Any one can be ballast; it takes a forward-looking brain and a warm heart to fit one to be a sail. The role of ballast

should be abhorrent to any one under thirty. The youthful reactionary appears to me abnormal and loathsome.

But while we need not be ashamed of our romanticism, we must none the less admit that it is a most deceptive refracting medium through which to observe facts.

Most of us have realized at least subconsciously, that we were at heart dreamers. And here was the irresistible strength of the appeal materialistic Marxism made to us. It gave or appeared to give us an absolutely scientific foundation for our romantic dreams. And so we eagerly and blithely swallowed whole Marxism—or whatever weird grotesque conception of Marxism we were able to form. But the label "Marxist" had no magic power to banish our dreams. We remained romanticists. In fact, fancying we had placed a solid scientific foundation beneath our fanciful superstructures, we but gave a freer rein to our imaginative faculties. We created fantasies that bore little or no resemblance to anything that ever was on sea or land, and went out gaily to do battle in a world of cruel facts with weapons forged on the anvil of fantasy.

The choicest product of our uncurbed imaginations was a kind of Marxian economic Man, a sort of Gordon Craig marionette without red blood or emotional impulses, who responded solely to economic stimuli. Just show this curious monster where lay his economic interest, especially if our refracting medium could distort it into a *class* interest, and he could be depended to pursue it ruthlessly through fire and blood, over the bleeding corpses of his nearest and dearest if need were. Such a demon never cursed the earth by existing on it. Marx, very likely, would have been the first to repudiate him. But nevertheless we Marxists have striven futilely for years to build up a tactic on the hypothesis of a world peopled by these grotesque marionettes.

Since August 4th, 1914, even the dullest of us are beginning to realize that men and women of flesh and blood do not act like economic marionettes.

Our romantic idealism has also endowed the proletariat with intellectual and moral attributes worthy of sages and saints.

In spite of our insistence that the workers have for centuries been robbed of almost all opportunities of intellectual and moral, even of proper physical development, with incredible inconsistency we have proclaimed that by some uncanny miracle they had been endowed with those mental and moral qualities that fitted them and them alone for world leadership and world rule. Were they as stunted mentally as we claimed capitalist slavery had made them, surely it was vain to expect them to have the far-seeing and broad vision necessary to cope with a world crisis. We now know they did not have such a vision when confronted by the world-wide peril of democracy; but many of us cling to our romantic conception of a proletariat made up of supermen.

If we are to see straight and think clearly in the present crisis, not to say act wisely, we must first of all resolutely tear into shreds and tatters our romanticism and face the facts of life.

There is no use in discussing this question on the assumption that there is now or ever has been an International Socialist Movement in the sense of a world-wide proletarian brotherhood bound firmly together by real solidarity. We must face the fact, as stated on the second page of the first number of this magazine, "that the Second International, instead of being a perfect union of the working class 'one and indivisible,' was, in reality, to most of its adherents, a mere confederation of national units to whom first allegiance was due in case of a conflict." There is no use and no sense in discussing what should have been the action of a body that never was on sea or land.

Another romantic assumption we must cast aside is the notion that the various national units of Socialism were strong enough to have prevented War, had they so willed. There is no country in the world save Germnay where the Socialists were strong enough even to have delayed appreciably mobilization. In Germany they had the power to cripple the Empire by delaying mobilization for weeks, if not to have prevented it altogether, but they lacked the will to use the power.

When we come to America we constantly talk and write as though American Socialists had the power to affect appreciably the foreign policy of the United States. The first step to right reasoning is to admit that in this domain we are almost if not quite negligible. This may not be pleasing to our vanity, but it is the truth. It is to say the least asinine to predicate our action on the hypothesis that we have the power to wage a successful fight against, let us say, conscription. It is even doubtful if in such a fight we could show strength enough to amount to an effective protest. Personally I have no disposition at present to oppose conscription to raise an army to defend democracy and humanity, but if I had I would wish a better medium of protest than the present Socialist organization. But this is merely an illustration of my point that in discussing tactics we should consider not what it would be fine to do were we able to do it, but rather what with our present power and prestige, or lack of it, we are able to do that will further our ends.

But let us get back to the general question of the attitude of Socialists toward War. From about 1905 to 1913 it did appear to the more optimistic among us that the loose coalition or federation of the divers national Socialist parties adhering to the Second International was in a fair way to develop into the embryo of a true International Socialist Movement. We began to lose this illusion in 1907 when Hervé proposed to the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart that on the menaced outbreak of war the Socialists of the countries concerned should do their utmost by general strikes, particularly in the munition and transportation industries, to make the threatened war impossible. For the Socialists from most countries this was probably an academic question, as they had not the power to act effectively in this way. But for the Germans it was a very practical question. And the Germans would have none of it. They proved they were not internationalists, but Germans; or, to be more exact, Kaiserites, as from that day to this they have never hesitated to sacrifice the welfare of the German people to the wishes and policies of the Junker-bossed Kaiser. They have proved up

to the hilt the truth of Hervé's impassioned charge: *"Vous avez peur! Vous avez peur, vous Allemands!"*

Yes, alas, they were afraid; afraid to do anything that might lessen, however little, the power of the great political machine they had been so long building; afraid to appear disloyal to the Kaiser; afraid, madly afraid, of losing votes and seats in the Reichstag.

They had the power in 1907 to prevent Germany from waging a successful offensive war. There has never been a day or hour since when they have not had this power. They have ever been and still are afraid to use it; and yet this cowardly, narrowly national Socialist party has even now the effrontery to prate of "internationalism" in its eagerness to serve its royal master by intrigues at Stockholm!

For more than thirty years the vast army, the scientific military preparedness of Germany, has been the chief, practically the only serious menace to the peace of the world. This statement will surprise some of you; make some of you indignant. You will ask: Why was the German army more of a menace than the British navy? I might content myself by pointing out that with an army one can overrun and devastate the lands of a neighbor (witness Belgium and Serbia), while with a navy one cannot. Remember that it was more than two years after the present war started before England had an army that was not in the German sense "contemptible."

But even had England had an army comparable to the German murder-machine, still its menace would have been slight compared to the awful threat that for three decades has kept thoughtful men from sleeping sound o' nights—the threat of German invasion of foreign soil.

Why is this true? For several reasons. The economic one has never been put more clearly than by Louis B. Boudin in his book, "Socialism and War." He shows and proves that a capitalist country, in which the textile industries are predominant, tends on the whole to be peaceful and non-aggressive; but that just as soon as the Scepter passes from Cotton, Wool and Flax to Iron and Steel the country begins to

develop chauvinistic Imperialism. I cannot here repeat Boudin's convincing argument at length. It may, however, be briefly epitomized thus: Hats, shoes and calicoes can be sold under any old flag. Steel rails, steel ships, steam engines and structural iron tend rather to follow the flag of their nativity, or if they precede it they show a marked preference for territory over which floats a flag that never fails to salute with servile alacrity their natal emblem.

In developing this argument he shows that the statistics of pig iron production furnish a roughly accurate barometer of the growth of aggressive militarism. On page 124 of his book he prints a statistical table showing the pig iron production in long tons of the principal producing countries of Europe. From that table we learn that in 1912 Germany and Austria-Hungary together produced more pig iron than Great Britain, France, Russia and Belgium. But not only was the production in Germany so vast (more than *double* that of Great Britain), but it was growing at an appallingly rapid rate. Thus, in the twelve years from 1900 to 1912 it had more than doubled, while that of Great Britain during the same period had actually fallen off more than 100,000 tons.

So that while chauvinistic imperialism was growing so alarmingly in Germany, the tide had already begun to recede in Great Britain. And it is a matter of common notoriety that the England of the past five years has been much less imperialistic than the England of Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain in which Kipling sang of "The White Man's Burden."

The typical spiritual manifestation of iron-begotten imperialism is an unfaltering faith in the superiority of the "Culture" of the great pig-iron producing Nation, together with a scathing contempt for the "cultures" of all other nations. "For the Destiny of the Nation is," in Boudin's words, "to diffuse its 'culture' among the nations, exterminating the cultures which it may find opposing its own, so as to bring dominion to the only true Culture, for the greater glory of God. In order to accomplish its mission—from which it is mortal offense to

shrink—the Chosen People must seek to subdue the entire world politically and dominate it economically. For experience has shown that 'Culture' follows the flag. History teaches us this lesson: that inferior races or nations, whether white or colored, fail to appreciate the beauties of a higher culture, and are utterly unable to acquire it even passively, unless and until they have been forcibly placed under the political tutelage and economic domination of the superior race whose culture is to be extended. In this connection it must be remembered that its language is a nation's most characteristically national means of expression. In fact it is part of its own flesh and blood and possesses some of those very mystic qualities which constitute the essence of the national character and the basis of its special Culture. The most potent means therefore of spreading the culture of any given nation among alien peoples is to make them use the *language* of that nation. But that can only be done when the nation of the higher Culture politically dominates the peoples among whom this Culture is to be spread. And in this material world of ours political dominion is inseparable from economic dominion. Hence the cultural mission of the Nation becomes of necessity a striving to dominate the entire world economically and politically—*a striving for World-Empire.*"

There you have Boudin's masterly delineation of the spirit of the German people, or at least of the dominant forces of the German Nation. And it is and was that spirit behind the German war machine which made it such a deadly menace to the cultural heritage of the human race. No such spirit lurked behind the British navy.

May I disgress long enough to say that these imperialistic spiritual qualities—the belief that one is the sacred bearer of a higher Culture, and that all other cultures are beneath contempt—are the very hall-mark of the Marxian Socialist everywhere? Who that has ever sat in an International Socialist Convention has not been conscious of the amusing and insulting contempt exuding from every pore of the majority of the German delegates? What has hindered the growth of Socialism more than the contempt for those who differed from

them of Guesde in France, Hyndman in England and De Leon here?

But aside from this economic reason there are certain special circumstances in the history of the German peoples which made the German army a special danger to freedom and democracy.

The people of northern Europe and the United States are ethnically all of one stock, or to be more exact, all one hybrid of the same three stocks. Now this ancient stock, our ancestors, dwelt for some ten thousand years or more along the shores of the Baltic in small village communities which lived by agriculture and fishing chiefly. They owed some of their food to hunting, and in the latter part of their long sojourn on the Baltic took to piracy for variety, but it is doubtful if this piracy was ever economically profitable.

If we wish to look for our permanent racial traits we must go back and delve on the Baltic littoral. For that is the only mode of life and those the only institutions that our race has shown itself capable of flourishing under for any really long period of time. It matters not whether you take it that the race had certain fixed traits that adapted it to such an environment and life and institutions (or lack of them) or whether you take it that in the long course of ten to thirteen thousand years all those not adapted to such a life died off or at least left no posterity. It comes to the same thing. To find out what are the comparatively permanent traits of our race we must go to the Baltic. This is not to say that our race may not vary and change. Just because it is a hybrid race its range of variability is wide. But racial changes are very slow processes. And we have no warrant for believing that we have altered appreciably since our forefathers farmed and fished beside the Baltic.

We can find the chief characteristics of this life set forth by Thorstein Veblen in "Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution." There were no large towns. The people lived either in very small villages or scattered settlements. There is no trace of fortifications. Offensive weapons were very scarce. There was apparently no defensive armor. We are

driven to believe they were a peaceful people, not given to war. They had village minds. The hamlet was to them the largest social unit they ever thought of. Such ideas as country, race or nation would have been incomprehensible to them. In fact they are very nearly so to many of their village-minded descendants to-day. And yet these are the very people we hoped to make into true internationalists by the necromancy of a few well-worded resolutions!

Their civil institutions Veblen describes as "Pagan Anarchy." "All power vests finally," he tells us, "in the popular assembly, made up in effect of the freehold farmers, including under that designation the able-bodied male citizens of substantial standing, but not formally excluding any part of the free population, and perhaps not even with absolute rigor excluding all women.

"This deliberative assembly exercised the powers, such as were exercised, of legislation, executive (extremely slight) and judiciary. There is little if any police power, though there are established conventions of police regulation; and there is no conception of the 'king's peace' outside the king's farmyard." . . . "This civil system might be described as anarchy qualified by the common sense of a deliberative assembly that exercises no coercive control; or it might, if one's bias leads that way, be called a democratic government, the executive power of which is in abeyance."

It will be seen that insubordination was of the very essence of the scheme. There was a swift impatience of restraint. The most salient trait of our forebears was either a penchant for anarchy, if you like to so describe it, or what I prefer to think of as a fierce and ardent love of democratic freedom. And this has remained the distinguishing mark of these peoples wherever they have migrated—in France, in England, in New England, in Australia and New Zealand. Everywhere they retain the tendency to think in terms of the village, but also everywhere save in the German Empire they retain too their tendency to insubordination, their incurable love of freedom.

Why the anarchistic tendency of the race has died out in Germany is one of the great mysteries of history. I do not myself believe it is dead. I think it merely suffering a transitory obscuration or eclipse. I believe that deep down in the subconscious depths of the wonderful German nature there still burns the old ineradicable racial ardor for freedom. It is covered deep by the ashes of custom and military discipline, but I hope we will not have many years to wait before it will again glow red and warm and burst forth with mighty volcanic power. But it is comparatively easy to see why this love for freedom as an active factor has disappeared from German life.

During all the centuries when free institutions were emerging in England, France and America, and even in Scandinavia, to-day Germany has remained consistently organized (in Veblen's words) "on the pattern of the 'Territorial State'—a peculiar petty and peculiarly irresponsible autocracy, which has come to its best maturity only among the Germanic peoples." . . . "The territorial state is in effect a territorial aggregate, with its population conceived as an estate belonging in usufruct to a given prince; the concept is visibly of feudal derivation, and the habit of mind which makes it a practicable form of political organization is the feudal habit of personal subservience to a personal master. In such a polity subordination, personal allegiance, is the prime virtue, the chief condition precedent to its carrying on; while insubordination is the fatal vice, incompatible with such a coercive system."

The people of Germany have had probably over a thousand years of life under this and earlier and probably even more brutally coercive systems, so that they have come to loath insubordination. "The spirit of 'duty' in these people," says Veblen, "is apparently not 'nature,' in the sense of native proclivity; but it is 'second nature' with the people of the Fatherland, as being the ingrained traditional attitude induced by consistent and protracted experience."

In addition to this we have to reckon in the case of Prussia with 200 years of unremitting military discipline from the

days of Friedrich the Great down to the present hour. As Veblen puts it, "a military organization in war is a servile organization in peace." "It reaches its best efficiency," he adds, "only when the habit of arbitrary authority and unquestioning obedience has been so thoroughly ingrained that subservience has become a passionate aspiration with the subject population, where the habit of allegiance has attained that degree of automatism that the subject's ideal of liberty has come to be permission to obey orders." . . . "Such an ideal growth of patriotic sentiment appears to have been attained, in a tolerable degree of approximation, in the German case."

Boudin has told us why the German army was sure to be used aggressively and piratically. Veblen has shown us that the democratic conception of freedom had for all practical purposes ceased to function within the borders of the Fatherland. Is it any wonder that all thoughtful people stood aghast at the prospect of world domination by a race to whom freedom was an incomprehensible concept? Not only they did not know it in practise; they could not even conceive of its existence or nature.

Surely it is not necessary to tell readers of this magazine of the utterly undemocratic organization of the German Empire. They all must know that the German ministers are responsible not to the Reichstag, but to the Kaiser; that the Reichstag itself is no fair representative of the German people, as it is elected from districts that have not been altered since 1870, when most of the present great German cities were scarcely more than villages; that the Kaiser never or seldom hesitates to dismiss or prorogue the Reichstag when its actions are not subservient; that he can well afford to do this since he depends for what in England would be called his Civil List or in America salary for himself and relatives not on the Reichstag which speaks in the name of the Empire, but upon the Landtag or Diet of Prussia, for these are voted to him in his capacity of King of Prussia; and surely no Socialist is ignorant that under the Prussian three-class suffrage the Landtag is owned absolutely by the Prussian Junkers.

There is even less political democracy in Austria-Hungary than in Germany. It was thus long since obvious to those who were willing to cast aside romanticism and face facts that the German army was the ONE great menace to peace, to civilization, to progress and to those free democratic institutions which are a condition precedent to anything approaching a socialistic or communistic organization of modern societies. It was thus clearly the duty of all Socialists in all lands to do their utmost to avert the growth of the threatening Teutonic power. But this was pre-eminently the duty and the high privilege of the German Socialists, for they alone had the power to offer effective opposition to the ambition of militant autocracy to dominate the world and crush out representative democracy all over the earth.

There is only one conceivable answer to this argument. And that is to say that political liberty and representative institutions without industrial democracy and economic equality are empty, worthless baubles not worth fighting to retain. I am aware that there are Socialists who take his position. But that way madness lies. I believe that every upward, forward step the race has taken has been worth while, has been worth fighting for, aye, has been worth its cost in bloodshed. I believe the bourgeoisie have played a great and beneficient role in history. I believe that such democracy and political liberty as they have achieved has gone far to make life endurable to such village-minded anarchists as ourselves. I believe that their mission is still far from being fulfilled; that the world has not yet been made "safe for democracy," and that to join in the task of making it so is the duty of every Socialist just as it is the duty of every good citizen. I believe that Magna Charta was worth while. I believe that the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia Bill of Rights, Valley Forge, Bunker Hill, the Fall of the Bastile, the Battle of the Marne, the heroic defence of Verdun, the recent Russian Revolution with the release of the prisoners in the Fortress of Peter and Paul and the glorious home coming of the Siberian exiles were worth while, and worth all they have cost in human life and treasure. I do not believe our struggle upward and forward has been in vain. And I think it a glorious privilege to be living to-day to do one's part, however humble, in saving the world from the domination of the Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns.

But let us go back to the year 1910. The one great threat to peace and freedom then, as in 1907, was the great German army. We gathered in the great Socialist Congress at Copenhagen well knowing that to be the case, and knowing also that the German Socialists and Socialist Trade Unions had the organized power to make German mobilization both difficult and dangerous for the Kaiser, if they could but be induced to use their might. Once again the attempt was made, this time by the late Keir Hardie of England and Edouard Vaillant of France. They introduced their resolution for a General Strike in case of war. It was well known that the Germans alone had the power to make it effective. And again the Germans would have none of it. I do not wish to attack anyone. But it is well to remember that of the eleven American delegates there only two (Haywood and myself) were outspokenly in favor of the only effective proposition to make aggressive war by Germany impossible. I will not mention names, but at least two of our Socialist "leaders," who, since August, 1914, have been most active in advocating an embargo on food and munitions and other steps directly in the interest of the Hohenzollern, were at Copenhagen, and did not utter a word or cast a vote to bind the German Socialists to make an honest effort to avoid war. They took their cue for guidance from the German Socialists then, just as they have taken it from Scheidemann, Suedekum and other Kaiserites since the war began its devastations.

What is the proper attitude of American Socialists toward this particular war? Let us rather ask what has their actual attitude been thus far? I find the answer on page four of the first number of this magazine in what appears to be a manifesto by the editors. Here it is: "The action of the German Socialists in supporting the Kaiser's government in this war was either openly approved by our official leadership or else we

were admonished not to *dis*approve *o*f it on the plea of 'neutrality.'

"When Germany inaugurated a peace-propaganda in this country our party entered upon a peace agitation which was not essentially different in character from that of Germany's official and unofficial representatives. We not only waited with the launching of our peace agitation until the official and semi-official German propaganda in this country was ready for it, but the nature of our demands was largely a replica of that propaganda. The Socialist Party even entered into official relations with that propaganda, carried on in behalf of the governing classes of Germany, participating officially in 'peace' demonstrations organized in its behalf."

The *Cologne Gazette* the other day said: "The Kaiser's best allies are the German-Americans." Why was not "our" Party included? It has surely been faithful enough. By its treason to the United States, its shameless betrayal of the cause of democracy and political liberty it has become a stench in the nostrils of all forward-looking men and women, and it has not even won the guerdon of a kindly word from the Kaiser's sycophantic press.

It would hardly appear necessary to say that in my humble judgment the proper course for such American Socialists as are still affiliated with the Socialist party is to get out of it as quickly as may be and give their whole-hearted support to the Government of these United States in its splendid fight to "make the world safe for democracy." For myself I am proud to say I have not paid one cent of dues to the Socialist Party since the German Socialists voted for the war budget on August 4th, 1914; I voted for Woodrow Wilson for President in the election of 1916; I resigned from the Union Against Militarism when it began to attempt to hamper our government by a peace agitation after we had broken off diplomatic relations with the Kaiser's government; promptly on its organization I enlisted as a private soldier in the Connecticut Home Guard, the only military organization in which my age permitted me to enlist, and I am now serving as a sergeant in the Home Guard, doing my part to protect my neighbors

from the violence of well-meaning if feeble-minded pacifists, and releasing the regular militia for service against the enemy that "our" Party has been so zealously aiding. I further confess that I have so far given way to what this magazine stigmatizes as "vulgar patriotism" as to buy a Liberty Bond; and should there be further loan issues I have every intention of being vulgar again.

I note on page 3 of your first number that your editors appear to grieve because "the bulk of the Socialists of American stock" "are steeped in the vulgar pro-allyism," etc., etc. I hope that they are so steeped. I am tempted to add that the great need of the American Socialist Movement is to become vital and vulgar. *Vulgus* is a good old Latin word; it means the mob, the fellows whom Lincoln used to call the common people. The trouble with the Socialist party has been and is that it is so immersed in the obscurantism and romanticism of Marxist and neo-Marxist theory that it has never gotten into touch with and rubbed the elbows of the vulgar red-blooded mob of the common people who mean to see this war through until the world is made safe for democracy. The American Socialist Movement can take its choice: It can become vulgar and live; or it can remain refined and become a cadaver.

Lest anyone fancy that Veblen has exaggerated the servile alacrity, the docile subservience of the German people, I want to add my testimony. I spent the winter of 1910-11 in Munich among the kindly Bavarian Socialists. I questioned all with whom I talked about the possibility of its becoming a duty to oppose the Kaiser in case of war. I found just one comrade (a woman) to whom the idea was not absolutely inconceivable. Insubordination was to them simply unthinkable.

At a Congress of Bavarian Socialists to decide on tactics in the then approaching Reichstag elections, attended by several hundred Socialists, there was an official speaker who made a speech of about an hour's length confined mainly to warning them not to offend the Catholicism of the Bavarian peasants. At the conclusion of his rather weak address there was not

one single word of criticism or discussion. Subordination, obedience had become "ingrained" as Veblen said.

In holding as I do that the Habsburgs and Hohenzollern must go to make the world safe for democracy, I hold no brief for England or France. I have no doubt that much of cruelty and injustice toward their colonies and toward so-called "backward" races could be pointed out and exploited. But I do not forget that our racial trend toward kicking, toward insubordination, first found expression in the modern world in that great Mother of Parliaments that sits beside the Thames at Westminster. Nor do I forget that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are vital words pregnant with meaning to the descendants of the heroes who overthrew the Bastile on July 14th, 1789.

I still see a vision of Communistic Equality to be reached, it may be, through painful years of State Socialism leading in time to Industrial Democracy. But I no longer believe in a proletariat of Supermen who are going to bring this to pass by a revolution. I no longer believe in tactics based on the existence of a race of economic marionettes. I no longer believe it possible to make people with village minds think in world terms.

I do not believe our race of village anarchists can ever fully adapt itself to life under large scale production conducted under unbridled capitalism.

I believe the supreme question for the statesmen of to-day and to-morrow is so to harness and alter the machinery of our lives as to make it possible for our race to survive under conditions so unsuited to its permanent mental habits until we can evolve a system in which we shall be more at home.

This is not to say that forces are not at work modifying the race to suit the environment. I am aware of the Machine Process and the effects of rapid transportation and electric communication. And, no doubt, the race has sufficient variability to be modified in time, but it takes much, very much time; while the industrial revolution has gone on and is going on with dizzying speed. Our hope must be in the main to

modify the environment to suit the race, rather than to trust to the race altering to suit the environment.

Under these conditions our race cannot but perish from the earth should we lose the one thing it possesses that responds to its deepest nature. That one thing is the political liberty enjoyed by the people of France, England and these United States. To support our government in the present war is something more than yielding to patriotism, vulgar or otherwise. It is to do one's part in battling for the continued existence of our portion of the human race on the earth.

Never was there a worthier and nobler cause for which to battle. I am proud to believe that the majority of those who have in the past voted for the Socialist party will not now be found wanting.

II

By Louis C. Fraina

A

The most striking single feature of La Monte's article is its negative character. It is destructive, not constructive. You have a criticism of Marxism, or Marxists, a blast at German autocracy, an affirmation and a proof of the collapse of the Second International, and glittering generalizations incidentally. But what does La Monte substitute in the place of Socialism? If our attitude toward war in general, and this war in particular, is wrong, what is *his* attitude? Solemnly but carelessly wandering through the fields of history, ethnology, economics and philosophy does not in itself provide a constructive program of action. The acceptance of the concept that this is a war for democracy is not a sufficient substitute for the philosophy and movement that La Monte discards. Surely, La Monte's declaration that the Socialist should accept this "war for democracy" and see it through, cannot stand by itself; it should be proven, it should be related to the events of our day in particular, and to history in general. I may be unfair in my conclusion, but it strikes me that La Monte's position is this: the international collapsed, the German Socialist movement contemptibly entered into a war of conquest,

Socialism is a failure—and in despair, La Monte accepts the hypocritical idealism of this "war for democracy."

The article is not an argument as much as a soliloquy. La Monte was thinking aloud, and put his thoughts on paper. And the peculiarity of it all is that La Monte is really arguing against himself, against the La Monte of five and fifteen years ago, against the errors that distinguished him and that he himself helped to make popular. The circumstance that La Monte was himself a peculiar victim of the errors he now attacks, is not an argument for or against those errors, or against La Monte; but it does explain the psychology of his reactions.

Consider the charge of "romanticism" that he hurls against the Marxist. The Marxist, according to La Monte, refuses to accept "the facts of life." But here is a 6,000-word article on Socialists and war, an article that in places goes back to the period of the childhood of our race, and which makes only *one* mention of the Russian Revolution, the great "fact of life" in this war, and that a passing one—"I believe that . . . the recent Russian Revolution with the release of the prisoners in the Fortress of Peter and Paul and the glorious home-coming of the Siberian exiles was worth while." I can understand the psychology of despair that seized upon La Monte because of the collapse of Socialism, but I cannot understand this failure to appreciate the Russian Revolution and its tremendous influence on our hopes and fears, and on our future activity. Nor can I, except on the basis of an incurable romanticism, understand his failure to appreciate the new aspect thrown upon this war by the Russian Revolution. Is not the attitude of the Allies, and of America in particular, toward the Russian Revolutionary democracy a sufficient refutation of their claim to be waging an unselfish war for democracy ? Why does not America and its Allies accept the aspirations of the Russian democracy? Instead of accepting, they are rejecting; and in rejecting, they are using their industrial, financial and diplomatic forces to strengthen the imperialistic reaction in Russia.

La Monte's incurable romanticism is evident again in his acceptance of the idealism of this "war for democracy." I do

not imagine for a moment that La Monte believes that the United States went into the war to make the world safe for democracy. President Wilson's urging of a "peace without victory" upon the belligerents is too fresh in our memory. The brutal, selfish indifference to events in Europe, an indifference that did not alter in the face of the devastation of Belgium, Serbia and Rumania, that did not act to protect France but transmuted its blood and agony into profits—this indifference has characterized American capitalism for two and a half years. The world needed to be made safe for democracy one year ago, two years ago, as much as to-day—but this country did not act. Perhaps La Monte believes that whatever may have been America's motives, its act will conduce toward making the world safe for democracy. If that be the case, we anxiously await the proof and the demonstration.

This incurable romanticism of La Monte is an old characteristic. His Marxism has always had a peculiar romantic tinge. I remember his argument, in *Socialism, Positive and Negative,* that Daniel De Leon was an utopian, because De Leon had expressed a doubt concerning the inevitability of Socialism! De Leon emphasized the human factor that would utilize and transform favorable economic conditions into Socialism; La Monte emphasized the economic factor. Moreover, in this book La Monte travesties the Socialist philosophy by maintaining that the materialistic conception of history ascribes pecuniary motives as dominating the conduct of the individual. The very "economic man" or "economic marionette" that La Monte now scorns is the warp and woof of the ideas promulgated in *Socialism, Positive and Negative.* This mechanistic mode of thought has played, and still plays, an important part in the ideas of many a Socialist; it was dominant in La Monte's ideas. But it was never identified with Marxism. The Marxist was the first to repudiate it. It didn't require August 4, 1914, to "make even the dullest of us . . . realize that men and women of flesh and blood do not act like economic marionettes." Twenty years ago, one of the editors of this magazine, Louis B. Boudin, split a lance with La Monte on this very subject, accusing La Monte of garbling Marxism by promulgating ideas that La Monte now

very justly attacks. And in an article in *The New Review*, July, 1914, in discussing a certain school of Socialists, I said: "They neglected individual psychology, assuming that for all practical purposes it was sufficient to know that the social *milieu* conditions psychology. But that it not sufficient. While socially conditioned, *individual psychology nevertheless becomes an independent factor in the social process as a whole,* obedient to laws and motives of its own; laws and motives which men engaged in organizing human forces must comprehend if they desire success."

Nor is it true that romanticism was the curse of the Socialist movement. It may have been in the case of La Monte, but not of the movement in which he was a factor. The curse of the Socialist movement has been its readiness to discard its ideals, to look upon these ideals as pious aspirations, and to meekly accept the "facts of life." It was the greatest American opportunist of all, Victor L. Berger, who, whenever he argued for an abandonment of revolutionary Socialism, hurled the classic phrase, "It is a condition, not a theory, that confronts us." That has been the obstacle in our path—not our romanticism. The revolutionist was accused of neglecting the facts of life. It was upon this basis that German Socialism abandoned its revolutionary traditions. Surely, La Monte will not accuse Scheidemann, Wolfgang Heine and the whole pack of German Social-Patriots of romanticism! They are facing the temporary facts of life, they are making their compromise with these facts. The whole international Socialist movement made this compromise, accepting the immediate at the sacrifice of the ultimate. And it is against this compromise that we protest. Not because we are romantic, but because we face reality, because we are not afraid of reality, because we know that the compromise is a temporary one, made with temporary facts, and that through struggle we shall succeed.

Reality is a varying thing. There are all sorts and conditions of reality. The reality of the conservative is different from the reality of the revolutionist. A great deal depends upon your *interpretation* of reality. In a world dominated by a complexity of factors, we can all find the particular reality we desire. Among the contemporary facts of life is the war against Germany, and

its idealism, and the collapse of the International; but equally among these facts is the Russian Revolution and the against-the-war minority in the European Socialist movement. Which reality shall we cleave to? The one may to-day be stronger than the other: but since when did the revolutionist count the odds against him?

It is precisely because we revolutionary Marxists believe that the proletariat is composed of men and women of flesh and blood that we do not despair. The men and women in Russia who a year ago apparently enthusiastically accepted the war, to-day are a revolutionary factor and *against* the war. But they are the same men and women, with the same flesh and blood. And to-morrow their comrades in the other belligerent nations may equally become a revolutionary factor. Our ideals are planted upon the reality of economic facts *plus* the reality of human needs and aspirations. Nor do we idealize the proletariat, or conceive them as being supermen. We who have been fighting the proletariat organized in the A. F. of L. for its misdeeds cannot be accused of that error. We dare to go against the proletariat, to condemn the proletariat, when it takes the road to wrong and infamy.

The culture of the bourgeois, as culture is measured to-day, is superior to that of the proletariat. The culture of the barbarian hordes that overthrew the Roman Empire was inferior to that of the Romans, but the invasion gave a new impetus to progress. The culture of the Northmen that overran France was an inferior product, but their virility gave a new impetus to poetry, art and culture generally. The culture of the people that made the French Revolution wasn't much to boast of, but they created a new society out of which developed a finer culture. The "culture" of the Czar and his bureaucrats was infinitely superior to the soldiers and workmen that made the revolution, but mark the contrast in aspirations! The things worth while in this war have not come from the cultured gentlemen of the Wilhelmstrasse, nor of Paris and Downing Street, nor from the marvellously cultured scholar who occupies the White House. No! The things worth while have come from the Russian Revolution made by the peasants and the proletariat. The culture of to-day

is a decadent culture, the culture of a class that thrives on exploitation and misery. We want none of it. Truly, the conquests of civilization cannot be rejected. We must build upon their basis. But we shall transform and re-create. And the proletariat will accomplish a revolution and achieve "world leadership and world rule," not because it consists of supermen, but because it consists of men nad women of flesh and blood who have suffered long and hard, and whose mission it is, historically and humanly, to overthrow this system of tyranny, and in self-defense erect a new and better system of things. The human beings who compose the proletariat want peace and freedom and the joy of life, and they will fight for it—and get it!

B

I do not see the relevancy of stressing the *fact* of the collapse of the second International. It would have point in a discussion with Morris Hillquit or Victor L. Berger, but surely not in a discussion with one of our group. In this discussion, accordingly, it is *causes* and *consequences* that should be stressed. There never was a real international—granted: is that a reason for acquiescing in this war? American Socialists do not have "the power to affect appreciably the foreign policy of the United States"—granted: is that a reason for acquiescing in this war? If we cannot conquer, we do not necessarily have to submit. A start must be made somewhere, we must develop the necessary power. The revolution is a process and not an ultimate act alone. Our action is based upon the recognition of being a minority. Since when did a minority become a majority by abandoning its principles and striking hands with its foe?

La Monte puts the case in a nutshell in his statement: "We should consider not what it would be fine to do were we able to do it, but rather what with our present power and prestige, or lack of it, we are able to do that will further our ends." But if we are so completely deficient in influence, would it matter any if we participated in this "war for democracy?" But that is incidental. What we are doing, or trying to do, is fully within our power. We do not expect to stop the war, nor accomplish a revolution. But we can maintain our principles, we can assert

our Socialist integrity, we can seek to influence public opinion in the direction of revolution. Does La Monte imagine that a minority such as the Socialist Party is wholly incapable of influencing events, if it rigidly and conscientiously carries on a revolutionary propaganda ? Then the revolutionary Socialist minority in Germany should immediately cease its activity and support the Kaiser. The sacrifices of Karl Liebnecht, Fritz Adler and Rosa Luxemburg have been in vain. But it is *that* way madness lies!

The Social-Patriots of Germany could want nothing better than for American Socialism to acquiesce in this war. No greater blow morally could be struck at the minority in France and Germany, and at the Russian Revolution. Are we to fight Schiedemann by adopting the tactics of Scheidemann? Say what you will, our acquiescence in this war might differ in degree, but not in kind, from the action of Scheidemann and his cohorts.

And it is precisely here that we differ fundamentally with La Monte. To him, the collapse of the International is peculiarly a crime of the German Socialist movement. The evils of Socialism were much more marked in Germany, truly, but simply because the movement there was older and stronger. These evils were general. *The whole international movement failed to emphasize the international basis of Socialism and refused to accept aggressive action against militarism and war during the days of peace. The one international characteristic of the Second International was its general rejection of revolutionary tactics, against militarism, against war, and against capitalism.*

German Socialism bears the largest share of the guilt of the great collapse; but the Socialism of the other nations proportionately bears an equal share of the guilt.

It is this peculiar and exaggerated emphasis on the guilt of German Socialism that distinguishes the pro-war American Socialist from the revolutionary Socialist. The pro-war Socialist draws the line, more or less consciously and distinctly, between the Socialism of Germany and the Socialism of the Allies. *The demarcation is not between the Socialism of two groups of nations, but between the concept of Socialism held by antagonistic Socialist groups within each particular nation.*

There are to-day, and always have been, two Socialisms. In spite of a multiplicity of apparent tendencies, fundamentally the Socialist movement has been divided into two groups—the opportunist and the revolutionary. The opportunist has been dominant, and it is this dominance that brought disaster. It was nationalistic, and refused to adopt aggressive tactics equally against militarism and against capitalism. Shall we emphasize this nationalistic feature by separating the Allied sheep from the Austro-German goats? Or shall we strike a blow for revolutionary Socialism by separating the sheep from the goats in the Socialist movement *of each particular* nation?

It may be denied that there is such a thing as revolutionary Socialism. That, of course, would be in the true romantic style of denying the facts of life. The revolutionary Socialist is inspired by the minority in France and Germany, and by the intrepid stand of the Italian Socialist Party against the war. And it is these comrades that we cleave to in our action against the war, and not to the Austro-German majority, or to the majority of France. If the *whole* Socialist movement had acquiesced in war, I might sympathize with the philosophy of despair that has La Monte in its clutches. But it simply rouses my impatience, particularly when he accuses us of refusing to recogize the facts of life. Is it then only the *dominant* facts of life that deserve recognition?

It would seem that if acquiescence in war was the cause of the Socialist *debacle,* the finest contribution the American Socialist could make to the reconstruction of Socialism would be refusing to acquiesce in the war and expressing the revolutionary, international principles which alone make Socialism vital and vitalizing. But La Monte comes to a different conclusion, because under the influence of the philosophy of despair he sees with the eyes of the nationalist and not with the eyes of the revolutionary Socialist. But fortunately movements are sufficiently romantic and sufficiently vulgar not to be seized by the philosophy of despair *en masse*.

If in despair we are to reject Socialism incontinently, then any other course of action than that suggested by La Monte would be unthinkable. But that is not our purpose. Where others have failed, we shall make good. We shall not imitate their errors, thereby strengthening their reactionary influence. We shall not criticize their actions, and then pursue a similar course of action. There being essentially two tendencies, or groups, in the Socialist movement, the collapse of the International becomes an incident in our development and an indictment of the dominant group. Our task, accordingly, is not to reject Socialism, but to reconstruct it. And in this reconstruction the Socialist attitude on war becomes fundamental. Our refusal to acquiesce in war will contribute mightily toward this revolutionary reconstruction; a contrary course would be disgraceful to-day, and suicidal in the days of reconstruction to come.

La Monte, apparently, believes in good wars and bad wars—this war against Germany being a good one. I shall discuss this later on, at this point I shall discuss the general principles applicable to all wars waged under the conditions of Imperialistic Capitalism.

Wars to-day are waged exclusively for purposes of aggression. A particular nation, in this case Germany and Austria, may be the immediate aggressor; but as the immediate causation of a war flows out of a preceding series of diplomatic struggles expressing economic interests, all nations engaged are fundamentally the aggressors—except the small nations that are simply pawns on the international chess-board of Imperialism. President Wilson has very justly said that this iniquitous war arose out of the *status quo ante*. And that status was not determined by the autocracy of Germany, but by the clash of Imperialistic interests between the two groups, in Morocco, in Mesopotamia and in Persia. The war that might have been precipitated at Agadir would have been no different than this one precipitated at Serajevo. Whatever the apparent causes, the driving purposes are identical—Imperialistic aggrandizement.

Our opposition to war is not simply based upon the fact that war is aggressive. It is equally based upon the fact that war is waged by nations, and for national interests. The nation has been a factor making for progress in the onward

and upward development of the race, but to-day the nation is a reactionary factor. National wars of liberation and democracy are a thing of the past. Once the carrier of democracy, the nation to-day is the carrier of Imperialism. National interests simply express or cloak the most brutal Imperialistic purposes. The strengthening of the nation means the strengthening of Imperialistic reaction and the retarding of the class struggle.

The acquiescence of Socialism in a war inevitably means the suspension of the class struggle—unless the war happens to be waged by a revolutionary government. The possibility may be assumed theoretically of Socialism participating in a Capitalist war and still waging the class struggle; but in the actual stress of events and because of the psychology of men and women of flesh and blood, the theoretical possibility becomes a practical impossibility. And the suspension of the class struggle is the greatest calamity that can happen to Socialism, equally during war and peace. The nation is the nation of the bourgeoisie, of Capitalism; and it does not change its character simply because it happens to be engaged in a war. The co-operation of classes during peace is disastrous, curbing revolutionary virility; during war it is tragic and suicidal. The class is superior to the nation, and deserves our first allegiance. It was this issue on which the Second International wrecked itself: the class was subordinated to the nation, with consequences that La Monte deplores. And yet he urges us to adopt the identical policy! Either Socialism is a class movement or it is nationalistic, in which event it ceases being Socialism—there is no other alternative.

This is not a theoretical problem alone. It is very practical. The "civil peace" in Europe has been used against the Working Class. It has bound the proletariat, but not the capitalist. It has made easier the forging of new instruments of oppression. The "civil peace" has destroyed the possibility of the proletariat using the opportunity of war to promote its own interests, but it has not at all deterred Capitalism from promoting *its* interests. Consider the trades unions. Their immediate purpose is to become a recognized caste in the governing system of the nation. The conditions of war provide a magnificent opportunity for accomplishing this purpose. The trades unions in Germany and France struck a truce with the government, and they have become pariahs. The British unions did not, and they have become a recognized caste in the governing system of the nation. In this country the A. F. of L. unreservedly pledged itself to the war and struck a truce with the ruling class. I will let David Lawrence, Washington correspondent of the New York *Evening Post,* describe the result: "To-day the labor groups (in England) have a representation in the government, and the labor organizations are virtually a part of the government, with the manufacturer much less potent than before. *No such step is to be undertaken here, because there is no real necessity for it, and very likely never will be.*" There you have the suicidal consequences of the suspension of the struggle against Capitalism—even from the opportunistic standpoint of securing immediate advantages.

Acquiescing in war means promoting the most brutal and reactionary purposes of the ruling class and destroying the morale of Socialism. Moreover, *it shatters the possibility of aggressive action on the part of Socialism.* War provides the conditions for revolutionary action and Socialism must act accordingly. It is inconceivable that Russian Socialism could have achieved the magnificent things it has if it had acquiesced in the war. The acquiescence would have tied its hands, would have crippled its propaganda, would have deadened the instinct for revolutionary action in the people. The Socialist movement must keep its hands free for action as the opportunity ripens; to acquiesce in war means to surrender this freedom of action. Refusal to participate in war not only gives Socialism the necessary physical power and moral prestige to act at the proper opportunity, but hastens the coming of the opportunity. And that is the vital thing, all else being incidental.

Moreover, the "civil peace" strengthens the governmental reaction and compels Socialism to acquiesce. The Socialist majority in Germany dares not protest against the most outrageous actions of the government—it has assumed responsibility for those actions. Guesde and Sembat and the French

Socialist majority have been compelled to acquiesce in the brutal acts of their government. The government is dominant and the government directs things its own way when there is no independent and aggressive waging of the class struggle.

But the most tragic feature of Socialist participation in a Capitalist war is that Socialism gradually, subtly, accepts the most reactionary war aims of the government. I do not for a moment believe that German Socialism consciously entered the war for purposes of conquest, and yet it is to-day accepting these very purposes. Nor do I believe that the Social Democracy entered the war to perpetuate the monarchy, but that is exactly what it is doing to-day; and, moreover, through the Berlin *Vorwarts* it rebukes the Russian Revolution for its appeal to the proletariat of Germany to overthrow the monarchy and *defends* the monarchy! A Socialism that acts in this manner will either have no influence at all on the terms of peace, or its influence will be reactionary. All governments seek Imperialistic terms of peace and only an independent and aggressive Socialist movement can express the general desire for a just peace and a peace expressing the interests of the proletariat. Surely, the Russian Socialist movement, which has been relentlessly waging the class struggle, is going to influence the peace settlement much more actively and progressively than the enslaved majority of Albert Thomas or Scheidemann.

Theoretically and practically, accordingly, the Socialist movement must maintain its independent character and integrity by refusing to participate in war. Its reconstruction must be based upon this refusal. The class struggle must be waged fearlessly and relentlessly under any and all conditions.

C

Precisely as German Socialism is held responsible for the collapse of the International, La Monte ascribes the guilt of the war exclusively to Germany. Before discussing this aspect of the subject in controversy, certain minor points may be considered.

The concept that the German army *in itself* is necessarily more of a menace than the British navy *in itself* is certainly very peculiar. In the final analysis, the menace of one or the other depends upon the aggressive strength of the nation and its animating purposes.

But the issue is much deeper. The history of modern wars shows, and Admiral Mahan has stressed this fact, that naval power eventually triumphs over military power. It was naval power that beat Napoleon and naval power may beat Germany. Moreover, under the conditions of modern Imperialism, *the structure of world empire depends in the final analysis upon naval power.* No merely military nation can permanently conquer in the clash of Imperialism. The British world empire was created and is maintained by naval power; and in the clash of Imperialism Great Britain has the advantage and is more menacing than any other great nation because of its mighty navy. Is not the recognition of this fact behind the program of American Imperialism for "incomparably the largest navy in the world"?

The menace of the German army is emphasized by La Monte by reference to German Imperialism, and to "special circumstances" in ancient and modern characteristics of the people of Germany. The economic argument is buttressed by the racial. I shall consider the latter first.

In the early days of the war there was nothing more amusing than the constant regrets for the "kindly and philosophic" Germany of Schiller and Goethe, as if that proved anything for or against Germany. My ethnological opponent goes much further back—ten and thirteen thousand years! The argument based on racial characteristics is dangerous, and particularly the one of La Monte. "Such ideas as country, race or nation would have been incomprehensible to them [the Baltic people's ancestors of ten thousand years ago—naturally!] In fact they are very nearly so to many of their village-minded descendants to-day. And yet these are the very people we hoped to make into true internationalists by the necromancy of a few well-worded resolutions!" This is the new gospel according to La Monte. The characteristics of our ancestors

ten thousand years ago are considered determinant to-day—in a world revolutioniezd by steam and electricity, and knit together by the wireless and international trade in all the seven corners of the earth!

The characteristics of the race, the fundamental ones, survive, and among them are *the instinct to happiness and the spirit of adaptation.* Based upon these two human factors, the race may completely revolutionize itself and its enviornment. The fundamental characteristics of races are identical, only their expressions vary.

The essential institutions of the Baltic peoples prevailed among the peoples of the Mediterranean at the same stage of civilization. The spirit of insubordination was universal. And if the spirit of subordination is greater in Germany, it is not because of any pecularity in its people, but because of its social development. In passing, why does La Monte in his dithyrambic passage about Magna Charta, Valley Forge, the Bastile and the Battle of the Marne, omit any mention of the Reformation? The reformation of Luther struck the first great blow for the freedom of modern Europe. It was an event second only to the French Revolution, and it is a contribution measurable with that of Great Britain and France to modern history and civilization. Could "a race to whom freedom was an incomprehensible concept" achieve the Reformation?

The circumstance of Germany being organized on the basis of the territorial state proves nothing against Germany, or for La Monte's thesis. Every great nation of Europe has at periods in its history been organized on the basis of the territorial state. The territorial state is an incident in the onward and upward development of the nation, dominant at the period when the nation is consummating its unity and carving out its frontiers. If Germany had its Frederick the Great, France had its Louis XIV.

The perpetuation of the territorial state and of autocracy in Germany is not due to racial characteristics, *but to the conditions of modern Imperialism.*

Verblen, in *Imperial Germany,* points out that the introduction in Germany of the modern technology of capitalism did not overthrow the old political order because this technology was introduced from without, "borrowed," to use Veblen's phrase, and was not developed from within. The development of this technology in other countries produced great social and political changes, it had to fight its way against the institutions of the old order and overthrow those institutions; whereas in Germany it was assimilated, which produced the phenomenon of a mighty and efficient capitalism without its corresponding political superstructure.

There is a great deal of truth in Veblen's analysis, but it is not the fundamental truth. In spite of the fact that the modern technology had its general beginnings in the Italy of the fourteenth century, these beginnings died out, and the modern technology in Italy was equally largely assimilated. This, however, did not produce a powerful autocratic state. In the case of Germany it did, *because its liberal middle class, in fear of the proletariat, compromised with and accepted autocracy temporarily; then Bismarckian autocracy emerged into Imperialistic autocracy, and the German bourgeois accepted autocracy permanently.*

Veblen believes, and I imagine that La Monte concurs in this belief, that autocracy prevails in Germany because of its own power, and dominates as an autocracy. It does not. Autocracy prevails in Germany to-day because Imperialistic capitalism has found it necessary and efficacious in the accomplishment of its aggressive purposes. The autocracy would not exist a day if it had not compromised with Imperialism and expressed the interests of Imperialism. It is precisely this Imperialism that makes German autocracy dangerous; and it is precisely this circumstance that largely produced the Russian Revolution, because the autocracy of the Czar did not express the interests of the nascent Imperialistic bourgeoisie. But in Russia to-day, there is a great danger that a compromise may be struck by the Imperialistic bourgeoisie and the autocracy, in order to secure power for pursuing projects of conquest and subduing the democracy of the proletariat—a compromise already secretly at-

tempted by the bourgeoisie on the eve of the Revolution. Moreover, a distinguishing feature of Imperialism is the acquisition of territory for purposes of exploitation, *and we find the nations of the world to-day developing more and more in the direction of a modern territorial state.* The feudal characteristics of autocracy in Germany are incidental; essentially it is the new autocracy of Imperialism, compounded of military power, a brutal state Socialism and the hunger for territory. This new autocracy is developing rapidly in the other Imperialistic nations, and it is this new autocracy that is the great menace to peace and freedom throughout the world.

Imperialism determined the survival of autocracy in Germany. National unity and democracy was not achieved in France and England immediately. It was a long process, and there were periods of reaction, the most marked being the era of Napoleonic autocracy. France emerged out of that era. The era of Bismarck was a roughly similar period, following the crushing of the Bourgeois revolution of 1848; and Germany did not emerge out of that era because before the liberal forces had acquired the necessary power the new era of Imperialism had set in. The German bourgeoisie realized the tremendous utility of the autocratic state in the struggles of Imperialism; the liberal struggle against the autocracy ceased, the state becoming an *Imperialistic* autocracy—and *that* is the menace! There are peculiarly revolting features about the German menace, but fundamentally it is Imperialistic.

In his analysis of German Imperialism, La Monte is in a hopeless tangle. The characterization of Imperialism made by Boudin in *Socialism and War* and approvingly quoted by La Monte, is made by Boudin as characteristic of the Imperialism of *all* nations. Germany is cited and emphasized as the most marked and highly developed of all; the characteristics are international. The Declaration of Principles of *The Class Struggle* expresses it accurately: "Modern Imperialism is a world-wide phenomenon, although it may be more pronounced in one country than in another. Similarly, the reactionary trend which accompanies it is as broad as our 'civilization,' although in some countries it may assume particularly revolting forms while in

others its *forms* may be less objectionable." As a matter of fact, the first definitely aggressive expression of modern Imperialism was the British conquest of the Boers.

The economic factors making for Imperialism are present in every nation in which the modern technology of Capitalism is dominant. The production of iron as a factor in Imperialism is determined by the circumstance that great industry depends upon iron, and as an Imperialistic factor it is a corrolary of the export of capital, which is the determinant feature of modern Imperialism. The export of capital on a large scale pre-supposes concentrated industry operating to produce a gigantic volume of products, and the complete development of the home market. Means of production become an important item of export, in order to absorb equally the masses of surplus capital and to create new markets for the absorption of a nation's surplus products. New markets can be created only in undeveloped countries, and thereby ensues the struggle for their control. The circumstance that Great Britain and France usually checkmated the schemes of German Imperialism was because of the larger masses of export-capital in their control and their years of financial penetration. Great Britain and France were virtually invulnerable economically and financially, and therefore Germany sought the arbitrament of the sword.

But the picture of an innocent France and Britain is preposterous. They acted, where Germany simply threatened. The division of Persia between Russia and Great Britain and British aspirations in Mesopotamia were expressions of an aggressive British Imperialism. The French acquisition of Morocco and the financial penetration of Syria are equally aggressive expressions of modern Imperialism. Is it Germany alone that whet its Imperialistic chops at the prospect of the partition of China? Meseems each of the Allies who are now fighting to make the world safe for Democracy have for years been fighting each other and Germany financially and diplomatically to make the world safe for its own particular Capitalism. The Great War is incomprehensible except as the outcome of a general clash of Imperialism.

And the United States? The war with Spain and the acquisition of the Philippines are characterized by Walter E. Weyl in *American World Policies,* as an experiment in "unripe Imperialism." This country's financial penetration of Mexico and Venezuela and the growing demand for the acquisition of American control in Mexico are expressions of a developing aggressive Imperialism. The Carribbeans and Central America are a satrapy of American capital, political vassals of this country—and what is it all but Imperialism?

La Monte accepts the theory that the production of iron is the driving force behind Imperialism. Well, the United States produced *twice as much* iron as Germany in 1912. This tremendous production of iron is going to bulk large in the events of the immediate future. Moreover, what has restrained our Imperialism was the fact of America being a debtor nation. To-day, because of the war, this country is a creditor nation, and is accumulating a vast mass of surplus capital. This accumulation of capital and the tremendous production of iron and steel will inevitably make the export of capital the distinguishing economic feature of American Capitalism, as it is today—and that means Imperialism. The Monroe Doctrine is already being transformed into an Imperialistic instrument for the financial and political domination of the American continents by the United States.

Imperialism, accordingly, is a phenomenon characteristic of all economically highly-developed nations. It is only by bearing this fact in mind that we can safely traverse the events and problems of our day. International Imperialism must be fought by the international action of the proletariat. The proletariat may fail, but it may try again. To participate in a war with our government against the Imperialism of another nation simply strengthens our own Imperialism. Has not America's participation in the war already strengthened its Imperialism and reactionary character? *Against all Imperialism, because all Imperialism is alike*—the apparent differences disappear as events shape themselves more definitely.

D

The general idea that animates La Monte's argument is that America and its allies are fighting "to make the world safe for democracy." I might rest my case on the analysis of the Imperialistic causes of the war, but the issue is vastly important and deserves fuller analysis.

The democratic claims of none of the Allies are more contemptible and less worthy of credence than the claims of the United States. A great nation that is systematically and brutally suppressing democracy and the rights of small nations in Central America and the Carribbeans pretending to be waging an unselfish war for democracy and civilization against Germany! The brutal facts of America's deeds answer the hypocrisy of America's words. The attitude of America toward the war has been brutally selfish throughout. Scan the diplomatic record of President Wilson and the fact stands out clear as a pike that his animating purpose was to maintain a "benevolent neutrality" that brought great profits to America; that the President refused to organize a League of Neutrals to protect *all* neutrals' rights because it was considered inimical to America's selfish purposes; that as long as "our" trade with the Allies was considered safe, America through its official representatives cared not a snap of the fingers what happened to other neutral rights, cared nothing about the menace to democracy and the rights of small nations; and that it was only when the criminal desperation of Germany threatened American trade and American prestige beyond diplomatic redress that this country went to war "against autocracy." A nation may have the right to wage a war to protect its trade, but do not call it an unselfish war for democracy!

At this point I might again rest my case. But I shall not. La Monte is as aware as I am of the facts in the preceding paragraph. Neither of us, I take it, are interested in scoring points, but in discussing the larger aspects of the subject. And the problem of the relations between Socialism and democracy is vitally important. It is a crucial problem.

I agree with La Monte that "political liberty and representative institutions" are not "empty worthless baubles not worth fighting to retain." The preservation *and extension* of democracy are cardinal features of the revolutionary program of Socialism: the larger contains the lesser. On this head I shall again quote *The Class Struggle,* in its Declaration of Principles:

"We are not indifferent to the fate of democracy. On the contrary we believe that the Socialist movement is particularly charged with the duty of preserving and extending all democratic institutions. Furthermore, we believe that the revolutionary working class is the only social power capable of doing it. But far from this being a reason for our supporting any of the governments now at war, we believe that the interests of true democracy require that we refuse to join hands with any of these governments and the interests which support them and that we work for a speedy termination of this war by the action and pressure of the working class and Socialist movement of the belligerent nations. . . . The only hope of democracy lies in those revolutionary elements of each country which are ready to fight Imperialism in all its manifestations and wherever found."

The defense of democracy is the task of revolutionary Socialism. The circumstance that Socialism failed does not alter the situation. The only considerable group in any of the belligerents that fights for democracy and against reaction is precisely the revolutionary Socialist minority. Eventually, ultimately, Socialism must carry out its task, because historic conditions and its own necessity decree it. Socialism having failed, La Monte despairingly turns to war as the only alternative. The Russian revolution should have offered him another alternative. Democracy has gained from this war only in Russia, and that through revolutionary action. And only similar revolutionary action in all the belligerents can make the world safe for democracy.

La Monte apparently accepts the President's statement that the war arose out of "the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force, which is controlled wholly by their

will and not by the will of their people." The term "autocratic government" used against Germany refers to the remnants of Junkerthum, the feudal caste, still powerful in Germany. No sane man denies that this caste is powerful. It is a contributing menace to peace and freedom in Germany. But it is not the decisive factor in the causation of war. It is powerful only in the measure that it identifies itself with and represents the interests of aggressive Imperialism; in fact, it has been absorbed by Imperialism. The most ruthless plans for war and conquest in Germany come, not from the Junkerthum, but from the National Liberals, the representatives of finance-capital and Imperialism. A similar form of "autocratic government" prevails in Japan. The interests of Japan and this country clash Imperialistically. They clash not because Japan has an "autocratic government," but because the purposes of its aggressive Imperialism antagonize the Imperialism of America. A war between Japan and this country is not at all inconceivable; and when it comes, the then President of the United States may indulge in sentiments against "autocratic governments" and "making the world safe for democracy." The survival of an autocratic government such as Germany's is a "sport" in social evolution. It survives and is powerful not because of its feudal remnants, but because of the Capitalism that uses it for purposes of its own—imperialistic conquest and the suppression of the revolutionary movement.

Can autocracy be overthrown by this war? The "war for democracy" has brought with it the suspension of democracy, brutal reaction and dictatorship. Now, it is conceivable that dictatorship might serve the ends of democracy and progress. as during the wars of the French Revolution; *but it must be a dictatorship of the progressive and revolutionary forces.* A dictatorship of the revolutionary working class in Russia to-day would serve the ends of democracy. And it would be a *temporary* dictatorship. But the dictatorship created by this war is a dictatorship of all the reactionary forces as expressed in the ruling class, and that strikes directly at democracy; not alone for purposes of this war, but as a precedent and a weapon for the

future. And this dictatorship of the ruling class is *permanent* in its character.

The essential characteristic of autocracy in Germany is not its feudal remnants, *but the new form of autocracy produced by Imperialism and State Socialism.* What makes a Capitalist war for democracy hopeless and a tragic farce is that the new era of Imperialism makes Capitalism itself the worst foe of the democracy of Capitalism.

War is not the only consequence of Imperialism. It is completely altering the social and governmental structure of every nation that it controls. Imperialism means the merging of Capitalist class interests into a brutal and brutalizing State Socialism. The industrial Middle Class, once the "defender of the democratic faith" against Plutocracy, has struck its colors and compromised with Plutocracy. As long as the home market was the dominant market, the two could afford to fight each other; but Imperialism imposes unity of action upon the Capitalist, as only a unified Capitalism can successfully conquer foreign markets to-day. This has created a new Middle Class, dependent upon Imperialism and concentrated industry, and everywhere this new class is unanimously and violently Imperialistic. Democracy served the ends of the bourgeoisie against feudalism, democracy served the ends of the old Middle Class against Plutocracy; but to-day democracy is in the discard, Imperialism and democracy being incompatible.

There was once a theory that Capitalism requires democracy and the democratic republic. But the brutal fact is that it is not the form of government that matters to Capitalism, but a government that promotes its interests. The democratic republic is fading away because it does not serve the ends of Imperialism. State Socialism is the new form of government—militaristic, autocratic, belligerent. A new autocracy has arisen. Governments must be centralized, powerful, autocratic, to cope with the armed struggles precipitated by Imperialism. Formerly liberal social elements acquiesce in this new autocracy because it promotes their material interests. The severity of international competition compels a nation to develop its maximum efficiency;

the forces of Capitalism must be organized and marshalled—and all this is done through State Socialism and its new autocracy. The liberty of *laissez-faire* is incompatible with the requirements of Imperialism. The democracy of Capitalism is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

This reactionary trend, away from democracy, is the determining tendency of our day. It is characteristic of all nations. That it has assumed its most brutal and definite form in Germany is simply an indication of speedier development. The tendency was active in Great Britain, France and the United States before the war, and it is being made dominant by the war's stimulus upon Imperialism. And the Pro-Consul system of government that Imperialism imposes upon its possessions and "spheres of influence" reacts upon and destroys democracy at home.

There are certain features about this new autocracy that mislead romantic radicals. One of them is the fact that it provides for the material comforts of the people, and yields certain forms of sham democracy. It is a readjustment. The working class is coddled along through State Socialism to make it ready to lay down their lives for "their" country—when its Imperialism is in danger! Imperialism means international reaction, government and industrial autocracy, but a certain amount of social reform and "democracy" as a bribe to the people. The essential fact, however, is that the trend is away from fundamental democracy. The distinguishing feature of the Imperialistic nation is that it substitutes "kultur" in the place of democracy. Under the illusion that the nation is still the carrier of democracy, European Socialism went out to fight for national freedom—and lo and behold! it was a brutal Imperialism that was being promoted.

Under these circumstances, the revolutionary Socialist refuses to become *particeps criminis* in the wars for democracy waged by a hypocritical Capitalism. It is Imperialism that menaces democracy, and Imperialism alone that we shall fight. In the pre-Imperialistic era Socialism and democracy could be separated; and the demand of Marx for a war of the liberal powers against autocratic Russia was a legitimate one. *To-day the struggle for democ-*

racy as such can be waged only as an integral part of our general revolutionary struggle for Socialism. Our action must be international, our way the way of the proletariat of Russia.

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I shall not waste much time on the charge that the Socialist party is pro-German. That was never true of the party as a whole, simply of certain prominent members of the bureaucracy. I despise their attitude as much as La Monte does. But it does not at all enter into the question as to what attitude the party should take towards America in the war. If La Monte, under the control of his philosophy of despair, had not left the party he would know that it was the radical membership that forced the bureaucracy into an aggressive anti-war stand. Shall we play into the hands of this handful of pro-Germans by becoming pro-Ally? *The only effective way to fight the degrading pro-Germanism of these bureaucrats is to fight for revolutionary Socialism.* The bureaucrat is pro-German because he is pro-Scheidemann.

It is the philosophy of despair that makes La Monte urge that "the proper course for such American Socialists as are still affiliated with the Socialist party is to get out of it as quickly as may be and give their whole-hearted support to the government of these United States in its splendid fight to 'make the world safe for democracy.'" Imagine! The philosophy of despair inevitably generates the policy of surrender. And I have no doubt that after the hysteria of this war is over La Monte will regret these words, "I am now serving as a sergeant in the Home Guard doing my part to protect my neighbors from the violence of well-meaning if feeble-minded pacifists." I have had experience with the contemptible acts of the Home Guard of New York City, and its citizens need to be protected from *their* violence. It is the Home Guard and the soldiers that deliberately provoke riots at pacifist and Socialist meetings. The peculiar feature of the Socialist that acquiesces in war is that he becomes more reactionary than the government itself. Even Secretary of War Baker has rebuked the violence of soldiers and sailors at Socialist and pacifist meetings! But this is a minor objection. The Home Guard is an expression of militarism; imagine the

formerly revolutionary La Monte identifying himself with militarism!

But such are the vagaries of the philosophy of despair. It inevitably leads to reaction. And in this connection a well-known passage from Marx' *Eighteenth Brumaire* is appropriate:

"Proletarian revolutions criticize themselves constantly; constantly interrupt themselves in their own course; come back to what seems to have been accomplished, in order to start over anew; scorn with cruel thoroughness the half measures, weaknesses and meannesses of their first attempts; seem to throw down their adversary only in order to enable him to draw fresh strength from the earth, and again to rise up against them in more gigantic stature; constantly recoil in fear before the undefined monster magnitude of their own objects—until finally that situation is created which renders all retreat impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:

"Hic Rhodus, hic salta!"

We are against this war because we do not despair. We do not despair because we know that revolutions are not made in a day and that errors and weaknesses are inevitable. The brilliant passage of Marx expresses exactly the situation to-day. We have failed—come, build anew!

The task is gigantic. It means a complete reconstruction of the Socialist movement, of its theory and its practice. We shall build upon the truth of the past and discard the errors. We shall forge a new movement—comprehensive, aggressive, revolutionary, a movement adapted to the new conditions of Imperialism. This new movement must be built upon the fundamentals of Socialism, purged of error and compromise; the revolutionary spirit of Marxism emphasized against the deadening practice of the Socialist Majority.

This is the great opportunity of Socialism. To despair is to accept defeat. Out of great events arises great action. There can be no faltering. All for Socialism—*revolutionary* Socialism!