

## Armistice on All Fronts

By LUDWIG LORE

Negotiations in Brest Litovsk are still under way. But the last three weeks have been a deadlock and today it is practically certain that they will lead to no settlement between the two parties. As a matter of fact we do not believe that either side has the intention of making peace. The revolutionary government is opposed, in principle, to a separate peace, Germany from egoistic motives. Our comrades in the Russian government know that a separate peace with the Kaiser will enormously strengthen junker reaction, and will bring to the fore German annexationist tendencies. On the other hand capitalist imperialistic circles in Germany know only too well that to secure a separate peace acceptable to the Bolcheviki, they must lay their cards upon the table and play their best trumps.

It is certain that both parties entered upon these negotiations, not because they expected immediate and positive results, but because they hoped to exploit them for their own respective purposes. The German government has played with peace offers too long to dare to refuse negotiations when proposed by the other side. It feared the effect upon its own people, who would have been at a loss to understand a refusal to discuss Russian peace terms. Germany was therefore forced to play the miserable, double-faced game that has been so poignantly illustrated by the speeches of Czernin and von Kuehlmann on the one side and of General Hoffmann on the other. Germany declared herself, "in principle," in sympathy with the Russian peace formula, and in practice attempted to annex the Baltic provinces.

The comrades at the head of the Russian nation know only too well that Russia has ceased to be a military factor. No force from within or from without can galvanize it into war-like activity for some time to come. War on a large scale, with its mass armies of millions of men, whether for capitalistic or for revolutionary aims, is out of the question at the present

time. The soldiers are going home, the people are starving, and above all, the necessity of preserving the Revolution demands an immediate liquidation of the war. But the international situation today is such that an early and a democratic peace can come only if the Russian Revolution is backed up by revolutionary uprisings in other belligerent countries, and receives from them the necessary support. In other words, an uprising of the German and Austrian proletariat is the premise for an early peace, a peace that would be concluded everywhere in the interests of the working classes. Fear of revolt everywhere would force the hand of the ruling classes. The piratical imperialistic desires of the allied nations, as the diplomatic treaties published by Trotzky plainly show, are as egoistically opposed to the interests of the people as are those of the central powers. The revolutionary overthrow of the central powers would inevitably bring in its wake the collapse of allied militaristic and imperialistic aims.

Revolutionary Russia, therefore, recognized the necessity of adopting radical measures to awaken the class conscience of the German people. It was no easy task. In Germany, the traditional land of servility and submissiveness, a revolutionary uprising is conceivable only under the severest pressure. The elements that remain at home are composed mostly of women, children, the aged, infirm and crippled, and the ammunition worker, who has always been difficult to organize for revolutionary action. The majority group of the Socialist movement still plays the role of the imperial lackey, ready, at a word, to perform political somersaults; while the Independent Social Democracy seems still too weak to fulfill the mission that falls to the lot of the German proletariat.

These considerations led the revolutionary government of Russia to adopt the indirect method of influencing the working class of Germany and Austria. It could not reach the proletariat of these two nations directly with its propaganda. There was only one possible way of reaching them—to speak to them over the heads of their own ruling classes. To accomplish this Russia proposed a general armistice of all belligerent

nations. But the Entente refused all participation in the proposed conference and Russia was placed before the alternative—to negotiate with the imperialists of the Entente on plans for further warfare, or to negotiate with the imperialists of the central powers for peace. They chose the latter; there was no other possible choice.

Recent events in Germany and in Austria show how correctly our Russian comrades had diagnosed the situation. In both of these countries a movement has set in that began, just as did the Russian Revolution in 1917, with the cry "Peace and Bread," and will end ultimately, as did the other, in a reconstruction of the whole social fabric of both nations. As yet the dimensions to which this revolutionary movement of the people has grown cannot be adequately measured, nor to what lengths the movement that began with mass meetings against and in spite of police prohibition, that has already passed the stage of political general strikes, will go. But this much seems certain—the unrest in Germany will not subside until the government has submitted to the chief demands of the people and has shown its good intentions by seriously negotiating for a peace without annexation and without indemnities. In Germany and Austria the spell is broken!

The time has come when the people of the other nations must act. "Either war will kill the revolution, or revolution will kill the war!" These words were spoken by a Russian Zimmerwaldist a few days before the Russian Revolution. Shall it be said to the shame of the workers of the West European nations, shall it be admitted for a moment that the English, the French, the Italian masses and the people of the other belligerent countries will be content to play the role of a mere passive onlooker, after the workers of the Central Powers have so plainly shown that they are awakening? World imperialism cannot be crushed by a single people. Its overthrow must be accomplished by the united action of the world proletariat.

It has been generally accepted unconsciously even by the capitalistic world, that peace will and must be brought by the action of the proletariat. But a peace according to the Russian

formula, a peace without annexations and without indemnities, can be brought about only by the general armistice that has been demanded by the Russian government..

Germany and Austria agreed to the armistice for a variety of reasons: they were afraid of their peoples, and they hoped, furthermore, to be able to use an armistice on the Eastern front for their own dark purposes in the West. But they overlooked that every immediate benefit they might derive through the shifting of troops was outweighed by the fact that they were forced to uncover their cards, and to acknowledge before their peoples and the world their imperialistic aims.

The allied governments have thus far refused to discuss the armistice proposal of the Russian government. They could do this the more easily because their own people were content to maintain a state of patient passivity in this respect. Perhaps fear in the allied countries of German militarism and imperialism lent an appearance of justification to this refusal. But the newest phase of events in Germany has deprived even this faulty argument of its basis. The German people are determined to settle accounts with their tormentors, and they are the only power that can accomplish the democratization of Germany. The duty to act now rests upon the peoples of the Entente, and, above all, upon the United States, whose aims in this war, if we are to credit the so often repeated assurances, are entirely disinterested and represent the highest ideals of undiluted democracy.

The United States are in this war not only to fill the breach that Russia's defection has made; they are the factor that is to win the war by a gigantic effort to furnish men, ammunition, food and money to the exhausted allies. America, without whose assistance the struggle against the central powers cannot be continued, is in a position to exert a strong influence upon its allies. If it should raise its voice in favor of a general armistice, the armistice is practically assured.

The last speech of President Wilson intimates that America is ready to conclude a democratic peace. Lloyd

George, and even Clemenceau, have underscored his statements; the people of Germany and Austria are forcing their rulers to recognize the same principles. The nations of the world are practically united upon the aim and end of the war—and still the insane slaughter goes on.

The answer to this question depends alone and entirely upon the degree of passivity, upon the willingness to suffer and to obey, upon the willingness to be led to slaughter of the masses and of their Socialist and union leaders. If they are willing to let their governments bring excuse after excuse, if they are willing to wait until power in Russia is "consolidated," then they will, by their non-resistance, sacrifice the cause of the Russian Revolution and with it the cause of world revolution and world peace. If the proletariat of the world refuses to help the Russian masses in their fateful struggle, then the prospects of a general and democratic peace are gone forever.

There is but one means toward the end—an armistice on all fronts. Only when the armistice is declared, when the soldiers in the trenches realize, for the first time, what peace and safety will mean, when the peoples again will dare to breathe freely, to speak freely, to hope, when the horrible pressure of war upon body and mind will have been partly released, only then will the possibility of revolutionary development be given.

If the allied nations then, are honest in their desire for a democratic peace, if they come out openly and without reservation for the formula of the Russian people, no power on earth can prevent its realization. But if they should refuse, if they should still insist upon the accomplishment of imperialist annexationist demands, then an armistice alone can show to their peoples that they are fighting, not against a militaristic, imperialistic enemy abroad, but for militarism, for imperialism, for autocracy at home. And as the armistice in Germany has aroused the people to demand a general and a democratic peace, so will it force the governments of the allied nations to choose between a democratic international peace or revolt of their own awakened masses.