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# Dictatorship and the International.

by Morris Hillquit

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Comrades, I believe that in taking up this problem we have reached probably the most important part of our deliberations. At this time there is no more important task for the Socialists of the world than to find a proper basis of international organization.

Unfortunately, we are not authoritatively informed about conditions of the Socialist movement in Europe. During the war and for a considerable time after it, our country was so tightly shut up from the rest of the world that we had little if any information on the subject of the Socialist movement abroad. At this time information is beginning to reach us in more or less fragmentary form from time to time. We still don not know all of the facts. Furthermore, the conditions abroad are so unstable that what may hold true for today may not be true the next day.

From the best source of information obtainable the situation seems to be this:

In the first place the old International is disrupted. The old International of Socialism was an organization composed of practically all Socialist organizations of any standing throughout the world. I think it was the most compact, and most organically connected international organization in the world. The Socialist Parties, even of contending and conflicting tendencies in the different countries, all belonged to the same International.

With the outbreak of the war and the acute differences arising on the question of the proper Socialist attitude towards it, the International was split wide open, and this is the present situation.

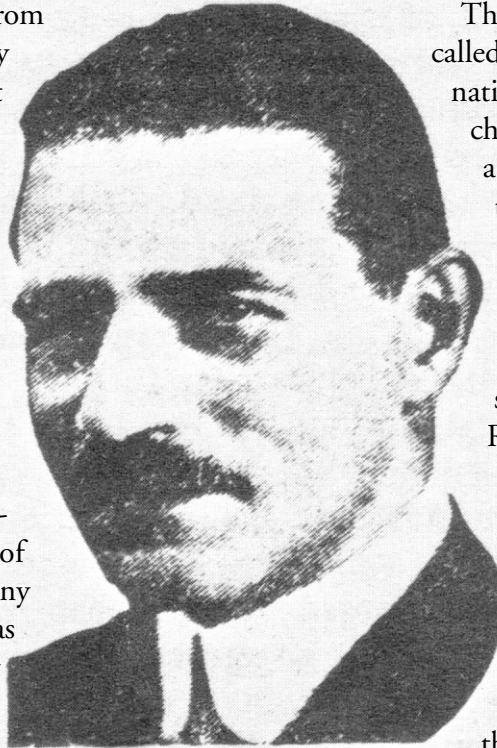
Of whatever remains of the old International,

the so-called Second International, is no doubt still numerically the strongest. It includes the Majority Socialist Party of Germany, with its large following, and at least for the time being, the Labor Party of Great Britain, with its millions of members. It includes the Social Democratic Party of Austria and the Socialist Parties of Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Finland, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, and a number of smaller countries.

The Third International, so-called, that is the Moscow International, represents, as we have characterized it in our report, a nucleus but no more than that of a new International. It was organized originally by the Communist Party of Russia, with the cooperation of similar parties in some former territories of Russia that have since gained their independence, a few small Communist Parties in neighboring countries, while some representatives of foreign countries attended the Congress without authority from their organizations.

Since that time several Socialist Parties of western Europe and then our party have declared their intention to affiliate with the Third International. The former include the Socialist Parties of Norway, Switzerland, and Italy.

As far as I know these parties have so far had no opportunity to participate in any of its deliberations.



We are in the same position.

After our action on the subject, however, several events have occurred which are of great importance as bearing on the condition of the Socialist International.

In the first place the Independent Socialist Party of Germany has adopted a resolution to the effect that it would initiate a movement to bring together all Socialists that had remained true on Socialism during the war and after the war in one International, with the further proviso that if such union cannot be brought about in conjunction with the parties of other countries, the Independent Socialists of Germany would join the Third International anyhow. The leaders of the German Independents made it clear, however, that they meant a union not on the basis of the program of the Third International adopted in Moscow, but upon a common program, acceptable to all parties, including the Independent Socialists of Germany, the Socialist Party of France under the leadership of Longuet, and others. The Independent Labour Party of England has recently taken a somewhat similar stand. The Labour Party, which is the larger organization of the trade union (*sic.*), still stands by the Second International, with every indication, however, that they likewise may sever their relations with it in the near future.

That is the physical line up. Now, as to the moral side.

The Second International is the International of that wing of Socialism which we have come to style "social patriotic," composed of those who had unconditionally supported the government during the war and who after the war in a majority of cases are cooperating with the middle classes in the government, either as in Germany, where the Cabinet consists of Socialists and non-Socialists, or as in Sweden, where the Cabinet is purely Socialist — under a somewhat "bourgeois" King.

So far as the third group is concerned, the unaffiliated group comprising the Socialist Party of France under Longuet's leadership, the Independent Labour Party of England, and the Independent Socialists of Germany, they come, I should say, as close to the position of our own Party in this country as any Socialist parties abroad.

And now, comrades, it is very important for the understanding of our position by our own comrades

as well as on the outside, that we draw a clear and distinct line between our relations to Soviet Russia and our relations to the Third or Moscow International.

We have always supported the Soviet Government of Russia. We support it today. Our sympathies are absolutely with it. I hope they will always remain so. Because no matter whether that government styles itself aptly or inaptly, it is the government of the working class of Russia. It is a government which strives to abolish every remnant of capitalism and for that reason is being persecuted by every imperialistic and reactionary power on the face of the globe. The reasons that impel our government in Washington, the governments of Great Britain and of France to make war upon Russia, are exactly the same reasons that impel us, as Socialists, as working class representatives, to support Soviet Russia in all of its struggles.

But that does not mean, Comrades, that we abdicate our own reason, forget the circumstances surrounding us, and blindly accept every formula, every dogma coming from Soviet Russia as holy, as a Papal decree. By no means. It also does not mean that because we support the struggles of the working class in Russia, we accept for this country or for any other country the special institutions and forms into which these struggles have been moulded by the historical conditions of Russia.

After we had declared our intentions to join the Third or Moscow International, a manifesto was published, signed by the President of the Executive Committee, dated Sept. 1st, 1919. The Manifesto deals with the relation of the International to national socialist organizations, and among other things states that in France, America, England, and Germany the revolutionary elements are adhering to the Communist movement often by cooperating with the anarcho-syndicalist groups, and the groups that now and then simply call themselves anarchistic. The Executive Committee of the Communist Party welcomes this most heartily; and another reference is to our own IWW, which is supposed to lead the movement or the fight for soviets in the United States. It then proclaims that "the universal unifying program is at the present moment the recognition of the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of soviet power"; that "history has drawn the line between the revolutionary proletariat and the opportunist and between the Commu-

nist and the Socialist traitors of every brand"; Kautsky in Germany, Longuet in France, the Independent Labour Party as a whole, and your humble servant in America are mentioned as such traitors "because they do not wish to lead the struggle for the soviet power of the proletariat."

Now, comrades, with all my cordial sympathy for the Russian Soviet Government, I say, if I considered this document authentic, final, and authoritative, I could, speaking for myself, see no possible way to honestly remain in a party which accepts this as a universal program. I will say, however, I do not attach as much importance to this document as its authors may think it is entitled to. I know how such documents are drafted. I believe that the cooler heads in the Moscow International would repudiate it if it came to a question of actual application. At least I am inclined to think so. I have no authority for any such statement.

Now, why do I think we could not stand on this platform and adopt the formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of Soviet power. Because as a concrete proposition the statement is not only meaningless but misleading, and as applied to conditions here, it would be anti-socialist and anti-revolutionary.

The phrase "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" was first coined by Karl Marx in 1875, when he wrote a letter in criticism of the Gotha Program. Speaking of the period of "transformation," he asserted that the state during that period "could be nothing else than the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat." Later Engels referred to the Paris Commune as a practical example of such "dictatorship."

Now, what was the Paris Commune? The Paris Commune was a body elected on the principle of universal suffrage, a parliament of Paris, which did not exclude any class from voting and consisted of Socialists of all shades and even non-socialists.

What Marx and Engels evidently considered as Dictatorship of the Proletariat was evidently the political, even parliamentary majority rule of the proletariat, and I will say in all kindness to our comrades in Russia that they do not have a dictatorship of the proletariat. It does not make it any less dear to me. But when we speak of dictatorship we can mean only one thing, an irresponsible rule of an irresponsible ruler; otherwise it is not a dictatorship.

Russia has a perfectly responsible government.

Lenin is not a dictator and Trotsky is not a dictator. They have been elected to their positions, they have no proclaimed themselves in power. They can be recalled tomorrow. They can be recalled by the Executive Committee of the All Russian Soviet; they can be recalled by the All Russian Soviet; they can be recalled in numerous other ways. There is not an institution or official in Russia that is not subject to recall, or dependent upon popular support. Why call it a dictatorship? It is not a dictatorship. It is a somewhat limited democracy. It is a democracy which excludes from its ranks nonproducing classes, just as the democracy in the United States at one time excluded non-propertied classes. Whether such limitation upon the suffrage is necessary or not in Russia, I am not going to pass upon, because I don't know. But it is not a dictatorship. Nor is it a rule of the proletariat; the term "proletariat" has a definite meaning. It means an industrial worker who does not own his instruments of production. The rule of Russia is the rule of the workers and peasants, with the peasants in the overwhelming majority.

Now, Comrades, I don't care what the exact and technical form of Soviet Government is. It is a government of the working people of Russia, and these are always entitled to the support of our party and every true revolutionary organization so long as they continue fighting the powers of world capitalism.

But we are talking about forms of struggle that we are to apply to our own movement, and there is no reason in the world why we, in the United States, should take it upon ourselves to adopt the ideal of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat." Comrade, when we do that, and when it is made a condition of our affiliation that we recognize the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, we must also adopt their definition of the term, and what is that definition? The dictatorship of the Proletariat implies the disarming, the disfranchising, and the outlawing of the bourgeoisie. In countries of democratic and parliamentary traditions the Socialist movement cannot consistently employ or advocate such methods, because if we do, we practically say to the parties of the bourgeoisie, to our Democrats and Republicans: "Gentlemen, we want to take advantage of the ballot box in order to get into your parliaments, we want to get into power somehow, but when we are in power we will disarm you and disfran-

chise you and outlaw you, as a necessary measure for the transition to Socialism,” and the logical reply would be: “All right, gentlemen, but today we are already in possession of the public powers which you seek to conquer, and consequently we will disarm you and disfranchise you and outlaw you as a measure of self-preservation.”

It is one thing or the other, comrades. Either a fight by physical weapons, a reversion to the old method of street barricades, or it is a political fight with the weapons and methods of political democracy.

If we accept the Dictatorship of the Proletariat in the sense of destroying, disarming, and disfranchising our opponents, then we have no kick coming if the ruling classes use against us the methods that we say we will use against them.

The Socialist Party has never advocated such methods. Marxian Socialism has never stood for it. We cannot consistently stand for it, and for this reason I say that as far as we Socialists of America are concerned, we cannot join the Third International if the recognition of this so-called dictatorship is made an absolute condition of our joining.

Now, why do we insist upon remaining in the Third International at all? Because we realize that the Third International represents after all the best spirit

in the Socialist movement at this time. Its formulas may be wrong, but with all that, the Moscow organization affords undoubtedly the best field for rebuilding the Socialist International, provided it will not remain an international of eastern or Asiatic Socialism, but will open its doors to all revolutionary organizations of Socialism and provided it will adhere to the rules which have always guided the Socialist Internationals, the First as well as the Second, the rule of self-determination in matters of policy and methods of struggle, so long as no vital principle of Socialist program and Socialist philosophy is violated.

And such a general organization, including the Third International, will never be brought about so long as the Independent Labour Party of England, the Socialist Party of France, and the Independent Socialists of Germany stand outside. Just as much as it is impossible, in my mind, to create a live new International without Russia, just as much is it impossible to create such an International without Germany, France, and England.

Hence the suggestion of your Committee, that we work towards the creation of a larger International on the basis of the Third, and that instructions be given our Executive Committee and our elected officials to cooperate with other parties in that direction.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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