

# CAPITALISM AND THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION By J. T. Walton Newbold

It is now some seventy years since the European proletariat made its gallant but unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the governing classes of the great States of Western and Central Europe. With the exception of one or two minor incidents towards the close of the French Revolution this was the first effort of the workers to challenge and to contest the sovereignty of the state systems which had grown up on the ruins of feudalism. The Continental proletariat of the towns was not then sufficiently strong or class-conscious to achieve success and was betrayed by the upper and lower elements of the capitalist class as soon as these saw the direction in which their victory was likely to carry them.

They withdrew from the side of the workers, whose mass action alone had made it possible for them to overawe the executive power of the landed and mercantile classes (in the latter case we refer to the money merchants of Paris), and if they did not ally themselves directly with the reactionary forces, they followed such a policy as to enable those to re-conquer authority. The Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary and the Kings of Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, and their fellow-princelings returned to power, but with a recognition dawning in the minds of their statesmen, at any rate in Prussia, that they must set themselves at the head of the Nationalist Party, attach to themselves the capitalist interests, and adopt an internal and external policy calculated to further what those elements conceived to be to their advantage. The success of the Tudors and the failure of the Stuarts in England was not lost upon the Hohenzollerns. At the same time, in Germany, more even than in this country, the landed aristocracy became involved in the capitalist system, owing to the preponderating importance in German industry of the Brewing and distilling industries and of the *Krieg-industrie*, or armaments manufacture, having its foundations in iron and coal mineral lands. The alliance of the industrial magnates and the landowners was cemented and flourished under the highest and most interested patronage of the Kaiser himself. The German Empire became an enormously powerful political organisation of these closely inter-connected economic interests. The feudal state in Germany was overhauled and re-organised scientifically on a more colossal plan. Extensively and intensively, the control of the State over the people was reinforced. Antagonism to the reactionary political regime of *Kaiserism* has had, moreover, to encounter in Germany the same kind of economically impelled desire for expansion as has come to affect the workers of Britain and the U.S.A. Consciously or sub-consciously, the proletarians in all highly developed capitalist countries have responded to the subtle influences of capitalist production for sale, of capitalist zeal for export trade. This

impulse is natural, because in the modern economy vast requirements of the people can only be supplied from without the frontiers of the country and, at the same time, once the market becomes congested with commodities, production must fall away and employment at remunerative wages be restricted. The workers are living within the framework of capitalist society, and the more completely they are enmeshed in that system, the more must they struggle, not necessarily with intelligence, to improve their lot. So long as the capitalist class can direct them to what it may or may not believe to be the cause of all these misfortunes, viz.: the organised capitalists of other lands, great numbers of the workers will seek that mode of escape, or acquiesce in the order to march and to fight. The modern state, the modern "executive committee of the capitalist class," is a terrible monster, against whom rebellion seems useless, and is useless, unless a high degree of solidarity and determination can be assumed among a large proportion of the workers, not only in one area or one country, but all over the world of capitalist production and government.

The German workers, in so far as they were Socialists, before the War were organised much more for a political struggle against a reactionary political system than for industrial warfare against economically powerful groups of capitalists. The German trade union movement was, largely, the child of the Socialist movement of political and political theorists. German capitalism developed at a prodigious rate. It pursued an enlightened policy towards its workers, aided by a paternal government which, at the same time, made it plain to the trade unionists that the Army was always in reserve to assist in the maintenance of public order, the order of the *Junker-Industrialists*. In Germany there did not arise the kind of advanced Labour Movement that appeared in every country where industrial capitalists fought out their battles with their workers face to face and without too frequent interference on the part of the State. When War broke out, and, so far as we can make out, down to the present time, there is no industrial unionism of any vigour in Germany. At the same time, there does not appear to be any revolutionary movement of action in the Army. The one man who might, and, in my opinion, would, have been likely to bring about a revolutionary movement of action in Germany was Liebknecht. He was not obsessed by theory; he was for ever attacking; he had vigour; he had enthusiasm; he had the spirit of adventure. He was not an academician, a journalist, a would-be statesman. He was an agitator, and the impression he made on me, as he talked of our plan of attack on the Armaments International, was of a man who would never be so happy as when he was hitting, hitting, hitting his enemy. He felt intensely about his work, but he

was the happy pugilist rather than the earnest Tolstoyan or eminently respectable advocate of Socialistic Pacifism prevalent in this country. He could have fired the imagination of the working men where Bernstein and probably Kautsky would never have touched them. Liebknecht is in prison and there does not appear to be any one else upon whom his mantle has fallen. If there is, we must conclude that the circumstances of War and the Law of Military Service prevent him from arousing his fellows.

The magnificent organisation of the State for maintaining the civilian life of the country; the thoroughness of the police regime; the fear of Clemenceau, "the Tiger," and his more suave-tongued colleagues across the waters, hold the German proletariat in impotence. In Austria-Hungary, where the native bureaucracy is less capable, where economic development and political organisation have not brought so strong a State into existence, and where capitalism is not so cunningly controlled as in Germany, there is a seething mass of revolutionary material. Hunger is more pronounced and the need for expansion is far less felt owing to the low economic cultivation of industry in the Dual Monarchy.

Yet, for all the seeming hopelessness of a revolutionary upheaval in Germany or a successful outbreak in Austria-Hungary, the chances are that the reactionary elements in Germany may be overthrown by those capitalists, mainly the financial gang who are so influential in New York and in London, despite their temporary eclipse, an eclipse that there is reason to believe is not so real as apparent, and that a political settlement will be established in Berlin, which many advocates of Wilson's American Democracy will immediately hail as the spiritual counterpart of their own "dollar civilisation." The present directors of the German military system will be "shanghaied," Germany will be admitted to the League to Enforce Peace, and the "best features" of her bureaucratic and military discipline will be commingled with those of Britain and the U.S.A. as the armed and official guarantees of the new constitution appropriate to the political counterpart of international production.

The U.S.A. will be the arbiter of the world, and Europe, at any rate, will be perfectly safe for the Democracy for which Washington fought; the Fathers of the Republic agitated their shrewd old lawyer brains; such sterling and self-sacrificing Union-men as Commodore Vanderbilt and Pierpont Morgan laboured to make safe with their chartered coffin ships and their antiquated carbines; and for which finally, Wilson, through rhetoric and Schwab and Vanderlip, by steel and dollars, spread to the four corners of the earth!

(TO BE CONTINUED)