

SOCIALIST APPEAL

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CRISIS IN BELGIUM

BY E. BONNE

After some weeks of Allied occupation of Belgium, the exhilaration of the first few days of "liberation" has vanished. For the mass of the population, the main problem is once again—and more than ever—how to maintain a bare existence?

All means of transport and communication have collapsed and the food situation is acute. For the first time since the beginning of the war, Brussels has been without bread for nearly two weeks; for nearly a month the people in the capital have had neither coal nor gas, which means that they have no means of cooking whatsoever.

The British capitalist press has made great play of the fact that the Belgian Government, headed by Pierlot, was the first of the Allied Governments established in London to return to its country, and to be received there as the legally and unanimously recognised government. In fact, it took the Belgian capitalist class a fortnight of cautious consideration and sordid haggling, before the new Pierlot government could be constituted.

After some flirtation with the idea of choosing an ultra-reactionary "strong" man for the job of Prime Minister of a country which is obviously faced with severe social convulsions, Pierlot was retained as Prime Minister solely because he was the only personality the various parties could be made to agree upon.

The newly constituted cabinet comprises:

- 6 Catholics
5 Socialists
3 Liberals
2 Communists
1 Representative of the Resistance Movement.

The Catholics hold the most important posts—Prime Minister, Finance, Interior and Justice. The Socialists, with Spaak remaining Minister of Foreign Affairs, have taken upon themselves the load of all the labour and social affairs, food supply and communications ministries. The Liberal, appointed as Minister of Economy, is a well-known industrialist from Liege. The representative of the Resistance Movement is, curiously enough, a

Catholic! The "Communists", as recognition for their participation in the capitalist government, have been granted posts of . . . Public Health and Minister without Portfolio.

The set-up is an essentially conservative and reactionary one. The relation of forces between the various tendencies has been assumed to have undergone no changes since 1939, and the "will of the country" as expressed by the clandestine organisations during the four years of occupation, has been systematically ignored. On this basis the Government naively hopes to be able to "govern".

So far it has taken a number of preparatory measures, such as attempting to incorporate a small number of members of the resistance movement individually into the army as volunteers and dissolving the rest of the organisation forbidding the carrying of arms except by members of recognised organisations detailed to assist the police force. It has also decided to issue a new currency and withdraw that now in circulation, which will be exchanged on the basis of a franc for a franc up to a certain figure. Exceptions, are, however, foreseen, especially in the case of "persons handling large sums of money in the normal run of business."

But none of these measures have sufficed to pacify the masses. Great

strikes have broken out, completely paralysing industry in at least two of the most industrial areas of the country—the Charleroi and Liege districts. The strikers came out for an increase in pay and allowances. In spite of appeals, the Belgian workers in these districts have firmly refused to resume work until they are given satisfactory wage rates to meet the high cost of living.

According to the "Manchester Guardian's" Brussels correspondent:

"At one time so extensive did the strike at Charleroi become that it was feared that the pumping crews would come out and that mines would be flooded. The intervention of the Allied Civil Affairs authorities has prevented this, but there is still no sign of coalmining being resumed."

The Government has decreed a general increase in wages of 60 per cent, but this increase calculated on the basis of pre-war rates, is blatantly insufficient to meet the rise in the cost of living, and the general increases already granted under the German occupation.

Belgian trade union bureaucrats, who had taken refuge in Great Britain during the war, have been hurriedly rushed back to Belgium in a specially chartered plane, in the hope that they might be able to "re-establish law and order", as they usually managed to do in the good old pre-war days. But the exiled reformists are reporting back that the trade union situation is "very bad" (for them!) and that they by no means have the situation "in hand."

The reason for this is clear. For more than 4 years the Belgian workers have had to rely upon clandestine trade unions and illegal factory or pit committees, and through these, they have managed to wrest concessions even from the German occupation authorities. At present they are showing no enthusiasm whatsoever to return to the old bureaucratically controlled unions which the former reformist leaders are attempting to re-establish. The workers intend to have militant fighting organisations, directed by militant fighting leaders. They have undergone the experience of being betrayed and abandoned by the leaders of the organisations they built up.

The "Manchester Guardian" correspondent concludes his description on the situation in Charleroi:

"Now there is conflict between the old unions and the new underground ones, a conflict made worse by a good deal of agitation conducted on old fashioned Trotskyist lines which has done so much harm to the situation that it is difficult to believe that it is not inspired by Fifth Columnists."

Even before the war, the Charleroi workers used to turn for leadership to the Trotskyist Party, the Belgian Revolutionary Communist Party (P.C.R.)—then called the Revolutionary Socialist Party, whose main strength lay in the Charleroi region.

We hail the fact that today, at the first signs of revival of the labour movement, our Belgian comrades are in the forefront of the struggle, in spite of the sad losses they have suffered at the hands of the Nazi oppression, and particularly in spite of the loss of the Charleroi leader, Leon Lesoil—killed in a German concentration camp.

The accusation of "Fifth Column" activity is the usual last argument of the capitalist class of all countries, when faced with any large scale movement which threatens the basis of capitalist rule. If they use this slander in Belgium itself, it is hardly likely to impress the workers, who have seen these same comrades, "fifth columnist Trotskyists" resisting the Nazi oppression, and who are today vainly demanding the tracking down and punishment of the real "collaborators"—the big industrialists who drew large profits from their collaboration with the German capitalists at the expense of the Belgian working class, and who at present rule the country under the protection of the Allies.

BREAK THE COALITION!

Labour to Power

on the following Programme

AN END TO THE COALITION WITH THE BOSSES. LABOUR AND TRADE UNION LEADERS MUST BREAK WITH THE CAPITALIST GOVERNMENT AND WAGE A CAMPAIGN FOR POWER ON THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME:—

Industrial and Economic Policy.

- 1. Nationalisation of the land, mines, banks, transport and all big industry without compensation, as the prerequisite for a planned economy and the only means of ensuring full employment with adequate standards of living for the workers, and the operation of the means of production under control of workers committees.
2. Confiscation of all war profits, all company books to be open for trade union inspection, control of production through workers' committees to end the chaos and mismanagement.
3. Distribution of food, clothes and other consumer commodities under the control of committees of workers elected from the Co-ops, distributive trades, factories, housewives' committees, and small shopkeepers, and allocation of housing under the control of tenants' committees.
4. A rising scale of wages to meet the increased cost of living with a guaranteed minimum; the rate for the job; and industrial rates for all members of the armed forces.

Democratic Demands

- 5. Repeal of the Essential Works Order, the Emergency Powers Act and all other anti-working class and strike-breaking legislation.
6. Full electoral and democratic rights for all persons from the age of 18 years. Full democratic and political rights for the men and women in uniform.
7. Immediate freedom and unconditional independence for India, Ireland and all the colonies of Britain; immediate withdrawal of British armed forces from these countries; full economic and military assistance to the Indian and colonial peoples to maintain their independence against all imperialist attack.

Military Policy

- 8. Clear out the reactionary, pro-fascist, and anti-labour officer caste in the armed forces and Home Guard; election of officers by the ranks.
9. Establishment of military schools by the Trade Unions at the expense of the state for the training of workers-officers; arming of the workers under the control of workers' committees elected in the factories, unions and in the streets for the defence of the democratic rights of the workers from reactionary attacks by the enemies of the working class at home and abroad.

International Policy

- 10. Against race hatred and discrimination of all forms (Vansittartism, Anti-Semitism, and the Colour Bar); for the fraternisation and co-operation of workers and soldiers of all countries.
11. Unconditional defence of the Soviet Union against all imperialist powers; despatch of arms, food and essential materials to the Soviet Union under the control of the Trade Unions and factory committees.
12. A Socialist appeal to the workers of Germany, Europe, Japan, and the rest of the world, on the basis of this programme in Britain, to join the socialist struggle against Nazism, Fascism and all forms of capitalist oppression and for a Socialist United States of Europe and a Federation of Asiatic Soviet Socialist Republics.

Russian Revolution 27 YEARS

THIS NOVEMBER MARKS THE 27th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION. (ACCORDING TO THE OLD RUSSIAN CALENDAR IT TOOK PLACE ON OCTOBER 25th—ACCORDING TO THE WESTERN CALENDAR, THE 5th OF NOVEMBER.) THIS IS A DATE WHICH WILL BE REMEMBERED FOREVER IN THE MEMORY OF MANKIND AS MARKING THE GREATEST STEP FORWARD IN HUMAN PROGRESS. THAT THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION HAS ENDURED FOR 27 YEARS IS A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT IN ITSELF. THE REGIME HAS SURVIVED TESTS THAT WOULD HAVE LED TO THE DOWNFALL OF ANY OTHER FORM OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION. YET IN SPITE OF CIVIL WAR, INTERVENTION, FAMINE, AND NOW WAR AGAIN, THE SOVIET UNION STILL STANDS.

Today the Stalinists try to portray the Russian Revolution as a purely national phenomenon; as a purely national achievement of the Russian people. But the Soviet Union was and is a part of the struggle for the emancipation of the working class on a world scale. 27 years ago when the Russian workers and soldiers stormed the Winter Palace of the Czars and brought down an empire which had endured a thousand years, it was not primarily as a national force, but as the vanguard of the struggle of the world working class to overthrow capitalism.

Time and again, Lenin, Trotsky, and other Bolshevik leaders emphasised their solidarity and dependence upon the working class of the whole world. The workers and soldiers who carried through the revolution did not do it as an isolated national phenomenon. They knew that Russia was at war and suffering tremendous defeats and that without the support of the world working class they would be lost.

Immediately the Bolsheviks took power, Lenin broadcast an appeal to the workers of the world for support. Without it, it would have been impossible for the Soviet Union to survive the first difficult years, at a time when the Soviet Union was weakest. And the Russian Revolution did gain the aid which was confidently anticipated by Lenin and Trotsky. The masses throughout Europe and the world were thoroughly sickened with the slaughter of the chauvinism and hatred that was systematically being fostered by the criminals who stood to gain out of the fratricidal conflict.

Instead of pitting nation against nation; race against race; worker against worker, a new hope dawned for the tortured peoples of the world. The enslaved coolies in China, the ryot in India, the backward tribesmen of Africa and above all, the advanced workers of Europe enthusiastically and instinctively greeted an event which offered a way out of the shackles of capitalist enslavement. Here was a message which transcended all national frontiers with its message of class solidarity, of hope for the oppressed and downtrodden masses of all humanity. The Russian Revolution brought not only a message of hope, but as important, a message of hate for the bloodstained capitalists, "statesmen," and priests who battered on the misery of the people.

The whole world shook at the impact. The capitalists of all lands trembled with fright as they felt the ground shake beneath their feet. Churchill, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Wilson—all were paralysed by the sweep of the revolutionary wave which was stirred into action throughout Europe and Asia by the Russian Revolution. Churchill and Lloyd George have admitted that at the Peace Conferences, the possibility of a Bolshevik Europe was seriously taken into account by these representatives of the old order. In a frenzy of hate and fear, for three years they waged war with Winston Churchill in the van, against the young Soviet Republic. A campaign of slander and vilification was launched against Lenin and Trotsky as "German agents", as mass murderers, as satanic rapers of women, of everything that was beastly and vile in mankind. No lie was too incredible. No vituperation too base for them to use against a state which proudly proclaimed itself as the Citadel of the World Working Class.

But all their attempts were in vain. Owing to the internationalist policy of Lenin and Trotsky, the weak forces of a backward country exhausted and bled more than any other in the first world war, survived the assault of the combined capitalist forces of the whole of the rest of the world. In spite of the fact that the crimes of the interventionists—German, British, Japanese and American—were as black as those of the Nazis, Lenin and Trotsky systematically differentiated between the workers and the capitalists. In the battle against the British forces of intervention, Trotsky as Commander in Chief of the Red Army, issued the following order to the army and navy on October 24th, 1919:

"But even today, when we are engaged in a bitter fight with Yudenich, the hiring of England, I demand that you never forget that there are two Englands. Besides the England of profits, of violence, bribery, and bloodthirstiness, there is the England of labour, of spiritual power, of high ideals of international solidarity. It is the base and dishonest England of the Stock Exchange manipulators that is fighting us."

Those were the greatest days of the Russian Revolution. Those were the foundations upon which the Soviet State were built. Without such a policy there could never have been a revolution and a Soviet Union.

It was primarily by ideological, not material means, that the struggle was waged successfully. It saved the revolution from the hands of Churchill and the White Guard interventionists.

But by 1920, owing to the destruction wrought by the armies of intervention, Russia was reduced to a state of economic collapse. Her industry amounted in 1920 to only 10 per cent of that before the war!

Yet look at what has been achieved today from the level to which Russia was reduced! The Russian workers held on in the hope of aid from the West. But the revolution in Europe was defeated . . . or rather betrayed by the Labour leaders of Europe. Thus, taking advantage of Russia's isolation, of the weariness of the masses, Stalin and the bureaucracy usurped the control. For the first time there was introduced the reactionary utopia "Socialism in one country". Trotsky foresaw this development, but owing to the defeats in other countries could not prevent it. Even so, the struggle which Trotsky and the internationalists waged was not without its fruit. While inflexibly opposing this revision of Leninism, it was Trotsky and his followers who proposed the Five Year Plans of industrial development which became Russia's salvation in the present war. Stalin and the ruling clique fought against what they termed, this "super industrialism". As late as April 1927 Stalin asserted at a Plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, that to attempt to build the Dnieperstroy hydro-electric station, would be the same thing for Russia as for a peasant to buy a gramophone instead of a cow. But in spite of himself Stalin was compelled to adopt Trotsky's programme (even though in a caricatured form) after he was expelled in 1927 for among other things, advocating the Five Year Plan!

The Five Year planning in peace and the successes of the military struggle in the war against Hitler, have established the superiority of nationalised property and planned economy over the anarchy and chaos of private property under capitalism. This basic conquest still remains, and that is why the Fourth International still stands unconditionally for the defence of the Soviet Union against all the imperialists. But the Soviet Union has developed far from the state which was created by Lenin and Trotsky. Its government has become a loathsome caricature of all the ideals of socialism. Not a single one of the conditions which Lenin laid down for the setting up of a workers' state, let alone socialism, are in existence at the present time. In "State and Revolution" Lenin laid down "measures analysed in detail by Marx and Engels:

- 1. Not only election but recall at any time of the Soviets;
2. Payment no higher than the wages of a worker;
3. Immediate transition to a regime in which ALL will fulfil the functions of control and supervision so that ALL may for a time become 'bureaucrats', and therefore NOBODY can become a bureaucrat."

This is the first step with which "we should and must begin upon achieving a proletarian revolution."

Not one of these conditions exist today. The Soviets have been abolished, and in their place a "parliament" to which only one candidate can be nominated in each constituency! This converts elections into a farce and an insult to the masses. Not only is there no real control over the so-called representatives, but there is no longer any real election. As an example, some dozens of deputies were shot in the purge, without trial, yet new representatives mysteriously appeared without any new election.

Instead of the officials receiving a wage no higher than that of an ordinary worker in order to guard against corruption and degeneration, today a Russian bureaucrat can earn a thousand times more than an ordinary worker. In fact, the bureaucrats consume as much of the national income in proportion as the capitalists do in the West. Far from the workers having control over the managers, it is the managers who control the workers. The law introduced by Lenin and Trotsky that no officials of the state must receive a wage higher than that of an ordinary worker has long since been abolished under the Stalin regime.

While Lenin and Trotsky lived under conditions of Spartan simplicity, the top bureaucrats of today squander and live like Byzantine emperors. The newspapers, more cautious on Churchill's second trip because of the reactions of the workers, had revealed the menu of Stalin and the bureaucrats at a time when the

Continued on page 4

Lenin and Trotsky, 1918



"The inspirer of the revolution from beginning to end was the Central Committee of the Party headed by Comrade Lenin. Vladimir Ilych was then living in Petrograd in a conspirative apartment in the Vyborg district. On the evening of October 24th, he was summoned to Smolny for the general leadership of the movement. All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection was conducted under the immediate leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the skilful direction of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and first of all to Comrade Trotsky." — Stalin, in "Pravda", 6th November, 1918.

ITALY "LIBERATED"

BY ROSE CARSON

While the great bulk of the Italian workers are still struggling against German imperialism in the North of Italy, the real meaning of what Anglo-American "liberation" signifies for the mass of the people is becoming clear.

Will Lawther, President of the National Union of Mineworkers, who recently returned from a tour of "liberated" cities and villages in Italy, reported that the degree of unemployment, starvation and disease prevalent in the "liberated" territory is "beyond description."

Official rationing provides less than half the quantity of food necessary to maintain even the barest minimum standard of health. Supplementary food must therefore be bought on the free market of unrationed foodstuffs or the black market. Lawther explains that in spite of the stabilisation of the Italian lire at 400 to the £ sterling and 100 to the dollar, money has no real meaning, since the majority of the people are without normal employment. There are 20,000 in Rome alone wholly unemployed. Those who have jobs earn between 50 and 150 lira per day.

Lawther gives a few examples which illustrate the conditions "liberation" has imposed upon the Italian people. "A modest meal in a first-class restaurant costs between 100 and 200 lira (more than employed workers earn in a week). Olive oil, an important commodity for Italian feeding, cost 4 lira (approximately a quart when available and rationed) and black market prices range from 50 lira (Bari) to 550 (Rome).

A pair of leather shoes cost between 3,500 and 4,500 lira. If we compare these prices with the 50 to 150 lira daily earnings of the average workers—Civil Servants, Judges, Carabinieri and Police are paid less—one realises how much any real basis for social life is lacking.

"OCCUPATION" FOR THE WEALTHY

While the masses are beginning to recognise that imperialist "liberation" means a continuation of oppression, hunger, inflation, and the black market, the capitalist landlords and aristocrats view the "occupation" quite differently. These erstwhile fascists and supporters of fascism, parading today as respectable and "sincere monarchists" preservers of "law and order," against unscrupulous "parties seeking power" see in the Allied bayonets the only guarantee of the existing social order, that is, the continuation of their power and privilege.

On the 28th September the "Daily Mail" correspondent Edwin Tetlow cabled the following from Rome:

"You would have to go a long way here in Rome today to find any non-Italian who would not agree that if the war ended tomorrow and the Allies went home, Italy would be in the throes of revolution and civil war inside a week."

"She is in a dangerous state of suppressed turmoil already."

However, this opinion that Italy is on the verge of revolution is not only the opinion of non-Italians. The "New York Herald Tribune" of June 16th gives a report of some enlightening conversations with Italian business men.

"A large part of Italy's population especially business men and others with property, are fearful of what may happen when the country is given back to the Italians. Some think Italy will go Communist, some think there will be Civil War some think the people will founder for lack of leadership. Some Italians are saying the present Bonomi Government is a Kerensky Government which will lead to Communism. One Rome business man said: 'The Allies ought to stay here and govern the country for five years. How can a people with so little training in governing themselves take over the most difficult reconstruction job in history?' And then he said: 'I'm afraid that as soon as the war is over America will go isolationist again, and the British will pull out too, then there is almost sure to be Civil War and Communism.'"

This clear-sighted estimation of the revolutionary situation in Italy and the open confession of impotence by "the Italian business men" is a resounding

reply to traitors, like the Stalinists who attempted to rescue the reactionary Badoglio regime, and now prepare to deceive and betray the Italian masses again. When the "business men" refer to the certainty of civil war and Communism, they demonstrate the futility of Stalinist collaboration, and its moves to hold back the tide of social revolution which alone can truly "liberate" Italy.

Furthermore the fears expressed by the "business men", that a withdrawal from Italy of Anglo-American troops would certainly be followed by Civil War and Communism, show their recognition of Allied occupation as the spearhead of the counter revolution. This fact has been understood and gleefully accepted by the impotent, decadent ruling class of Italy, it is also being pounded home to the masses at every turn in the situation.

"A.M.G.'s" AIMS

In a report from the Associated Press of December 19th, 1943, we have some frank avowals of what A.M.G. does not intend to do. General Hume, A.M.G.'s military commander told the A.P. correspondent that: "A.M.G.'s task in Italy is not to squash fascism."

The truth of this assertion has been amply underlined by the continued toleration of fascists in the A.M.G. administration, and most specifically by the class solidarity of the A.M.G. officials with the reactionary Roman

(Continued on back page)