

MY IDEA OF BOLSHEVISM

BY ROSA LUXEMBURG

THE revolution of the proletariat now-occurring-can-have-no-other purpose and no other result than to bring about Socialism. To this end the working class must concentrate all political authority in its own hands. Political authority is only a means to an end with us Socialists. The end for which we must employ that authority is the radical overturn of our whole economic system.

To-day all the wealth of the country, the largest and the best tracts of land, the mines and the shops and the factories belong to a few junkers and private capitalists. The great mass of workingmen receive from these junkers and capitalists a bare subsistence in return for their laborious toil. The purpose of the present economic organization is to enrich a small number of idlers.

This condition must be abolished. All the wealth of society, the land and the soil with all the treasures which they contain in their bosom or on their surface, all the factories and shops, must be taken out of the hands of exploiters and made the common property of the nation. The primary duty of a real labor government is to make the principal agencies of production national property by a series of decrees, and to place these agencies directly under public control. This is the first real step and the most difficult step in reconstructing our system of production upon a new basis.

To-day the production in each individual establishment is controlled by individual capitalists at their own

discretion. These owners determine what shall be produced, how it shall be produced, and where, when, and how the goods manufactured shall be sold. The workers have nothing to say in these matters. They are only living machines for performing special processes.

Under a Socialist organization of society all this must be changed. The private owner vanishes. The primary purpose of production is no longer to enrich individuals but to provide for the community the means of satisfying its wants. For this purpose factories, shops, and farms must be reorganized in accord with this new point of view.

First, if the real purpose of production is to provide a respectable standard of life for everyone, with adequate food, clothing, and an opportunity to satisfy higher cravings, then in that case the productivity of labor must be much greater than it is to-day. The fields must produce larger crops, the factories must adopt the most efficient processes and machinery; our coal and ore mines must be developed to attain the greatest possible results. It follows that socialization must extend first of all to our greatest industrial and agricultural enterprises. We do not need and do not desire to take away the property of the small farmer and the small mechanic, who employ their independent labor upon a piece of ground or in a workshop. As time goes on they will voluntarily join us when they perceive the advantage that Socialism presents over private ownership.

In the second place, if all the members of society are to enjoy a comfortable standard of living, everyone must work. Only those who do useful work for the community as a whole, whether it be manual labor or skilled labor or intellectual labor, have a right to demand that they shall receive in return the means of satisfying their reasonable desires. An idle life, such as the rich exploiters enjoy at present, will no longer be permitted. Labor will be compulsory for all who are capable of working, but naturally will not be required of young children or old people or invalids. The community is obligated to care for those who cannot work, but that care should not be miserable charity, such as at present, but an adequate provision. It should mean the education of the children at community expense, a comfortable home for the aged and the best hospital and medical treatment for the sick.

In the third place, the same consideration — I mean the welfare of the community at large — necessitates the most efficient possible employment of the means of production and of labor and the utmost economy in their use. The extravagant employment of both that now prevails must cease. Naturally, all production for purposes of war would stop, for a Socialist society does not require tools to kill people. Instead, the expensive materials and the expensive labor now used to make guns and munitions and naval vessels and to supply them with food and medicines would be diverted to useful channels. In the same way industries purveying to luxury would disappear, as well as manufactures which consult the fickle fancy and extravagant tastes of the rich. Personal service would become largely a thing of the past. All labor devoted to these fields of effort would find a more useful and appropriate application.

When we have created a nation of working people, where each labors for the welfare of all and produces only for the common profit, the work itself will change in spirit and character. To-day labor in the field and the factory, in the shop and the office, is for the most part burdensome and uninteresting for the proletarian. People go to work because they must, because otherwise they will not have anything to eat. In a Socialist society, where all work for the common welfare of all, it is natural that the conditions of labor will be such as to shield health and to inspire a desire to work in the highest possible degree. The working hours will be short enough not to overtax the worker beyond his maximum efficiency. The place where work is done will be attractive and wholesome. Every possible measure will be taken to change tasks and to afford periods of recuperation; and thus each one will be inspired to do his share with pleasure and elation.

However, such great reforms demand leaders of first ability. To-day the capitalist with his knout stands behind the workingman either in person or represented by his foreman or superintendent. Hunger drives the proletarian to the factory or to the great estate or to the office or shop. The proprietor sees to it that his employees do not waste their time; that materials are not misused; that good and honest work is performed.

In society organized upon a Socialist basis the proprietor with his knout disappears; the workers are free and equal men, working for their own welfare and profit. This means that they must voluntarily work industriously and avoid wasting the materials which are common property, and perform their tasks in an efficient manner. Every Socialist enterprise must naturally have its technical leaders, who understand the work that is to be done and

who give necessary advice and directions, so that the machine will run smoothly, the work be properly allotted, and the highest output attained. This implies that the workers must willingly and obediently and scrupulously follow the directions given them. They must maintain discipline and good order. They must not permit friction and confusion.

In a word, the laborer in a Socialist State must prove that he can work industriously and regularly without the incentive of hunger and without the capitalist or his overseer standing by him. He must himself maintain discipline and perform his best service. All this requires self-control, intellectual maturity, moral seriousness. It demands a feeling of self-respect and responsibility. It implies a complete internal regeneration of the proletariat.

Socialism will never succeed in a nation of lazy, light-minded, egoistic, thoughtless, and indifferent people. A Socialist community must have members who perform their duty with enthusiasm and devotion for the common welfare. Members filled with the joy of service and love of their fellow

men; members possessed of courage and persistence and readiness to undertake the most difficult problems.

But we do not need to waste several centuries or decades until a new race of men has been born. The proletariat is acquiring the necessary idealism and mental maturity by the very struggles of the revolution. Courage and persistence, clearness of thought and self-sacrifice are qualities cultivated by the revolution itself. When we make good revolutionists, we make the Socialist workers of the future, upon whom must rest the foundations of a new order.

Our youthful workers are called first and foremost to this great task. Their generation will certainly lay the real foundations of a Socialist State. It is their duty to show that they are fitted to assume the great responsibility of pioneers of the future of humanity. The whole old world must be overthrown and an entirely new world must be constructed, but we are doing it as the song says:

'The only thing we need, my wife, my child, to be as free as the birds themselves, is time.'

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THE CAREER OF FRITZ EBERT

BY JOHN STAPLETON

DURING the past few weeks Fritz Ebert — familiarly called 'Fritzè' by his friends and comrades in the German Social Democratic movement — has won a double triumph. The first success, his elevation to the principal place in the German Government, was not due to any pushing or showy qualities in his nature. Though of humble origin — he was the son of a working-class tailor of Heidelberg and himself a saddler — he has very little of the climber about him, and the final success of his career has been attained by hard work and careful and patient use of considerable administrative abilities. The second triumph, the consolidation of his own position and that of his Majority Party, was, we may be quite certain, still less sought out, involving as it did, before the elections, the armed repression of the Spartacists, many of them former comrades in the once united German Social Democratic Party. Ebert's extreme personal reluctance to use what was, after all, the only effective means of suppressing Bolshevism in Berlin — namely, troops under the control of the Government — was overcome almost too late. But it was overcome, and it is not difficult to analyze the reasons which finally prevailed. In the first place, there was the patriotic instinct — we must always bear in mind that Ebert, like David and Scheidemann and other Majority Social Democrats, but unlike Liebknecht, was always a loyal German, even to the point of accepting an invitation to confer with the Kaiser, which he did in July, 1917, to the great

disgust of many of his comrades. The second motive was, we may guess, his extremely well-developed sense of party loyalty and discipline. This is a thing which, in Social Democrats, above all, we find a little difficult to understand. In this country, divisions, religious and political, take place so easily, especially in labor circles, and often for such small causes, that we find it hard to understand the type of mind which insists on loyalty as a principle and puts membership of a political party and consequent self-subordination to the party leaders on the same plane as service in an army and obedience to one's officers. Ebert is such a type. For him conscientious objection is anathema, and unquestioning submission, even against one's feelings, to the party one has joined is a Socialist's highest duty — a very characteristically German attitude, perhaps, but one to be reckoned with in judging the action of the German Social Democratic Party in the past and during the war, and in speculating concerning its future.

At the time of the murder at Sarajevo, Fritz Ebert was Joint-President of the German Social Democratic Party, his colleague of that date, as again after the revolution of November, 1918, being Hugo Haase, who was also president of the party in the Reichstag. No one who was in Germany during the closing days of July will forget the intensity of the opposition on the part of the German Social Democrats to the German Government's giving any support to Austria.