

Freedom

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST COMMUNISM

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NOTES.

The Russian Revolution.

The dramatic turn of affairs in Russia has at last completed the work which the liberation of the serfs began. It has destroyed the last bulwarks of feudalism and given victory into the hands of the rising merchant class. As in the case of the French Revolution, certain concessions will perforce be granted to the masses, but the victory at present remains with the bourgeoisie. The Duma leader, M. Rodzianko, very correctly described the position when reading the resolution adopted by the Duma leaders, "that the hour had struck for a *change of authority*, in which the Duma would take a most active part." It was inevitable it should be so, for men's minds are not yet accustomed to the idea that the absence of all constituted authority is quite compatible with order. We nevertheless congratulate the Russian people on making a bid for freedom, and especially those political victims of the old regime who have suffered martyrdom in prison and Siberia.

"Even Freer Than England."

The daily press has been full of quaint remarks about the Russian crisis, most of the papers combining to congratulate the Russian people upon their freeing themselves from the tyranny of the Romanoffs. Their criticisms of the Irish rebellion and the Irish people were penned in quite a different vein, we remember. Perhaps the *Daily Chronicle* was guilty of the most wondrous sentiments. It regretted that the throne was temporarily vacant, because "it interrupts continuity—always a principle which the prudent revolution-maker must strive to conserve whenever it is consistent with progress." The use of "prudent" and "revolution" in one sentence inclines to take one's breath away, as does also the sage remark of their Petrograd correspondent, who ruminated "that if all went well Russia might actually prove to be even a freer country than England." How very long absent from England this Rip Van Winkle must have been!

The New "Vicars of Bray."

The Holy Synod in Russia has followed the example of the clergyman celebrated in the old song:

"Whosoever may be King,
I'll be the Vicar of Bray, Sir."

A Reuter telegram announces that this body has addressed a message to "the children of the Orthodox Church" declaring that the Revolution was brought about by the hand of God, and exhorting them to obey the new Government. This shows that their political sagacity is greater than their morality. The heads of the Church have always supported or condoned whatever atrocities have been committed by the Czars against those who wished for a more modern form of Government, and even excommunicated Tolstoy, who tried to bring the Church back to the teachings of Christ. Now that the revolutionists have got hold of the machinery of Government, the priests will try to prove that they have always been in favour of a change, and will transfer their support to the new Government, so as to obtain its support in return. In spite of incidents as glaring as this, the Churches still claim that religion is the basis of morality.

National Service.

The poor response to the appeal for volunteers for National Service is a scathing indictment of those who have helped to bring about Conscription for others. Having torn younger men away from their homes and forced them to undergo the horrors of the battlefield, they are now asked to volunteer for work on farm and in factory in order to keep up the necessary supplies. But, although frantic appeals have appeared on the walls and in the newspapers, and patriotic speeches by the hundred have been addressed to them, the elder men have failed to come forward in any numbers. Although as voters they must be held responsible to some extent for the policy which led up to the war, they have forced others to bear the brunt of the suffering, and now shelter themselves behind their birth certificates or their businesses. It is too much to hope that they will oppose compulsion, for the rich

will manage to evade it and the poor will be the victims. Trade Unionists are busy passing resolutions against "industrial conscription," as they did against military conscription, but they cannot hope to defeat it unless they throw over their officials, who have sold themselves to the Government for some State job or the other.

The Wheeldon Trial.

The amazing trial of the Wheeldon family on a charge of conspiracy to poison Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson showed the lengths to which the authorities are prepared to go to secure the conviction of men and women opposed to the war and to Conscription. The more one reads the evidence, the more one feels the audacity of the police and the simplicity of the jury. All the tales about poisoned darts and poisoned boot nails were so absurd that it seems almost unbelievable that they could be put before sensible men without raising a smile. Undoubtedly Mrs. Wheeldon and her daughters hated Lloyd George as being primarily responsible, in their opinion, for the continuance of the war; but if all those who share their hatred were to be sent to prison, then the prisons of this country would have to be enlarged. But the worst feature of the case was the part played by the Secret Police, who evidently thought the hatred shown by the Wheeltons would be a good foundation on which to build up a "plot." The principal *agent provocateur* was kept out of court, as his future activities would be curtailed if he were recognised. He has probably been handsomely rewarded by his superiors, who like to work up plots such as this, for they thereby prove to the rich the necessity for the existence of the Secret Police. It also means the continuance of their salaries and the spending of money for which no detailed accounts need be shown. The trial incidentally proves the rottenness underlying all forms of government.

"Welfare" Helps Exploitation.

Lloyd George possesses the failing common to all his countrymen—his imagination runs riot at times. It was no longer ago than December last that he informed the House of Commons how necessary it was for the Government to institute a Ministry for the well-being of Labour that it might be known as the "Welfare Department," "an attempt to take advantage of the present malleability of industry in order to impress upon it more humanitarian conditions—to make labour less squalid, less repellant, more attractive, more healthful." Beautiful and inspiring sentiments which, unfortunately, have not matured in practice. If one may judge from the experience of a woman welfare supervisor, the scheme of welfare has so far only resulted in aiding the whole machinery of exploitation. As foreshadowed by us in a previous issue of *FREEDOM*, the "welfare" cant has enabled employers to reduce exploitation to a fine art, and increased speeding-up has been the permanent result of the scheme which the ubiquitous Welshman painted so rosily.

A State Paradise.

A News Agency sends us the following particulars of State enterprises in Queensland:

The present Progressive Government of Queensland has embarked upon a number of State industrial enterprises. These have not been long enough in operation for the results to be known, but some of them have recorded successful initial operations. For instance, the State butchers' shops show a yearly profit of £2,865. The *Brisbane Daily Mail* writes as follows: "The State insurance office and the Public Curator's office have received consistently good patronage during the year, though the former has been subjected to much criticism on account of its rates. There remain the State stations, the State coal mines, the State sawmills, the Central Sugar Mills, and the butter enterprise. The Central Sugar Mills are a merely temporary expedient to assist the growers in the districts in which the mills exist, but of the remainder of the business mentioned, there is one—the State coal mine—which will command itself to the average business man." Mention of two more—the State hotels and the State timber business—complete the list.

May we add two more—State prisons and State executioner?

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THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

We heartily rejoice at the upheaval in Russia, and the clearing out of the Romanoffs and the gang of tyrants who have so long swayed the destinies of that nation of many millions and many races. It is an event that has been long hoped for, and long worked for, by all friends of liberty, and its influence will be felt in many directions. It must be glorious news to the political prisoners and political refugees who have suffered so much for views which, in many cases, are similar to those held by Radicals and Liberals in other countries. The papers describe the joy of the people, who can now express their hopes and fears without being clapped into prison, and without that terrible feeling of oppression which comes from being constantly watched by unseen eyes and ears.

Many streams have made up the flood which swept away the Romanoffs, and many and varied are the interests and views of those now engaged in forming an up-to-date system of Government. Even now the information on which to base a judgment is too scanty, but in the absence of any prominent family from which to start a new dynasty, we think it almost certain that a Republican form of government will be adopted eventually, with self-government for various parts of the Empire, after the model of the United States of America. The rising commercial class will be the predominating influence, the Socialists and Labour men being given some of the minor offices in the Government as a reward for their assistance in the Revolution. But the workers are already being told that the programme of reforms put forward on their behalf cannot be realised until after the war, which must be prosecuted to a victorious issue.

We are not quite certain that the people are so pro-war as the press would have us believe. We know that some of the banners carried through the streets had on them "Down with the War!" And we know that the Socialist Deputies were sent to prison for their opposition to the war. In any case, we refuse to believe that a free Russia will continue to carry on the same war policy as that of the corrupt and autocratic Czar's Government. The new Foreign Minister, M. Miliukoff, has always claimed Constantinople as Russia's prize, but the Minister of Justice, M. Kerensky, speaks of the "internationalisation" of that city. The Revolution may have a great effect in favour of peace, as opponents of the war in Germany will now say that there is nothing to fear from a newly-regenerated Russia. And if Germany offers new peace terms to the new Russian Government, we think it quite possible they may be accepted—not as a separate peace, but in combination with the other Allies, among whom France, which has suffered most, would respond to any overtures supported by Russia. England is the stumbling-block in the way of peace, but if the other Allies made up their mind to try a way out by negotiation the statesmen of this country would soon find a formula to suit those Allies.

Although for years we have looked forward to a Social Revolution in Russia, we cannot write very enthusiastically about the new *regime*, knowing by past experience how much tyranny can exist even under the most democratic forms of government. Yet we are not without hope that the Russian workers, by their study of the conditions in other countries, may learn what to avoid. At least we hope that the wish expressed by a member of the Provisional Government, to copy the English Parliamentary system, may never be realised. If Russians really are to be free, the less they have to do with Parliamentary institutions the better. The Revolution was made not by the Duma, but in spite of the Duma. May the Russian Revolution prove to be an Anarchist Revolution!

OUR MODERN FUNGOID GROWTHS.

Those of us who are rash enough to scan the daily papers are practically certain to find therein two important items of news. Day by day with most monotonous regularity appears an announcement of the formation of some new State department, and cheek by jowl appears the text of some new Order in Council, the effect of which will be to still further curtail the little liberty we still possess. The papers have become a mere register of the veritable rake's progress of our beneficent Government. Most people conscious of the bludgeon held over their heads in the shape of the Defence of the Realm Act, have ceased to criticise, but the *Daily Chronicle*, which until recently has been a most admirable specimen of a good, patriotic newspaper, has at last summoned up courage to accuse the various State departments of waste and overlapping. That nice brand-new broom, the National Service Department, is accused of sweeping ground already well swept by other State departments, to the dire confusion of all. It asserts that "the present method means that hundreds of officials are duplicating work, so that the department which was set up to enforce national economy is giving a fine example of national waste and inefficiency." It complains of lack of unity and co-ordination, and declares that delays, jealousy, and friction are handicapping the work of this and other State departments. The logic of the brave man who dared thus raise his voice in the wilderness is irrefutable, but how few writers to-day dare follow arguments to their logical conclusion! Perhaps they are zealous for our reasoning powers, and prefer that we ourselves should point the moral.

At the risk of being accused of using our reasoning faculties and so being hopelessly out-of-date, we modestly declare that there is something very "rotten in the State of Denmark." Of recent years scientists have delighted to tell us of some very remarkable growths of fungoid origin. They have taken a particularly vicious interest in telling us how rapidly such growths will extend their mycelium threads, and how tenacious of life are their offspring. We are told how this fascinating plant will gain a foothold on trunk, stem, leaf or fruit, and insinuate its way through the cells until the whole structure breaks down, and the fungus is triumphantly left in possession for as long as ever it can retain a foothold, that is, as long as food lasts out. Having propagated its kind by means of spores which possess the most remarkable vitality, and refuse to be killed by all ordinary means, it goes on spreading its evil way, leaving blackness and desolation behind.

If we enquire as to why plants succumb to such an attack, we are told quite definitely that they are not vigorous and disease-resisting, or that the cultivation of the ground has not been good. Neglect and ignorance have sowed the wind, and yet we pretend to be amazed at the whirlwind that is reaped! A good gardener or farmer, asked how he escaped the ravages of fungoid diseases, would reply, "by good cultivation." In other words, his war against all those foes that would tend to weaken his crops would be incessant, and his vigilance would be rewarded.

In this we see an analogy between the parasitic and fungoid attacks and those from which society is suffering to-day. We have allowed noxious plants to take root, and, quaintly enough, express surprise at their rapid growth, like a mushroom that appears to have come into existence in a single night. But if we examine the life-history of the mushroom we find its mycelium threads have been busy for a very long time underground, quietly and secretly germinating, gaining strength, and preparing the way for the life above ground.

It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that the plethora of State departments from which we are suffering to-day is in itself a symptom of decay. The whole organisation of society has for years favoured the growth of bureaucracy. The people have systematically been prevented from using their power of initiative. They have been forced to tolerate Governmental edicts which have sapped their power of voluntary organisation. Since the war began the mycelium threads of bureaucracy have spread with alarming rapidity, and, like all fungoid growths, will be difficult to exterminate. The cessation of hostilities will not root it out. The old worn-out society we have tolerated provided a rich soil for such undesirable growths. War or no war they would have retained their foothold and extended their ramifications, because the soil was fit and the people spineless and ignorant.

It is a mere matter of conjecture how long the bureaucracy of to-day will continue to thrive. That it must break down one day is certain. It is also undeniable that its effects will last as long as the people submit. When we again approximate to a healthy social life, then, quite naturally, this fungus will disappear. It thus becomes a question of "good cultivation." The apathy and ignorance of the people must be broken down, and the power of the Government crushed. So long as they tolerate exploitation, starvation, overwork, and a host of other evils the day is afar off, for the ground is full of weeds. Only we must remember that a hoe wielded with determination can do efficient work.

A DIPLOMAT'S PLAIN ENGLISH.

We all know what a united nation we are. This unity we extend to our brave and gallant Allies (hear, hear). We all admire them, for we know that without their help, without the blood they have shed for us, the torchlight of civilisation would have been extinguished and the gas cut off at the main. The Allied diplomats form a Mutual Admiration Society, to the great chagrin of the Hun, who, we are assured, finds it hard to keep a smiling face when he meets his deluded co-workers. Our diplomats are gentlemen of birth and breeding; golden-tongued, and with a command of language that Mr. Dooley might well envy. Here it is in black and white, and let the world despair. A diplomat's letter to the British Ambassador at Petrograd, dated July 2, 1916:

"My dear George," begins Lord Hardinge in his affectionate way that leaves Briand and the rest with a warmer heart; "My dear George," writes he, "your private telegram of this morning announcing the retirement of Sazonoff is decidedly depressing." We do all of us get bad news sometimes, but evidently George was not unduly depressed. He is a man of action is George. "I am glad that you sent your telegram to the Tsar and hope it may prove effective." So Hardinge smiled again as he bit the end of his fountain pen. The Tsar must certainly be put in his place, and George has done it. As Hardinge continues, in perfumed ink doubtless: "It is astonishing what an evil rôle is always being played by these Russian reactionaries." "It is very unfortunate that at a moment like this a change should be brought about, especially during the progress of the negotiations with reference to Roumania's entrance into the war."

It is certainly difficult, when you are doing the blarney stone business on the innocent stranger, to keep it up when the other fellow butts in. There is undoubtedly another Hunseen Hand at the bottom of the dastardly business. But let our friend the noble Lord take up the thread of the discourse; he has certainly studied the "Polite Letter Writer" and the "Manners and Customs of the Aristocracy" to good, almost brilliant, effect. "The negotiations with Roumania appear to proceed satisfactorily, but I shall not be convinced of their success until I see Roumania's declaration of war." How they trust each other, these diplomats, and what childlike faith has this believing Thomas. "For," says he, "Bratiano (the Roumanian Premier) is one of the most evasive fellows and always has been. Even at this moment he is endeavouring to wriggle out, on the alleged pretext that our offensive at Salonica is not everything which he desires." Diplomats have their little troubles, and it is nothing short of the meanest parsimony to grudge them the few thousands they get for "secret service." But to return to our Roumanian sheep.

It is incredible that Bratiano should have hesitated when honour and freedom and some tons of British grain were at stake. But we have our diplomat's word for it that he is a very evasive fellow. And, to clinch the matter, always has been. This evasive fellow, this double-dyed rogue, this bandit, brigand and whatnot, apparently insisted on something more substantial than honour and freedom, and the price of a few tons of grain. That accounts for Hardinge's next sentence: "Yet he must recognise that Roumania will not obtain the enormous tracts of territory for which she is striving, so long as she does nothing to secure them." It cannot be said we were ever niggardly, where other people's territory is concerned.

However, all the world knows that at last Roumania agreed to take a hand in the war, especially when Russia playfully paraded a few army corps on her borders. We are of course sorry that Roumania was wiped out after all, but—that Bratiano was always a very evasive fellow. He has been taught a lesson.

It must not be thought that Hardinge has a special dislike for Roumanians of an evasive disposition. There are others. It appears that the value of the rouble seemed likely to come down with a rush, although it would never fall so low as the mark, we patriotically assert. So Benckendorff went round to McKenna and tried to pull his ear to the tune of a few thousands. Apparently, however, McKenna had had a bad day at Newmarket, and prospects were not bright with Marconis. Anyway, he seems to have made a very wry face about it. And so Bencky turned sadly away. This naturally annoyed our diplomat, who quite candidly says: "McKenna, like all financial people, is narrow-minded and pedantic, and asserts that the rouble exchange is a question which does not concern the war. His opinion is a false one. It is possible we may have to intervene in order to convince him in case no agreement is reached."

And so there you are. You know all about it. Let it not be said that our Secret Service is useless. It is not everybody that can deal with evasive fellows or narrow-minded pedants. Or write perfumed letters about them. The Empire is safe. Let us slumber peacefully.

L.A.M.

THE NEW DICTATORS.

The possibility of a Military Dictatorship is beginning to be recognised by many besides the Anarchists. The recent change in the Government, by which Lloyd George seized the reins of power and appointed himself the head of a Council of Five to carry on the war, has naturally caused some heart burning amongst the Liberals whom he ejected from office; but others more disinterested see in this move the forerunner of another step which might lead to the country being placed under a Military Dictator. In an article headed "Dictatorship," in the *Daily News* of March 8, the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell, in dealing with the great increase of new Government Departments, says many things which Anarchists have said before him. For instance:

"It should be the object of all reasonable people to be governed as little as possible. The gradual evolution of representative self-government has expressed the resolve of civilised men to manage their own affairs and live their own lives, with the least possible interference from above or from outside. To-day the chief opponent of this resolve is Bureaucracy, which had long been trying to undermine self-government, and to set up the ideal of being governed as much as possible, in opposition to the older and better ideal of being governed as little as possible. The war, in addition to other and more obvious mischiefs, gave Bureaucracy an immense increase of strength. Every week sees the creation of some fresh office, and of a staff employed in executing that office's behests. There are some forms of lower life in which, if you detach a part from the whole, the part detached has the power of living and propagating itself. Even so with Bureaucracy. The Circumlocution Office is broken up into a dozen departments. An energetic official is placed at the head of each, and goes to work with a will, issuing decrees, like hot rolls, every morning.

"In old days, when the Cabinet system was still in force, we knew that the Government as a whole was answerable for actions done in its name; and that a blunder or a crime committed by one department involved the fate of the whole Cabinet. To-day the oppressed subject knows not where to turn. If Mr. Podsnap or Mr. Perkup issues an absurd decree, or if the Minister for Turnip-tops urges a course which the President of the Board of Conscription disallows, to whom are we to appeal? If General Sir George Tufto, being 'the competent military authority,' forbids family prayers, on the ground that they may involve seditious proceedings or hinder the work of recruiting, can we invoke the Cabinet to defend our religious liberties?"

But though the prospect is thus discouraging, Mr. Russell thinks it might be worse. The members of the Cabinet are civilians, and civilians might yet understand, or remember, what civil liberty means. Not so a Military Dictator; for, as he goes on to say:

"The military mind is constitutionally incapable of conceiving of Freedom, except as a pestilent mischief to be exterminated by whatever method comes most readily to hand. There is no need to ransack ancient or modern history for illustrations of my contention. At this moment, and for nearly three years past, the British nation has been struggling with all its might against the tyranny which German militarism is striving to enforce on the world.

"And yet there are some who say, in words or in effect, Let us set a thief to catch a thief—a tyrant to fight tyranny—a dictator to resist dictatorship. Sooner than lose the war (and by losing the war I mean failing to crush Germany) I would consent even to this desperate expedient; but in doing so I should feel an absolute conviction that, when the war was over—even when Berlin was turned into a dung-heap—the Dictator would still be with us. Dictators, whether military or civil, have a wonderful power of sticking to their posts."

Mr. Russell seems to fear a Military Dictator more than a civilian one, but if the civilian controls the army there is not much difference between the two. But it certainly looks as though the result of this war to "protect our liberties" will be the degradation of Parliament and the establishment of a Dictatorship. Of course, if the people wake up, things may turn out rather awkward for our Dictators; but at present they are content to let things slide, and their native enemies are taking full advantage of the situation.

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TOWARDS REVOLUTION.

The miracle of miracles has happened: Russia has at last had its successful revolution—successful at least to the extent that it has shaken the throne of the Romanoffs. How far that dynasty has been trodden underfoot it is not easy to say, as in spite of the alleged abolition of the Russian censorship, news is difficult to obtain. How far Lord Milner had a hand in it, whether he came to London with the plans of it all in his pocket, these things will not be known to us unless some professional jealousy among the diplomats lets the cat out.

The revolution may have got out of the hands of the bourgeois capitalists who initiated it, but, as the matter is treated elsewhere in these columns, I will not deal exhaustively with it. I wish to make a few pointed remarks on the revolution—the Social or Anarchist revolution, as you will.

It will, I think, be frankly admitted that we all dream of the coming of a power, a cataclysm, a social earthquake that will make short shrift of the things that are. It is according to our youth, our matured experience that this varies in our vision. But whether the coming be sharp, short and sudden, or long, how many of us are prepared for it? How many of us have reckoned it out in cold blood?

Where is the school in which the coming youth are taught to foresee and to prepare for the day? If we assert that it may not come in our day, why do we not pass on our ideas, our plan of action to the new generation? What is the use of adumbrating about social science, and the fallacy of this or that theory of value, if we do not know our part in the day of days? It is true, of course, that no cut and dried plan will serve, as circumstances always change; but why not lay out at least a skeleton plan? It may, of course, be asserted that the revolution may come in forms it is humanly impossible to foresee, but the people will want food at the least. A revolution is won on the stomach. People cannot live on manifestoes.

There is no question of giving away secrets to the reactionaries if we openly discuss the possibilities and line of action that will be open to us. The reactionaries have only one remedy—force, and to attempt a revolution with the Army on its present scale against us would be madness. Production must be maintained and the welfare of all carefully thought out.

The Paris Central Committee discussed too much and lost. But the Commune cannot be taken as an analogy, since it was mainly a military, or, rather, a citizen-army revolt. There was too much *chassepot* business, too much organisation for the defence; there was no making the people independent of the Assembly. All the public services were, however, maintained, and Paris did not starve any more than she had during the siege. How far have we anticipated these things? Let us at least have something to work upon. Let us make sure that the revolution shall not be defeated by the would-be revolutionaries. To discuss now is easier than to wait until the day comes.

L.A.M.

"For the Duration of the War."

On March 19 a letter was sent to the War Office stating that if our type and machine parts were returned they would be used to print FREEDOM, and that we considered the Defence of the Realm Act quite strong enough in case we infringed the Regulations, and did not consider them justified in withholding our goods. In reply we received the following letter:

20th March, 1917.

Sir,—I am directed by the Competent Military Authority to inform you, in reply to your letter of the 19th March, that, as you still refuse to sign the undertaking that you will not use the type mentioned in your letter for any contravention of the Defence of the Realm Regulations, the same will be held for the duration of the present War.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

E. S. WARD, Capt.,

General Staff, London District.

Evidently the War Office has failed to learn any lessons from the Russian Revolution.

The receipt of a free copy of this paper is an invitation to subscribe—1s. 6d. per annum.

To Our Readers.

The great increase in the cost of printing and the refusal of the War Office to allow FREEDOM to be sent out of the country have made it more difficult to produce our paper, although only four pages, and we appeal to our readers to subscribe to our Guarantee Fund and help us to carry on. It would be a good thing if comrades were to buy two or three copies each month and give them away to likely readers, especially now that the ban on posters prevents us advertising the paper in the ordinary way.

In response to many inquiries, we have reprinted that splendid pamphlet, "Anarchist Morality." The high cost of paper has compelled us to increase the price to twopence, but as there are 40 pages it is still wonderful value for the money. We will send six copies for 1s., or 13 for 2s., post free. For larger quantities, prices on application.

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(March 1—March 28.)

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