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THE YEAR OF REVOLUTION

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BEFORE summarizing the results of the first year of the revolution we must ask ourselves where we stand at present. The old Germany which we knew in our youth has ceased to exist. It has been consumed in a mighty conflagration that has swept through the entire circuit of the globe. The embers are still glowing; the last lurid glare is still visible. No people, no class, no institution will survive in its previous form.

A new Europe has arisen in whose international councils Germany has a modest place. Deprived of three great provinces and of six million people, bereft of its army, wrecked in its finances, with its productive forces crippled, and burdened with vast obligations to its enemies, it enters a new family of nations under many handicaps. Three great West Slavic governments have meantime appeared in Europe—a greater Poland, a great Czecho-Slovak republic, and a great Serbia have arisen at the cost of Prussia, Austria, and Hungary. This accords with plans laid long in advance by the London foreign office. The future of greater Russia is still unrevealed. England, having adopted a policy identical with that of Bethmann-Hollweg toward the border states of Livonia and Lithuania, will either cut Russia entirely off from the Baltic, or leave it but a narrow corridor of access to that sea.

There is no question, consequently, but what the first year of revolution shows a heavy deficit in respect to

foreign relations. However, these losses of population, territory, and property cannot be charged against the revolution itself, because they are consequences of the military defeat of the Imperial Army, and, above all, of the unreasonable and misdirected foreign policy of the old government. The only benefit that the revolution might have brought us, in view of our military overthrow, would have been the unity for which our nation has longed throughout its history. We could have attained this, however, only by a complete reconciliation with the Latin nations. It is generally known that Italy desired to see Austria and Germany joined. France would have withdrawn its opposition if German Socialism had really been willing to go back unreservedly and unhesitatingly to the traditions of its great leaders, Marx and Engels, who always agreed with the French Socialists in regarding Alsace-Lorraine as the inalienable property of France, and who believed the union of these territories with Germany a crime against the common people of Europe. Complete reconciliation with the Latin nations would not only have made it possible to restore the unity of the German people, but it would have removed the danger of losing upper Silesia, which now threatens, because France and Italy are inevitably dependent upon Germany for coal. These two nations could not possibly wish to see new Germany's ability to export coal crippled. The task of the immediate future

will be to reduce the deficit incurred by our foreign policy during the first year of revolution by an honorable and sincere reconciliation with the Latin nations.

Turning now to the transformation which the past year has brought about in political and social conditions at home, the most striking fact is the blindness of most Germans to the fact that the old order has gone never to reappear, and that a new social system is in process of formation. Not only the middle classes, who have suffered so by the revolution, but even the most radical of our social democrats, who are responsible for that revolution, either hope or fear, according to their respective sympathies, that after a short period of transition everything will be as it was before. But anyone who has taken the trouble to survey the events of this period with the philosophic calm of the historical and social student, and whose mind is unclouded by party controversy, will see at once that the old political and social order cannot come back, because both the war and the revolution coöperated to destroy them completely. They have lost their physical resources and their intellectual prestige. We are justified in saying that the masses are unable to restore the old order, no matter how bitterly disappointed they may be in the new, because they have had a glimpse behind the scenes of the ancient system. They all perceive now how the Imperial Government vacillated, bereft of steady counsel, between a desire for peace and greed for new territories. They have seen what they used to regard as the wise heads of the foreign office hesitating irresolutely between an Anglo-Saxon and a Russian policy. Their old faith in the infallibility of their military leaders has been destroyed by the obvious and puerile blunders of the

war. They have witnessed how the heads of dynasties wrangled over the crowns of Courland, Lithuania, and Poland, on the very eve of the revolution that overturned their thrones. A nation that has seen the powerful tremble, the wise fail in counsel, the infallible blunder, and the exalted in rank grovel in undignified strife, will never turn back again to a form of government of which these institutions were the pillars. They will not do so, even though they recognize that they themselves lack the moral qualities required to guide their own destiny.

In the same way that the war and the revolution have destroyed the sentiments and beliefs essential for a restoration of the old political system, so have they destroyed the bases for a reconstruction of the old economic system. It is mere folly for the captains of industry to think that the former labor discipline can be restored by reviving the submission of the working people to the arbitrary authority of employers. A generation which has spent four years in constant danger of its life, and that has lived through a world catastrophe, cannot be reduced again to its former subordination. The only possible outcome is some new organization of productive labor, which will not do violence to self-respect and human dignity, but will be impersonal and more or less automatic, and will govern the employer as well as the employee.

The physical structure of the old productive system has been transformed as completely as its intellectual structure. It will have to be rebuilt upon an entirely new basis, to conform with the changes in organization to which we have just referred. This is not because the Germans despise and hate everything that is old, but because the old has passed away of its own weakness and decadence, so that there

is no alternative but to build anew, on a new plan and with new materials.

This is a vital truth — a new form of society is in process of formation, notwithstanding the doubts of our workmen and citizens. Our books and newspapers are filled with arguments to show that the revolution has made no material change. They take this position: 'You say a new social order has arrived. We do not see it. All we see is misery and distress. Can you not observe how wealth displays itself in public, how smugglers and the speculators exult over their gains? Then turn your glance to the war invalids and the discharged soldiers unable to find employment. Where is the gratitude of the nation? Is this your new social order?'

No one can deny that these objections are well taken and not to be lightly dismissed. They point to another deficit of the revolution. But would anyone expect that a new social order, emerging from an ocean of blood and ruin, could at once restore the well-being of the multitude? Did not the destruction of the Feudal System of France, in 1789, spread famine throughout the entire country? Was not 1783 — the decisive year of the revolution — a harvest season for smugglers and speculators? The long queues that then stood in front of the bakers' shops in Paris, and the proceedings of the revolutionary tribunals, give an unambiguous answer. The arguments of those impatient radicals who deny our contention that the old order is dead and that a new and better era is dawning, touch only the surface of the situation. They are valid as a criticism of the revolution, but they do not affect the fact that old Germany cannot come back, because something different and new is taking its place.

The existence of the new order is not denied by more conservative circles,

but that order is bitterly criticized. It is hard to say what the great voiceless multitude that does not print books and publish newspapers really feels and thinks. But a man who listens to the conversations on the train, in the waiting rooms of the stations, in the taverns, and upon the streets, knows that the common people are passionate and bitter critics of the revolution and that they regard its outcome as a failure. This great voiceless mass, whose deciding votes turn every election, demands of the Socialist parties: 'Where are the blessings you promised? We do not see them. All that we do see is revolt, disinclination to labor, silent workshops, disorganized traffic, dirty streets, ruined houses, untidy dwellings. The characteristics of your new order were to be joyous, willing industry. Where is it? You were to substitute unselfish service in place of the thirst for gain. Have you done that? Are not people more self-centred and selfish than ever before? Do not the war profits mount up? Do not the propertied classes insist more vehemently upon their rights than ever? You speak of liberty. Where is it? In place of submission to authority we have license. Old age chatters of the past, youth revels in the empty, high-sounding phrases of the revolution. What are the practical advantages of this? Where is the moral regeneration you ascribed to socialism? We see nothing of it — we doubt if there is such a thing.'

We hear these criticisms rising louder and louder as the days pass, from the masses who do not own property, but whose sympathies lie with the bourgeois democracy, and the clericals. Their estimate of the revolution, however, overlooks the fact that all great crises in history have promised at the moment more than they could deliver, and that periods of transition in which

old moral standards are shattered are almost always periods of ethical decadence until a new morality has established itself in the hearts and minds of the masses.

The criticism which the champions of the old régime direct against the revolution is as monotonous as it is uninspiring. It is merely a repetition of the old charge that the revolutionists stabbed our victorious armies in the back. That is a myth, as every intelligent man in Germany knows. People abroad go so far as to deny the reality of any revolution in Germany, and characterize the overthrow that we call by that name as the general strike of a whipped army. Indeed, it was not until Ludendorff's defeat was obvious to everyone, that the spirit of the German army was shaken. It was only when our troops saw that Ludendorff, in spite of the numerical superiority which he possessed in the spring of 1918, was not able to win a victory, that their confidence wavered. That result was unavoidable. When the second retreat from the Marne began, a million German soldiers were already buried in the soil of France. Our men could not look in any direction without seeing the ominous arms of German crosses extended over the graves of their comrades. The ravaged forests stretched their withered arms to heaven, ruined cities and villages reproached them with the fixed and silent eyes of death. This whole region of devastation and bloodshed framed the memories of four years, during which they had cowered in dugouts and trenches, exposed to artillery fire and poisonous gases and bayonet attacks. And they saw no end to this misery. Meantime, reports were coming that at home the war profiteers were dancing a mad dance around the golden calf of gain. Naturally, hate rose in their hearts. And then came

the end. The firebrand of military revolt sped like the wind along our entire front, and the whole military structure collapsed in a night. We need not stop to argue that the balance of the first year of revolution is not what the representatives of the old régime assert. In October, 1918, there was no victorious army which the revolution could stab in the back. It is true, however, that the German revolution at the outset was a general strike of a hopelessly conquered army against the madness of its leaders, who were ready to send new hecatombs of victims to the sacrifice of battle.

A cool-headed, objective, unpartisan estimate of what the first year of revolution has brought us will set first on the debit side the fearful decline in coal production. Instead of one hundred and ninety million tons, which was the normal annual output before the war, we have raised only seventy million tons the present year. The loss of the Saar Basin, which is the subject of so much violent discussion, accounts for only twelve million tons of this decline. To be sure, the falling off of output is not solely due to the revolution. When Ludendorff started his great offensive in the West, he did not spare the miners. Many of them have fallen at the front; others have returned to their homes as cripples and invalids. The speedy recovery of our labor resources was not to be expected, for mining is a highly skilled vocation. In addition, throughout the war, mechanical facilities for working the mines steadily grew worse. Precautions for the safety of the workers were neglected. The physical labor required to win a ton of coal, and the danger incurred in so doing, both increased. All these influences combined to lessen the output per worker during the war, in spite of the fact that hope of victory, and the stern discipline of our military

masters, were concentrated upon increasing production to the utmost. Both the hope of victory and the fear of authority vanished together when the imperial armies collapsed. Naturally, there was a great reaction. The authority of employers over their men was destroyed. The miners fixed their own tasks and made them easy. Their personal interest was preferred to the interest of the community. The revolution has found no means of moral suasion to prevent a miner's daily output declining from eighteen hundred kilos to one thousand kilos. The dogma that socialist labor is labor for the common weal found no acceptance in the coal regions.

The worst conditions prevail in Upper Silesia. Things are still boiling there as in a witch's caldron. Bolshevik propaganda to destroy everything is allied with Polish propaganda for national ends. Both aim to stop the mines in order to enforce their demands. It is no miracle, therefore, that production in that region has practically ceased. But strikes follow close on the heels of strikes even in the Ruhr district, the richest coal region of the continent. There is no such sense of duty among miners, as we find, for instance, among physicians, who risk their lives and exhaust their strength without self-regard, in a period of epidemic. A purely selfish insistence upon a six-hour day and a correspondingly small daily output, which might be defended, perhaps, under different circumstances, has supplanted all regard for the general welfare among this class of workers.

Another entry to the debit account of the revolution is our disorganized system of transportation. That disorganization cannot be attributed alone to our having delivered five thousand locomotives and thirty thousand freight cars to the Allies. Disinclina-

tion to work is responsible for our troubles in this instance also. In contrast with the coal mines, our railways and our repair shops have plenty of labor. We must consider, however, that the use of substitute materials has been a great handicap. We have been further hampered by losing so much of our rolling stock to the Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and Courland. It is lamentable that we did not bring back our trains and locomotives from those regions when it was possible, and that we have had to wait until the Entente brought strong pressure to bear before evacuating Livonia. While factory after factory stood idle in Germany for want of coal and cars, we were providing munitions and food for an entire army in Courland, which might have been withdrawn and disbanded within a few weeks of the armistice.

One hopeful feature of the situation is that the spirit of industry is reviving gradually in the country districts and in small and medium-sized towns. Complaints of indifference to their duties on the part of workers have nearly ceased in the porcelain and glass works, toy factories, piano factories, and many chemical establishments. It seems safe to say that if we could get our coal output up to the normal once more, our export trade, so far as it depends on native raw materials, would soon revive.

A very serious debit item is the decline of foreign exchange. Although the flood of German paper money that has set back into the country from the territories beyond our own borders formerly occupied by our armies, and the flight of war profits to other lands, are due rather to the war than to the revolution, yet the latter must bear part of the blame for the situation. Decline in foreign exchange is partly due to our wavering foreign policy. We seem, strangely enough, to have

assumed that when we stopped trying to exculpate Germany for starting the war, and frankly acknowledged our responsibility, we had reformed all our relations with the outer world.

The most important item to the credit of the first year of revolution is the establishment of a Democratic republic. And, indeed, if we believe with Friedrich Engels, that the laboring classes can rise to power only under a democratic form of government, and that such an organization of the state is the direct prelude to the rule of the proletariat, we shall estimate this the greatest achievement of the year. The other items to the credit of the revolution are the eight-hour day, employment relief, - and preliminary steps toward socializing coal mines, electric power, and match manufacturing. To the revolution is also due the enormous advance in wages, the full benefit of which, for the working classes, will be deferred until our foreign exchange declines. However, we have actually succeeded in making the compensation of manual labor nearly equal compensation for intellectual labor. Most of our working people now receive an annual income exceeding five thousand marks, and are, therefore, better off than a capitalist living upon the income derived from an investment of one hundred thousand marks.

Our 'Majority Socialists' are mostly skeptical as to the value of the Soviet idea. They are not unhappy over the fact that the Soviet principle has practically no achievements to show during the first year of the revolution. We

should bear in mind, however, that the vast majority of those who champion the Soviets do not understand the essential principles of the system. We have explained repeatedly that that idea at bottom merely means a demand for the representation of the people at large in the control of production. The whole system has been prejudiced by its association with Bolshevism. Our 'Majority Socialists' are singularly blind to the great intellectual revival among the people and to the new attitude they are assuming toward many social problems. This explains why many of our younger workers are seceding from the older group; and why our orthodox socialist ministers seem so bourgeois to their followers and encounter so much distrust among the rank and file of the party.

No matter how liberal the valuation placed upon the credit items of the revolution, we shall all have to acknowledge that the year closes with a debit balance which must be made up by subsequent achievements. We are confident that this will be accomplished. The rise of a new social system should not be confounded with a mere class insurrection. It is a slow process, still in its first stages. During the first year of revolution, the German people have been like a man following an unknown path through the darkness up a steep mountain. As he travels toward the East, instead of the dawn he seeks he sees before him for a time only deeper darkness. But they who have faith know that the sunrise will ultimately come.

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PEACE AND FAMINE

MR. J. M. KEYNES was the most important of the advisers of the most important of the governments represented in the great Conference of Paris. An economist of high repute, he was taken into the Treasury during the war, and the reputation to which he owed his selection for this special employment was so much enhanced that he was chosen to speak for that department when the Allies met to arrange the terms of peace. He took the leading part in the long and difficult deliberations over reparation that occupied so much of the time of the Big Four, and he sat in Mr. Bonar Law's place at the Supreme Economic Council when the Chancellor could not attend. He resigned when the policy of the Conference took a course that seemed to him fatal and irrevocable.

The publication of this book* is, therefore, not merely an act of conspicuous courage and public spirit; it is an infinitely more important event than any speech that has been made on the peace by any of its authors. He tells us what he thinks; they tell us what they force themselves to think. As a piece of literature it is beyond praise; if many economists had his wit, his eloquence, his easy address in stating and analyzing confused and intricate problems, their science would never have been called dismal. His portraits of the three chief figures are masterpieces. But the book which would live by these qualities alone is yet more valuable, because it tells the world how the peace looks to the best minds that were engaged on its prob-

lems. Its appearance is a political event of great moment, for it gives to all the men and women who know that Europe has gone wrong at this crisis in her history clear and definite guidance on the measures that can and should be taken to retrieve these errors so far as it is still possible to retrieve them.

A story was going round Paris last spring of a famous dialogue between Lord Robert Cecil and one of the most intransigent of his French colleagues. 'You want to destroy Germany, and you want at the same time to enrich France,' said Lord Robert. 'Unfortunately, revenge and avarice are in this case incompatible.' A good part of Mr. Keynes's book is really the demonstration and illustration of this thesis. The peace ruins Germany, and at the same time it promises to the Entente Powers an indemnity which is not put into figures in the treaty, but is meant to correspond in the public mind to the fantastic sums that were named on Coalition platforms a year ago. Now it is a simple thing to ruin Germany, but to ruin Germany or any other industrial state without ruining her neighbors is a less simple or straightforward matter; to ruin her and then to bleed her is the dream of a madman. The peace in its present form satisfies the desire for vengeance at the cost of the welfare of the world; it is not tenderness for Germany but care for mankind that makes every reasonable man condemn it when he realizes its character.

Not, of course, that this is the only standard. Peace was promised on certain terms. Mr. Keynes's comparison of the terms on which the armistice

* *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. By John Maynard Keynes. London: Macmillan & Co. 279 pages, 8s. 6d. net.