

THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT. By Karl Radek.

The Socialist workers' revolution of Russia shows the proletariat the way which leads to power. The capitalist press of the world cries that this way is bloody, it denounces the rough application of force used in this Revolution. And it is absolutely justified. Was not that press created by capital as the organ to fight the working class? Its duty, therefore, is to besmirch and vilify the first workers' revolution, and thereby frighten the workers in other countries with it as though it were Medusa. But why should the Axelrods, Martovs and the Kautskys condemn the Revolution, because of the force used? They were the very people who defended the idea of a proletarian dictatorship against the reformers.

What is dictatorship? It is the form of government by which one class ruthlessly dictates its will to the other class. In the period of social evolution, in which a class is merely preparing itself for the struggle for power, it disdains the weapon of force, because it is too weak to put this to the test. It is just collecting its strength, hence the governing power is not obliged to make a display of its real power. The governing class keeps force in reserve, at the same time granting a certain freedom of development to the oppressed as long as it deems that class devoid of danger. When, however, the rulers begin to lay burdens on their victims which cause them to react, then we regard that as bringing force into play. We saw such burdens put on the workers by the war. All the few liberties which the workers enjoyed in peace-time were revoked; therefore we experienced the dictatorship of Imperialism which cost the workers millions of lives....No ruling class has ever hitherto

been conquered at one blow. Once overcome, it strives to recoup its forces; and it can revive owing to the fact that revolution, no matter how successful cannot root up completely and at once the established customs of the defeated class. The Socialist revolution is a lengthy process, which begins with the dethroning of the capitalist class; but only ends when capitalist methods have been changed and transformed into a workers' commune. This process of transition must occupy at least one generation in every country, and this period is what is termed the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is the period in which the workers with one hand overthrow the capitalist class, whilst they hold the other free in order to build and construct.

Everything that has been said against the principle of the dictatorship of the Russian workers bears no other interpretation than the denial of the teachings of Marx, and even of the most commonplace occurrences of the past. What does it prove if a Renner tries to explain in a learned way that the political Revolution, i.e., the brutal use of force, is in total contradiction to the Socialist Revolution; because the latter is out to create a new mode of life, not to destroy? Nothing less than that this former devotee of Lasalle and Marx, is merely a sophist of Capitalism, and no true follower of Lasalle. The Socialist Revolution is bound to arouse the most unrelenting opposition of the former privileged class, and this can only be broken with iron. Where Capitalism is highly developed the struggle will be ruthless and bloody. In that land, then, the measures taken by the proletariat must also be ruthless and bloody in order to keep the conquered capitalists in subjection. But this argument is met by the opponents of the Russian Workers' Revolution—those who profess to be followers

of Marx—with the excuse that there is no question of the rejection of the Dictatorship on principle. The point at issue is the dictatorship in a country like Russia where the dictatorship of the proletariat will resolve itself into the rule of the majority by a minority. Such arguments are to be denounced as cowardly subterfuge.

In no country in the world will the Revolution be the act of the majority of the population. For Capitalism is not merely the physical control of production, but everywhere it controls the minds of the masses as well. Want and oppression, the cataclysmic effects even of that product of Capitalism war, will not suffice to cause a universal rising of the oppressed and despoiled. The revolt is always led by a minority which accomplishes the revolution. The success of the revolution is dependent on its affinity to the interests of the masses. It is the creative power of a revolution which succeeds in awakening the masses, and in bringing them into the camp which defends their interests, and will free them from their slavery. In fact it is quite safe to say that the minority begins every revolution; only during its development does it attract the majority and, thereby, conquer. If it were otherwise according to the Kautsky theory, the dictatorship would not be injurious in a country like Russia with a proletarian minority, but it would be unnecessary in a country with a proletarian majority—that is where the Kautskys kindly permit it. In those countries the capitalist class would be in such a minority that it would not be able even to take arms against the proletariat. Therefore, the only possible conclusion is that so long as the Marxian theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat reigns supreme, such a dictatorship can be justified in Russia as well as in any other country.