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RED BOLOGNA : *The Italian Socialist Congress.*

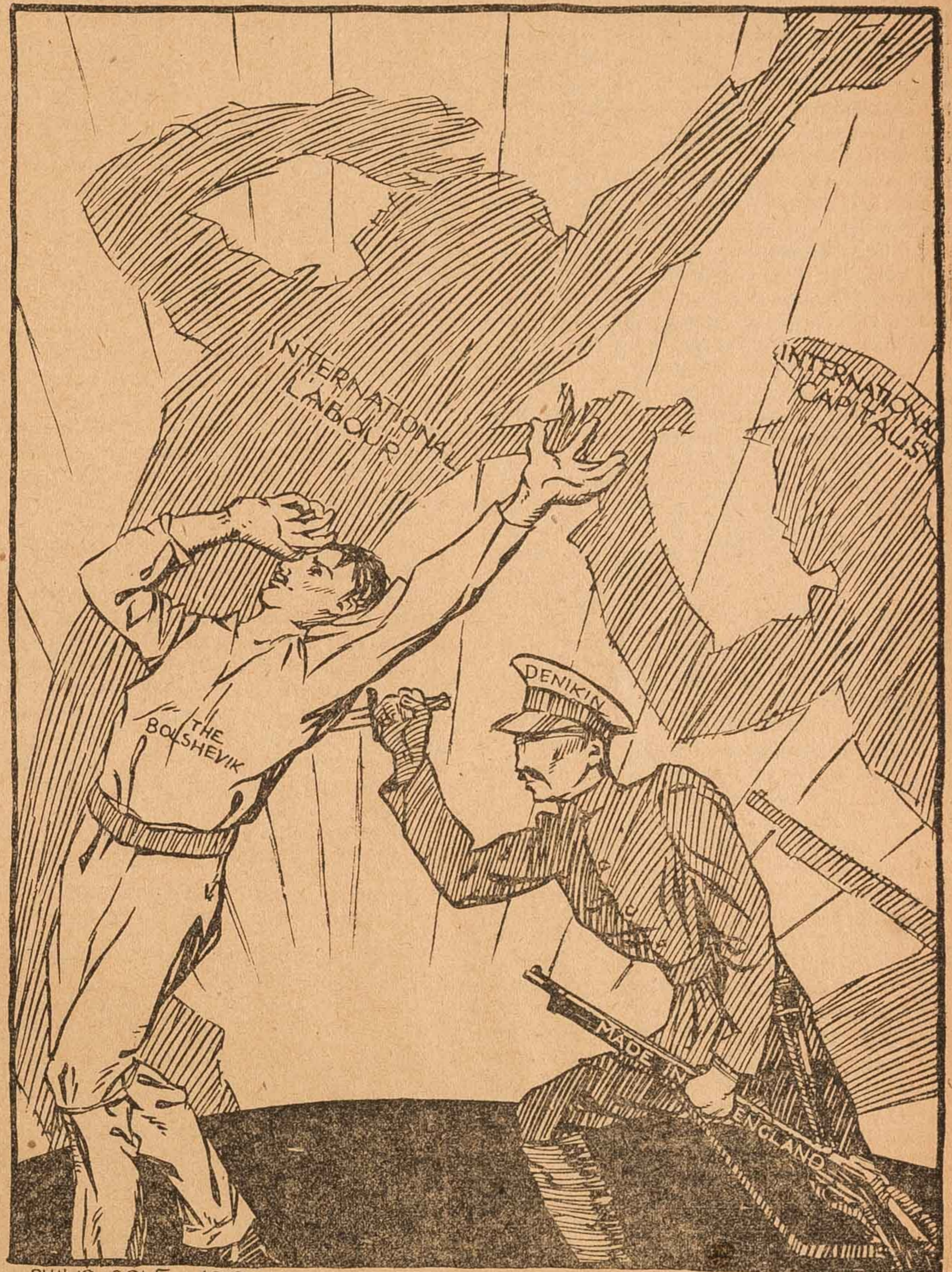
Beautiful Bologna! "Red Bologna" — red in a double sense, red in its colouring, Socialist red in spirit—still seems to be lingering in the quiet old world of the Middle Ages; the hurrying swirl of modern capitalism has not touched the ancient city yet, nor are its people stirred by the approach of the newest Social Order. Aggressively modern Communities writhe and groan in long and painful birth pangs, for the New Order; their populations contend in terrible strife, but the working people of Bologna, seem to be hurrying forward gladly and without fear or doubting, to take their part in the Social Revolution.

The old streets are mostly lined with portici, so that one seldom needs to step from under the shady archways into the sun. The massive houses, coloured in soft venetian red that pales to a mellow orange, are carved with the arms of ancient families, and through their lofty doorways one sees spacious courtyards with statues and fountains, wrought iron gates and glimpses of green gardens beyond. Oxen pass drawing great drays, finely carved and ornamented with nail heads; old vehicles handed down from generation to generation. Some of their owners will tell you they do not know the age of them, but can trace them back for more than a hundred years. On these slow-going drays big wine barrels, from which, when they stop at their destination, you can see the grape juice ladled out, all newly trodden, with the stalks and the smashed grapes yet in it. Pictures of long ago they seem as they rumble through the old streets, these drays with the covering of straw that the barrels may rest steadily without rolling, and the woman in short cotton skirt and a handkerchief for her head-dress, sitting on the barrels to drive holding a whip of string, whilst the man toils before leading the oxen with his hand on the bridle.

These peasants coming into Socialist Bologna, are arriving from a surrounding country that is even more Socialist than the town.

At Imola, a little village forty minutes' ride in the train from Bologna, a meeting was addressed by members of the newly elected Committee of the Socialist Party and the foreign delegates to the Congress.

The speakers arrived late,—the audience very early, it had waited more than two hours when the meeting began. The stage was cleared of scenery, in order that the entire space might be occupied by the people who crowded in behind the speakers. The pit was thronged, the tiers of the boxes (which take the place of the circles in British theatres), were packed, the women in front, the men behind, with tightly wedged human beings who seemed as though they might easily burst over the edge by sheer weight of numbers. Very vivid, almost startling, was the effect of the bright coloured peasant dresses and the warm brown human flesh lit up against the black interior of the boxes: more striking still was the force of the enthusiasm that stirred the people. "Viva il Socialismo! Viva Lenin!" the cries resounded, the people all



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cheering and waving, calling the speakers by name—"Viva Lazzari! Viva Serrati!" Even the foreign delegates were remembered, the French with a special enthusiasm. It was not from the speakers these people had come to gather enthusiasm, they had an abundant and overflowing store of it to impart. They were all glowing and burning with it—one felt the thrill of the coming revolution.

On the walls of the village houses was painted here and there: "Viva Lenin!" The Socialist Party has a large club house in the village where there is a big portrait of Lenin in a fur cap. On the walls of the Lecture Hall

of the club-house are painted portraits of Karl Marx, Karl Liebknecht and Andrea da Costa and the motto—"Those who do not work shall not eat."

Again in a suburb of Bologna itself there was a gathering in the Casa dei Fiori; a supper in honour of the newly elected Executive of the Socialist Party and a meeting in the courtyard outside. There was a dense mass of people, peasant women of all ages, some very old, others but children, were seated on chairs in the centre of the crowd; the men were standing densely massed on the outskirts.

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The women prompted the speakers, punctuated their sentences with ready comment, called for them to continue yet longer and would scarcely let them end. Even a foreigner, whose words they could not follow, was upborne by the warmth of their welcome; hundreds of hands were stretched out to help, to shake, to wave in greeting.

Bologna is the Oxford of Italy, the home of her oldest University. The city was once entirely aristocratic; the villeins, the working people lived outside in the country, and the noble families demonstrated their greatness and pride by building enormous brick towers as symbols of their power. Bologna possessed until recent years a very forest of these towers, but one only, Asinelli, now remains at its original gigantic height, 257 feet. Close beside Asinelli is a decapitated rival, Garisenda, which leans greatly to one side. Dante, when he saw Garisenda in the year 1300 likened it to the Giant Anteaus, leaning forward. Dante's verse has been inscribed on a tablet affixed to Garisenda and the Bolognes eagerly advise all visitors to stand at the angle where they can see the tower "as Dante saw it."

Life seems to go smoothly in Bologna. People sit leisurely at the tables outside the restaurants. The cafés are open and brightly lit till two o'clock in the morning. Asinelli towers hugely against the pellucid sky. The street lamps throw into warm relief portions of ancient buildings leaving the rest all clothed in the black mystery of night. Four scene shifters returning home, with spirits exhilarated by wine, pause here to sing a part song. One of their number beats time for the rest and then protests volubly at their inexactitudes. Two others stroll up to argue about the singing. An attendant at the café sits down to observe and makes humorous comments on the scene. We are back in the time of Shakespeare—either he must have travelled in Italy, or British cities were like Bologna in Shakespeare's time.

The Socialist Congress was held in the big Teatro Comunale (Municipal theatre) at Bologna. Banners announcing it were hung across the principal streets leading to the theatre. The walls of Bologna in every direction were plastered with Socialist posters; Manifesto from the Socialist Party to the people of Bologna, addresses of welcome from the local workers' organisations to the Socialist Congress and so on. Posters advertising the "Avanti" and other Socialist newspapers were everywhere; the Italian Government receives a tax for each poster, and perhaps because of this, there is complete freedom to post bills. On the commercial bookstalls one could buy translations of Russian Soviet pamphlets, pamphlets by Da Costa, and other Italian Socialists, and a serial history of the Italian Socialist movement.

There were upwards of 1,200 delegates to the Congress, representing 1,891 branches and 81,463 votes. Before the war the greatest number represented at any Congress was 1,418 branches and 66,708 votes. The membership steadily declined during the war. In 1917 there were 870 branches, in 1918 765.

The fine Teatro Comunale is brilliantly lit and decorated in red and gold. The artistic sense so lacking in England has made the best of the premises. Instead of a table and stiff rows of chairs at the front of the platform with a drop scene behind, as we do it in Britain, the entire stage is open. At the back sit the visitors to the Congress, who, have proved their enthusiasm by paying five francs each for admission, as have the other

visitors who crowd the top gallery of the theatre. Midway across the stage is a big table for the press; at right angles to it, on the left hand side of the stage, is another press table. Nearer the front of the stage, and to the left of the centre, are tables for the Executive of the Party. All these tables have dull covers, and green plants are gracefully arranged at various points. To the right of the tables where sit the Executive, and a little nearer the footlights, is the tribune from which the speeches are delivered. It is covered in brilliant scarlet and draws all attention to the orator.

At the far end of the hall, right opposite the centre of the stage, is a great portrait of Karl Liebknecht, surrounded by red flags and with black ribbon draped about it. Again and again the Congress rose to its feet to cheer Karl Liebknecht. Was Rosa Luxemburg forgotten? We sent a note to the Chairman recalling the name of that great Communist heroine. He read it to the assembly: the delegates leapt to their feet and cheered most cordially. The omission recalled the fact that not 5 per cent of the members of the Italian Socialist Party are women. To the mind of the average Italian, (this is not untrue to say it of our own country also) the word "leader" always conjures up the figure of a man. Yet several Italian comrades, commenting upon the incident, expressed the view that Luxemburg was probably an even greater force in the German, and in the International Communist movement than Liebknecht. The moral of this is a call to women comrades to come out and take their due share in the revolutionary struggle, and not merely to remain in the safe harbourage of agitation for piece-meal reforms, which entail no serious conflict with the possessing classes—of the women who are in the Italian Socialist movement, but few belong to the well-to-do bourgeoisie; many are teachers, many belong to the manual working class. In certain sections the women are well organised industrially. In the stretch of country eastward from Piedmont to Ancona there are 8,000 women to every 1,000 men in the industrial Unions and in the Unions for land workers.

For one session at the Congress the chair was taken by a woman, comrade Altobelli.

REVOLUTIONARY IDEA ACCEPTED BY ITALIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT.

Several outstanding facts must impress even the most superficial observer.

No one in the Congress, except Turati, the old reformist leader of the Party, whose day has passed, expresses the least doubt that the Russian Soviet Revolution is a genuine Socialist Revolution, that the Soviets and the proletarian dictatorship are the essential medium for securing Socialism, and that the Bolshevik policy is the right one.

No one in the Congress openly dissents from the view that a Socialist Revolution is desirable in Italy as in all countries, that this revolution will shortly arise in Italy and that force will be employed on both sides.

In Italy the rank and file of the movement so strongly desire the Revolution that not a single leader dare tell the Congress that he is against it. Even Treves, a very clever reformist, who, were he in this country, would not be a Socialist at all, but a member of the Liberal Party, found it best merely to suggest that the Revolutionary period may not have arrived, that much preparation is necessary, and that the present popular tendency towards a violent revolution may only be an effect of the war.

In Britain, not a single official leader has yet taken a firm and unequivocal stand for the Revolution.

In Italy, the rank and file enthusiasm for the Russian Communists is so strong that, of all the leaders, only Turati dare cast a doubt on their bona-fides. In Britain, Henderson, Thomas, and others have persistently maligned and abused the Russian Communists, whilst the I.L.P. has refused to declare its solidarity with the Communists and the Soviets, and has insisted on adopting an attitude of impartiality between Soviet Russia and those so-called "Socialists" like Kevensky and Alexinski (at present acting as diplomatic courier for the British capitalist Government), who are joining with the

forces of world capitalism to attack the Russian revolution.

The Italian Socialist movement accepts as an incontrovertible fact the view that the League of Nations is primarily a capitalist instrument for crushing the Russian Revolution and all other popular movements which may arise.

We, ourselves, have consistently maintained these views, which, though they are in Britain regarded by the majority in the movement as almost fantastically extreme, are regarded as accepted commonplaces in the Italian Party.

It must be remembered that the Italian Socialist Party created the Italian Trade Union movement—the Trade Union movement is less advanced politically than the political party.

The Italian Socialist Party embraces all the political sections of the working-class except the Anarchists.

The original leaders of the Socialist movement were all intellectuals. Twenty years ago there were many Socialists amongst the University students. Now that the Revolution approaches, the Italian bourgeoisie no longer produces those who will fight against itself.

In the Italian Socialist Congress members of the actual working-class play a small part. Boreo, a Turin metal worker, was the only manual worker to address the Congress.

It is important to notice that though Revolution is the subject of public discussion by the Italian Socialist Party to-day, this was not the case in times past.

At the opening of the Congress the greetings of the Bologna comrades were voiced by Bentini, who said that this city was the birthplace of the Socialist movement in Italy. Tirantini, in bringing good wishes from the industrial side of the movement, the "Confederazione Generale del Lavoro," declared that the glory of that body is the strike for Soviet Russia of the 20th and 21st of July and the great strike of the Metal workers. Frasinelli brought greetings from the Young Socialists. Altobelli, from the Socialist women, saying that the message of the suffering motherhood of Italy is: "no more wars." More necessary and important she insisted than legal, political, and Parliamentary action, are international strikes.

A representative of the 300,000 demobilised soldiers, who are organised as Socialists in 600 branches, declared that the ex-soldiers organisation does not wish to form a separate Party but to work with the Italian Socialist Party and with the International. He said: "We are preparing our battalions to fight by your side. We shall form the Red Army to fight against the yellow army—the Arditi. We know that the war was a capitalist war. We have no hatred for the soldiers who fought against us; we reserve that for the Italian capitalists who drove us to the slaughter."

Greetings were brought from Yugo Slavia and from the Trentino; telegrams came from the Socialists' Municipal Council of Milan, from the comrades in Moscow, Berlin, Constantinople, Holland, and from the British Socialist Party. We were asked to speak on behalf of British comrades. We explained that we could not officially speak for the British Socialist movement as a whole, only in a general sense, and that our official greeting must be from the W. S. F. We spoke in English and Dr. Schiavi very ably translated. The French and Swiss delegates arrived later in the Congress, and received like ourselves a splendid welcome; the spirit of the Italian Congress is intensely international.

Paul Faure, co-Editor of "Populaire," addressed the Congress in French. He was as closely followed as though he had spoken Italian, and was tremendously cheered. When the Swiss delegate stated that the Swiss Socialist Party had left the Second International, but had not joined the Third, he was interrupted by cries of "Viva la Terza Internazionale! Abbasso la Seconda Internazionale!" and "Viva Lenin." "Viva Lenin" was a cry often heard during the Congress. "W Lenin" and "W la Borghesia" are signs often painted on the walls by the roadside in Italian work-

ing class districts. When cheers were given for Liebknecht many voices cried: "Instead of cheering make the revolution!"

The main business of the Conference was to receive the report of the Secretary, Costantino Lazzari, to elect the committee, and to decide upon the policy of the Party in regard to joining the Third International, preparation for the coming revolution, and the question of participating in Parliamentary action.

It is said that the Congress is more orderly than in any other days. Probably the delegates are sobered by the knowledge of the impending struggle. It is noticeable that social conditions: questions of rents, prices, pensions, and so on, are scarcely referred to broad outlines of policy, and the question as to how the capitalist system may be altogether overthrown, now holds the field. Few contrasts are more striking than that presented by this Italian Congress, and that, for instance, at which the British Labour Party adopted Sidney Webb's programme of reforms, which in pamphlet form has been published under the inappropriate title "The New Social Order."

Three main groups reveal themselves in the Italian Socialist Congress, each of which has presented a manifesto, and a resolution to the Congress.

These Groups style themselves:—

THE MAXIMALIST UNITARIANS whose motion stood in the name of Lazzari.

THE MAXIMALIST ELECTIONISTS whose motion stood in the name of Serrati.

THE COMMUNISTS whose motion stood in the name of Bordiga.

There is also a fourth tendency, the Reformists, whose members are so few that they evidently think it useless to put forward a motion. This group consists mainly of the Members of Parliament; Turati, Treves, and Mordigliani are its most prominent members. It was noticeable that the Parliamentary Group remained seated when all stood up to cheer the Russian Revolution and Lenin.

THE TAUNT OF TREVES. A REMINDER TO THE BRITISH.

Treves, who by the way was opposed to the Zimmerwald Conference, declared that the Peace Treaty of Versailles has made a successful revolution in Italy impossible, as our revolution would be crushed by the foreign intervention organised by the League of Nations. He also argued that the failure of France and Britain to join Italy in the general strike of July 20th and 21st, and the failure of the Italian effort to stop the Allied intervention in Russia, is a proof that the workers can do nothing by international action.

This argument, though it is not merely false but foolish, should make us realise in this country how grievously we betrayed the International, when we failed to respond to the call of the Italian comrades last July.

Treves urged as another argument against the possibility of a successful revolution, that the industrial organisations are becoming more and more conservative. It is true that the leaders of the Industrial organisations in Italy belong to the right wing of the movement, but the struggle between the Menshevik and the Bolshevik is going on there as every-where else in the workers' movement of every country.

LAZZARI'S MOTION.

The motion of the Lazzari section adheres to the Party programme of 1892, but states that it should be amended so as to indicate

*The Executive of the Party had already adhered to it.

that when the working class captures political power, it will supersede the present Governmental machinery by Councils of Workers: it recognised the important and international character of the revolutionary action which the workers are taking to secure Socialism: it demands complete liberty of thought for all members of the Socialist Party, but insists upon discipline in action.

The manifesto published by this section recognises the class struggle, adheres to the idea of Social Revolution, states that the transfer of power from the capitalists to the workers may be more or less violent and cannot be accomplished except by the dictatorship of the proletariat, through such Councils of Workers and Peasants as are the strength of the Russian Revolution.

This is a very advanced pronouncement to come from what is really the right wing of the movement, for the reformist section is too small to count as a wing. The statement is cooled down somewhat by a warning against making preparations for an insurrection, and a declaration that the invincibility of the Party and its power to create a great coalition of the workers against the bourgeoisie, lies in the admitted and recognised civil and political rights.

Lazzari, in moving the Unitarian resolution, explained that he did not wish to sign a special programme and to adopt a sectional title: he wanted to remain an old Socialist. It seemed that a clinging to tradition had probably a good deal to do with Lazzari's opposition to new tactics. His position is peculiar and by no means logical. He desires a revolution, but objects to preparing for it. He said that during the period of the strike of July 20th and 21st, when comrades kept coming to him mysteriously, saying: "I know where there is a bomb," he felt that he was no longer the secretary of a party, but a man in a comic opera. He urged that a revolution cannot be made without arms, and he talked

of the importance of munitions in the late war. Though of course a war between state and state is by no means the same thing as a war between class and class. He said it is folly to speak of arming the workers, that the workers in the Army have the arms, and the spiritual change in the people will automatically bring those arms to the service of the workers. In this last he was saying exactly what the more advanced groups declare, but he did not recognise those groups as an evidence of the spiritual change he was predicting. The open letter which the Finnish Communists sent to Lenin, attributing the failure of their revolution to lack of preparation, should be carefully studied by Lazzari and the Unitarian group.

Lazzari accuses the Maximalists of having faith in no one, but no one is so scathing as he in condemning the Socialist Members of Parliament. Of Treves he said: "We admire your cleverness, but we do not know whether we can trust you when the moment of trial comes." Lazzari argued that it is necessary to put Workers' Councils in the place of the present Parliamentary power, and accused the Socialist Parliamentary group of working, not for this object, but for a continuance of its own power.

It seems to us that no charge could be more derogatory and insulting, but Lazzari, who made it, still thinks the party should spend itself in putting such groups into Parliament, and considers the abstentionist position ridiculous. Lazzari is however very far removed from the bourgeois ideals of the Second International: he repudiated the glorification of President Wilson at the outset and denounced the Berne Conference as an expedient for giving a new virginity to those who betrayed the International. He betrayed regret that when the offices of the "Avanti!" were burned, the Socialists did not retaliate.

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PARLIAMENT AS WE SEE IT.

October 22nd.—Mr. Long tried to quibble over the question as to the number of British ships taking an active part in the Russian expedition. Finally Mr. Hogge (L.) elicited that "there is a considerable force" in the Baltic! Mr. Jack Jones (Lab.) who asked, "Can you make war without consulting the House?" was called to order.

A CHURCHILLISM.

"There are no formed bodies of British troops in any Russian theatre of war." This is another way of shaking off responsibility for any British soldiers now in Russia.

RUSSIAN BLOCKADE.

October 23rd.—The truth of the story of the Allied attempt to blockade Soviet Russia was admitted by Mr. Harnsworth. Then Mr. Hogge (L.) asked: "Can the hon. gentleman say on whose authority we are refusing to deal with the Soviet Government?" Mr. Harnsworth: "It is part of the policy of the Allies in Paris." Do we require further proof of the Capitalist determination to crush Socialism?

ALIENS BILL.

The debates on the Aliens Restriction Bill took place on October 22nd and 23rd. The clause which has been given the most notoriety was clause four, which guarantees that "no alien shall hold a pilotage certificate for any port in the United Kingdom." To this the Government moved an amendment to safeguard the Pilotage Act, of 1912, by which an agreement had been made with France to the effect that French were entitled to hold a certificate for a British port. All the venomous anti-alien were up in arms at once, with the result that at the division there was a majority of seventy-two votes registered against the Government amendment! The House was adjourned according to Parliamentary procedure.

It would have been more creditable to the House to have defeated the Government on the liberty-robbing Clause 3 which in Section 2 provides: "If any alien promotes or attempts to promote industrial unrest in any industry in which he is not bona

fide engaged in the United Kingdom, he shall be liable, on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months." This proviso strikes at the heart of all trade union amalgamations, and may be used by employers against any prominent non-British trade unionist, should he or she make things uncomfortable.

M. C. C.

HANDS OFF RUSSIA.

On Sunday, October 26th, a delegate conference was held at Chandos Hall, called by the B.S.F. to form a London section of the National Hands off Russia Committee. The following resolution was passed:—

"That this conference demands the withdrawal of all our troops, naval and air forces from Russia, the stoppage of supplies to Koltchak, Denikin and all counter-revolutionaries; the raising of the blockade on Russia; the establishment of normal relations between this country and Russia, and the recognition of the Soviet Government."

It was decided to send this resolution to the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, the National Executive of the Labour Party, and the Executive Committee of the Triple Alliance. A provisional committee of 12 was elected from the various trade unionist and Socialist bodies represented, whose duty it would be to call a conference of all industrial, political and Socialist organisations in London, with a view to forming a permanent Hands off Russia Committee in London, and to draw up a plan of campaign to stop intervention in Russia. The delegates present were asked to get their various branches to send the above resolution to their local Members of Parliament.